

HISTORY OF BARBERSHOP

compiled by David Wright

Lesson 6: TRANSFORMATION

Smooth harmony groups of the 1950's. Some of the old professional quartet men from the early 1900s later formed studio back up groups like the Revelers as the thirties style came into vogue. These groups evolved and adopted the harmonies of the era, and through the forties developed a style which can be viewed as a first cousin of the barbershop style. These smooth singing groups are typified by the arranging of Gene Puerling and his quartet, the Hi Lo's. This style achieved its zenith in popularity in the '50s with another group, the Four Freshmen, who had begun singing together as young boys, harmonizing in the barbershop style. Other groups that would spring forth: The Four Coins ("Shangri-La"), The Ames Brothers ("Sentimental Me"), The Modernaires ("The Lamplighter's Serenade"), The Four Aces ("Love Is A Many Splendored Thing"), The Four Lads ("Standing On The Corner"), The Brothers Four ("Green Fields"), The Kingston Trio ("Tom Dooley"), The Andrews Sisters ("In Apple Blossom Time"), The King Sisters ("Imagination"), and The Chordettes ("Mr. Sandman").

Gospel quartet style. Another type of singing which has as its foundation the old quartet style is the gospel quartet, both white and black. In the country churches and backwoods of the United States there developed in the '30's and '40's a gospel quartet tradition which reached fruition in the fifties as a professional style. Probably the first and most of the early white gospel quartets was the Blackwood Brothers Quartet. These quartets stayed with traditional harmonies, for the most part, and the songs they wrote have all the harmonic content typical of the barbershop style. One often hears in their music the strong presence of the circle of fifths progression, with occasional influences from jazz of the 1930s. It was common for the bass of such quartets to have a very low range, and their songs often featured him. The bass singer of the Blackwood Brothers was the famous J. D. Sumner.

Judging categories altered. As late as 1950, President Carroll Adams was reminding the districts that quartet members had to be members of the Society, and that quartets had to be currently registered to compete. Things were still a little loose. At the mid-winter of '51 the Board put its final approval on a change in the judging system. What was called Harmony Accuracy was divided into two categories: Harmony Accuracy and Balance and Blend. Voice Expression remained intact. Song and Voice Arrangement now became simply Song Arrangement. Previously this Category could penalize non-barbershop harmony; now the responsibility of disqualification was delegated to it for severe offenses. Stage Presence remained intact. Each of these categories was given equal weighting of 20%, with each judge scoring on the basis of 100 points. This system was to remain intact, with only minor changes, for twenty years.

Arrival of the 1950s. By the 1950s there existed two healthy organizations propagating barbershop harmony: SPEBSQSA for men and Sweet Adelines, Inc. for women. A five category judging system consisting of five equally-weighted categories – Harmony Accuracy, Balance and Blend, Voice Expression, Song Arrangement, and Stage Presence – served both organizations. Quartet singing had undergone considerable refinement through the 1940s, culminating in the fine singing of the 1950 Champions, the Buffalo Bills, and choral singing was emerging as the common practice of barbershop chapters across the land.

1950 Convention, Omaha. The winners this year would become a nationally known legend in quartet history. They were the Buffalo Bills, from Buffalo, New York.

Buffalo Bills. They were coached by Phil Embury, who wrote many of their arrangements. Their sound was considered by many to be the best ever, at the time. It combined the rich, full voice sound of the old quartet style with the tuned ringing quality of the quartets that would follow — a sort of bridge between the old and the new.

The Buffalo Bills had started singing on September 20, 1947 at the home of baritone Hershel Smith. He and lead Al Shea were members of the Kenmore, New York, chapter, but tenor Vern Reed and bass Bill Spangenberg were not. The four were

invited to sing at a Ladies night at the chapter a week thence, which they did. They tried to register as the Town Criers, then as the Four Tune Tellers, but were turned down by Carroll Adams, the Society's executive secretary, because the names were taken. Finally a master of ceremonies at the Buffalo Quarterback Club, advised that they were nameless, introduced them as the Buffalo Bills, a name that stuck. The Bills placed 16th at their first International Contest in Oklahoma City, 1948, and won their district that fall. The next year in their hometown of Buffalo they were sixth. Hershel Smith left the quartet at this point because of travel requirements, and Dick Grapes stepped in as baritone.

Their rendition of "Goodbye Old Dixie, Goodbye-Floatin' Down To Cotton Town" is exemplary of Phil Embury's arranging skills. It contains the famous "die" swipe, which was lengthened 23 years later by the Dealers Choice. Phil did many of the Bills' early arrangements. As champions, they became probably the most active quartet the Society had seen up to that time, travelling to performances at chapter shows across the country. Moreover, the Armed Forces Collaboration Program brought them invitations to sing before military audiences in Germany, France, Austria, Japan, and Korea, among other places. They were often accompanied by Phil Embury. Those who heard the Bills perform often recall the clear, full voice tenor of Vern Reed, perhaps their most defining feature. Over the course of their career they made several records, and like the Mid States Four, they sang many of their numbers with accompaniment. The recording "Buffalo Bills With Banjo", remains popular today and includes their well-known rendition of "My Honey's Lovin' Arms".

