



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen

Connecting members, supporters, and friends of the Stockton Portsmen

February 2026 - Issue #78

The View from the Helm



HERITAGE - ISSUE 26-02

“Heritage refers to traditions, values, objects, or qualities passed down from previous generations, encompassing both tangible things like buildings and artifacts, and intangible aspects like stories, languages, and customs, representing a collective legacy to preserve for the future.” – Google AI Overview

This concept has been running around in my head for a while. “How does it affect me?” you may ask, and that is a very fine question. To me, there is a lot of how and why we do things to heritage; those customs and traditions we use every day. With all the things going on in the world around us, our heritage leads in how to react to them, both positively and negatively.

Some positive heritage we use is recognizing those that help us enjoy our lives. Those that received recognition at the Installation and Awards Dinner were truly deserving. Sue Atkins, Barbershopper of the Year for a second time for all the stuff she does in such a positive way (Music VP, Show Chair, Newsletter Article and now District VP). Willys Nitschke and Steve Yund, the President’s Soaring Eagles for their respective work as Treasurer and Secretary. Bill Litz is recognized for his excellent work as our director. Ron Spohn recognized for his service as the person with keys to open us and for the excellent Birthday cards he sends. Sandy Harmon recognized for all the help she provides with Portsmen activities, like the Installation Dinner. Donna Wolter recognized for her ‘continued support and patience’ for me ‘At the Helm.’ These are not the only folks that COULD have been recognized but were those that rose to be the cream.

I wanted and needed to codify those that were recognized, but my thoughts on heritage didn't end there. As I stated many times, I am a second generation Barbershopper – actually, according to my dad, a third generation one, as my grandfather was a member for a very short time (an original founding member of the now defunct Beloit, Wisconsin Chapter - they have merged with other Chapters to form the Rock Valley Chapter). I am a living example of Barbershop heritage, with so many memories associated with Barbershop. Children of Barbershoppers, even when they do not join the Society, have memories of their parents' activities.

As we talked about membership recruitment at the January Board meeting, and as I alluded to in my installation remarks, the source of new members is not an easily identified entity. My dad has two sons. I am the only member – brother Jon has had no interest what-so-ever. Thus, heritage isn't a sure thing.

Heritage isn't always a thing to be desired. I am going to stray into no-man's land here, for according to our Code of Ethics, each of us are not permitted to introduce political, religious or other similar controversial issues into our affairs – Cannon #8. The purpose of this restriction is to keep political and religious arguments from disrupting our joy in singing with each other. While I agree, I know that religion and politics are very much like air and water to us humans, very hard to live without them.

Our lives have been impacted by lots of things, good and bad, by the heritage each of us has. The key for each of us is to enhance and share that which is good and avoid and/or eliminate that which is bad. Sounds easy, but it isn't. The worse part tis that while each of us tries to do those things for our own lives, the world changes around us.

Getting back to finding new, younger members, the changes in the world are making that task much harder. There has been lots of information given to our younger generations declaring that what was done in the past is not beneficial to them. They have more activities that not only consume their time but tend to make them more and more isolated.

The heritage of social organizations is dying. Look at the Philomathian Club, once one of the largest Book Clubs with the Stockton Chapter building and owning their building. A once glorious and vibrant spot in the community, available for not only Club meetings, but weddings and other such rentals. Even Veterans groups (VFW, Am. Legion) are struggling to keep membership levels, one of the reasons the Lodi Legion Post had to sell the Legion Building.

We are going to have to come up with new and ingenious ways to deal with this new heritage. Connecting with those singing in the Pops Choir is one way. Trying to break through the roadblocks established by music teachers and professors, so that we can plant the seeds of harmony into those who will not become theater or recording artist stars, encouraging their heritage of music.

One last thing which each of us needs to pay attention, how do we welcome and encourage those we do receive and include as members, especially after that are a member for a while. Keeping members, especially with this shift in how the world works, is in some ways more important than finding the new guy off the street.

I realize that this may not be my most positive and uplifting View, but we need to understand where we are.

While traditions evolve, harmony continues to bring people together. By staying welcoming and visible, we can ensure our heritage grows rather than fades.



February Birthday Celebrations

John Hunt – 2/16

Musical Director's Message:

By Bill Litz

This month, I would like us to focus on embracing choices and exploring new ideas. Growth in music comes from trying different approaches, refining what works, and giving every new arrangement our full effort.

Not every idea will fit perfectly at first, and that's completely okay. Recognizing when something doesn't suit the voices or style of the chorus and being willing to adjust or change direction isn't a failure. It's simply part of shaping our music into something that truly belongs to the Portsmen.

Take our recent sessions with the Armed Forces Medley, for example. We experimented, tried different approaches, and after a few sessions, we chose to keep only the elements that worked best for our chorus. That process of trying, observing, adjusting is exactly how we grow together.

As you approach each rehearsal, bring curiosity, effort, and openness. Experiment with phrasing, dynamics, and new ideas. Listen carefully and collaboratively, and don't be afraid to pivot when something isn't fitting. Every thoughtful choice you make strengthens the group and the music.

Remember, the goal is to turn intention into instinct. The more we thoughtfully explore, the more natural and confident our decisions will become.

Let's continue to embrace creativity, polish what works, and boldly explore new musical possibilities together.

Thank you, Josh Landin, for installing our officers!



2026 Board of Directors

President	Al Wolter
Secretary	Steve Yund
Treasurer	Willys Nitschke
VP: Membership/Chapter Development	Dave Harmon
VP: Marketing & PR	Brad Nieman
VP: Music & Performance	Sue Atkins
Member At Large	Al Farnum
Member At Large	Joan Ray
Immediate Past President	Nance Hennefer

Presidents Award – Donna Wolter



Presidents Award – Sandy Harmon



Presidents Award – Rosie Estrella



Presidents Award – Bill Litz



Soaring Eagle Award – Steve Yund



Soaring Eagle Award – Willys Nitschke



Barbershopper of the Year – Sue Atkins



Back at the Helm President Al Wolter





Galaxy S25 FE
7:55 PM

Four Heaven's Sake

A Barbershop Quartet

John Hunt

Steve Gund

Dave Harmon

Willys Nitschke

UPDATE: 1-27-2026



Four Heaven's Sake Quartet (4HSQ) is celebrating one year since Dave Harmon suggested the four of us get together to form a quartet. To personalize the journey thus far, each member of the quartet is contributing to this edition of the *Captain's Log*.

Dave Harmon, Baritone - Four Heaven's Sake Quartet formed up just in time for the 2025 Novice Contest in Lodi, and it was a fiery baptism. The judges'

critique was beneficial however, and we're entered to try again this year as a measure of our growth. In ten years, this is my fourth quartet, and finally the experience of singing with three other men is especially rewarding. I think there's something pleasing about the texture of male voices blending in those rich barbershop chords. When everyone's on pitch you can feel the sound. And it's very good.

A most rewarding gig this year was singing sweetheart songs to a very close personal friend of 40 years. Her husband invited us to serenade her in their home on one of her final days, and she loved it. Her husband used the video of our vocal tribute to her in her memorial service. I feel the emotion of those moments even now as I'm writing this.

Willys Nitschke, Bass - What a year it's been! When our quartet began, we weren't quite sure if this would be a long-term commitment or not, and it has turned out wonderfully. Not only do our voices harmonize well; we also support each other as our friendship grows. In the past twelve months, we have "watched goodwill come a-winging" as we've sung at Retirement Homes, a baby shower, several milestone birthdays (90 years and 100 years), a large retirement organization luncheon and

more! I enjoy the camaraderie of my fellow barbershoppers as we share our gifts and talents with others. I can't wait to see what the coming year will bring!

John Hunt, Tenor - Being part of the *Stockton Portsman* chorus has been very rewarding over the past few years. This past year I've had the added challenge and pleasure of being in *Four Heaven's Sake*. This is the first quartet I've been a part of since singing with my three brothers as the *Hunt Brothers*. It has been a huge extra bonus being in this group. I have a connection with each of the other three members, and this has allowed me extra opportunities, like singing in the harmony Society with other quartet and chorus members polishing up songs to the point where we can pull them out of our hats and give a performance at a community event. My quartet experience has expanded my opportunities and given me confidence to sing, not just with this quartet, but any other pick-up quartet. Highlights of this first year have been singing in several shows, singing at parties, celebrations and maybe the best part is practices every Tuesday. I look forward to learning more songs and getting to a point where we are so comfortable with each other that we're ready to take on any challenge.

Steve Yund, Lead – Having a chance to sing with three quality gentlemen in four-part harrowmony... wait a minute... that's not a word! (*it really was a mistyped rendering*) But, perhaps it is descriptive of this year for me. According to the *Yund and Nitschke Handbook of Polymorphus Misapplication of the English Language*: “Harrow-mony” – is defined as – *the repeated sense of awe/terror leading to and following that chord in a song that is “supposed to” ring*. My year has had many harrowing experiences. But the harmony of bravely stepping forward in faith; trusting your practice; believing your quartet-mates have your back; belting it out as though you truly feel the song; and surrendering the outcome to the interpretation of an always gracious audience is a metaphor for life. I could not have made it through this year as well as I have without my quartet experiences! We have been blessed to be a blessing! And we will keep looking for the next growth opportunity. “As iron sharpens iron; so, one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17) We usually end a half-step flat... guess we get to keep on sharpening!!

These are some of the reasons we love our hobby. Find three other people and...SING... *For Heaven's Sake!*

Tune Struck

January! The month of renewal and refocus. It also has been the month of illness and sadness.

Each December is typically a busy time, with a goodly number of gigs out in the elements, which can lead to feeling bad when the adrenalin ebbs, it was true for a couple of us, but it hit Al the hardest.

It isn't unusual for folks to pass away during this time, and there have been some friends of our members who passed this month, which can take some wind out of our sails, hard to be energetic and focused when your heart hurts.

Still, we are registered to compete at Prelims, and we are working on what songs to sing and what to wear. It is always an interesting exercise to determine which songs you know that would be best to compete with, in which order and on what day, etc.

One other thing that we took time with during our regular rehearsals, is working with Sue on Valentine songs. With Steve being the Lead of two quartets, having Sue able to step in is always a good thing. We have also worked a little as a possible quartet for the Spring show if Stephanie wouldn't be available to complete BS Quartet.

All of us are open to doing Valentines with a foursome made up of non-registered members.

Bring Harmony to Your Next Event

Book the Stockton Portsmen or One of Our Quartets!

A mixed-voice a cappella chorus celebrating 70 years of harmony in the Central Valley.

Looking to add warmth, charm, and polished harmony to your next event? Whether you're planning a lively celebration or a heartfelt ceremony, the Stockton Portsmen Chorus or one of our talented quartets will bring unforgettable music tailored to your occasion.

We perform at:

- Community Concerts & Festivals
- Grand Openings & Ribbon Cuttings
- Memorial Services & Celebrations of Life
- **Holiday Tree Lightings & Caroling Events**
- Weddings, Anniversaries & Private Celebrations
- Corporate Gatherings & Award Ceremonies
- Patriotic & Civic Events (**National Anthems**, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, etc.)
- Senior Living Communities & Community Outreach Programs
- **Singing Valentines & Special Deliveries (Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.)**

Flexible Performance Lengths:

Our typical sets range from 20 to 40 minutes, but we're happy to tailor the timing to suit your specific program or audience needs.

Contact Us:

Email: Info@StocktonPortsmen.org

Phone: (209) 881-SING (7464)

Website: <http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

We'd love to bring harmony to your special event.

Reach out today and let's create something memorable together.

Singing Valentines

Say *"I Love You!"* with a song!



Presented By:



This Gift Includes:

- A Quartet Singing 2 songs
- A lovely fresh red rose
- A Valentine's Card
(with your personal message)

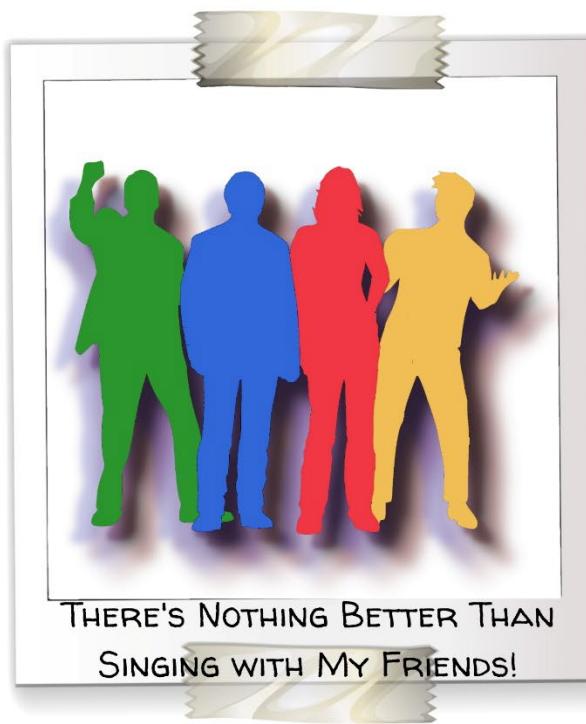
Order by Email

valentine@stocktonportsmen.org

or Call

(209) 881-(SING)7464

2026 NorCal Novice Quartet Contest



February 21st

ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH
2400 OXFORD WAY, LODI, CA

STARTS AT NOON!
GET THERE EARLY TO GET READY!
I CAN'T WAIT!!!!

FOR REGISTRATION FORMS
AND CONTEST RULES GO TO:
WWW.STOCKTONPORTSMEN.ORG



EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
INFO@STOCKTONPORTSMEN.ORG
OR CALL 209-881-7464

THERE WILL BE 2 CATEGORIES:

- 1) REGULAR (ANY 4 BHS MEMBERS)
- 2) HIGH SCHOOL (ANY 4 STUDENTS)

\$10 PER QUARTET MEMBER

\$10 GENERAL ADMISSION

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

February 12th

MAXIMUM OF 18 QUARTETS

Mission Statement:

Provide the greater Stockton area with quality Barbershop chorus and quartet music and wholesome family entertainment, while encouraging every individual of good character who loves to sing the opportunity to find their place with us.

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Interested in Singing With Us?

Visitors are always welcome Tuesday evenings.

No audition required just a love of singing and community.

Come experience harmony with us.

Location: Zion Lutheran Church – 808 W Porter Avenue (Stockton, CA)

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM (**Grace Hall**)

VLQ: 8:00 PM – 8:30 PM (except board meeting nights)

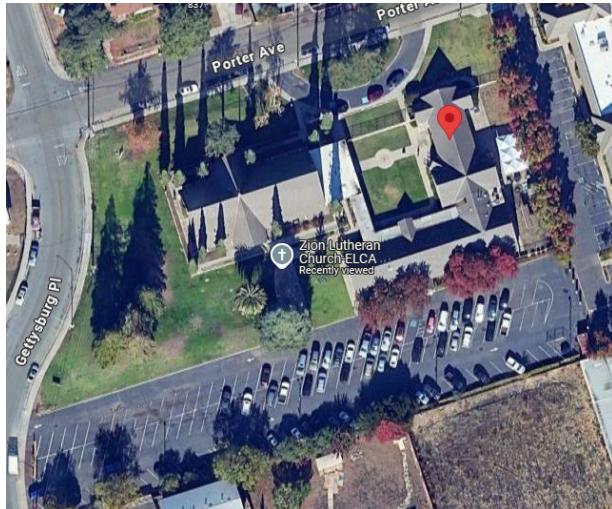
***Rehearsals may be held at an alternate location from time to time
please double-check the details.***

See calendar for up-to-date information:

[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

Website: <http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/194542747456>



Directions:

- From Pacific Avenue go west on Porter Way, turn south on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into the Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.
- From Pershing Avenue go east on W. Swain Road, turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.

SAVE THE DATE

2026

- 2/11 United Way Workplace Giving BBQ (11:30 – 12:30)
- 2/13-14 Singing Valentine's [Click link for order form](#)
- 2/19 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11:30 – 1:00)
- 2/17 Coaching Session w/ Chris Hébert
- 2/21 Novice Contest hosted by Stockton Portsmen (Lodi, CA) [Click link for details](#)
- 3/19 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11:30 – 1:00)
- 3/19-21 2026 FWD Spring Convention, Northern Divisions (Stockton, CA)
[Click link for details and for registration](#)
- 4/12 2026 Spring HOD Meeting – 3pm via Zoom
- 4/16 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11:30 – 1:00)
- 4/25 Delta Chapter Show (more details to follow)
- 4/25 Stockton Portsmen 72th Annual Show “Santa’s Escape Plan” (Stockton, CA)
- 5/21 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11:30 – 1:00)
- 5/25 Memorial Day Service at Cherokee Memorial (Lodi, CA)
- 6/18 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11:30 – 1:00)
- 6/28-7/5 BHS International Convention (St. Louis, MO)
- 10/6-11 2026 FWD 80th Anniversary Fall Convention (Honolulu, Hawaii)
(This is combined with the Pan Pacific Harmony Convention)

Barbershop Links:

Barbershop Harmony Society <http://www.barbershop.org/>

Far Western District <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/>

Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association <https://www.mixedbarbershop.org/>

Voices of California (VoCal) <https://www.voicesofcalifornia.org/>