Above all this, it happened that the Buffalo Bills advance the cause of barbershopping in a way that no quartet had ever been able to do before, nor has one since. They joined the cast of Meredith Willson's musical, "The Music Man".

1951 Convention, Toledo. The 1951 contest was won by the Schmidt Brothers: Joe, Jim, Paul, and Fran, who had begun singing at home in 1949. They all sang in the choir of their church (Catholic), in Two Rivers, Wisconsin. While singing for a women's club meeting in nearby Manitowoc, O. H. (King) Cole heard them from an adjacent lobby and invited them to visit the Manitowoc chapter (which he had organized). They became members, won their district in 1950, and were eventually coached to the International Championship by Rudy Hart and John Means, both of whom also wrote their arrangements. During the month before the contest they rehearsed every day. At the contest they lived apart from their wives, to stress the unity of the quartet. In the first session, they sang last in a hot auditorium to a tired crowd, but their rousing rendition of Hal Staab's arrangement of "I Love The Way You Roll Your Eyes," beginning with the "hello" bell chord which each man sang as he entered, brought on a tremendous applause. This arrangement has two elements that are much more developed than in earlier examples — an introduction and a tag. The Schmitts' sang with excellent fidelity and vocal quality. During their championship year they sang 110 performances, including the Ed Sullivan Show and the Arthur Godfrey Show (with the Chordettes). This quartet surpassed all others for longevity as an active quartet. They continued to sing for 36 years until, on January 23, 1985, Joe Schmidt died.

Bud Arberg. In 1951, the Alexandria chapter obtained as its director a gentleman named Bud Arberg, who was to be one of the Society's shining stars of the 1950's. He had received his Ed.D. in music education from Columbia University, New York City, in 1951. During one summer, as a lieutenant in the Army reserve, he had met Dean Snyder, our current Society Historian, who was working for the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and gave a lecture at Fort Knox on barbershop harmony. Snyder and Carroll Adams, who later encountered Arberg at Fort Monmouth, N.J. in the summer of 1949, recognized his talent, and encouraged his interest in barbershop harmony. (Adams was giving a course in barbershop singing to 50 enlisted men, as part of the Armed Services Collaboration Program.) Arberg became an avid barbershopper. Over the years Bud Arberg became a prolific arranger, providing at least 250 barbershop arrangements.

Bud Arberg had a long and distinguished career in as a musician in the Army Special Services Division and the Department of Education, retiring from the later in 1983. In 1956 he influenced the Army to adopt the old standard, "The Caissons Go Rolling Along". Bud Arberg wrote new lyrics ("First to fight for the right, and to build the Nation's might, and The Army Goes Rolling Along") and a new musical introduction, and "Caisson" became "The Army Goes Rolling Along," the official song of the U.S. Army. He was an advocate for arts in education, telling the New York Times in 1976, "We hope to make the arts a part of the cake rather than the icing on the cake, which is the way music, art, theater, dance and film are frequently taught now in schools". Bud Arberg died in 2009 at the age of 90.

Arberg and barbershop craft. Perhaps his most significant contribution to barbershopping was in the area of music education. Up to this time, there was very little attempt to teach fundamentals of barbershop harmony. In fact there had been early resistance to the idea of education. Very early on, the St. Louis Chapter had obtained the services of a voice teacher as a director, but the sessions were too intense, and members complained that they had joined the Society for fun, not voice lessons. The membership dwindled, and in 1939 this director gave up and quit. Bud Arberg, however, was able to make the learning fun. He quickly latched on to Reagan's clock system, and began devoting meeting time at the Alexandria Chapter to teaching barbershop "craft," a word he first used. He taught the men about chord structures, intervals, singing techniques —

"the ABC's and 2 plus 2's of barbershop" as he put it. Dean Snyder, a member of the Washington D.C. Chapter, (Dean had founded the Alexandria Chapter in 1948.) visited Alexandria one night and witnessed this. He was so impressed by Arberg's presentation that he recommended him to the MAD District leaders, who invited him to give a presentation at a District Board meeting in November of 1952. His demonstration, using the piano keyboard and a blackboard, was a resounding success, his skills as a teacher became known to others, largely due to Snyders promotion. At the Mid-Winter Meeting of 1953, Arberg gave a similar demonstration, which greatly impressed Frank Thorne and others. His ideas gave birth to our Society's fledgling education program. This was the forerunner of the Harmony Education Program HEP schools that were to develop in the late 50s, and eventually give us Harmony College.

1952 Convention, Kansas City. The new Champions are our youngest to date. They were the Four Teens, from St. Louis, Missouri, and the first winners from the Central States District. (Actually, they were at Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Illinois. This is the quartet to sound like a "modern" quartet in certain respects. All previous quartets had featured heavier, full voices, some vibrato, and often a full voice tenor. The Four Teens had bright voices, straight tones, pure falsetto tenor (no mix), and that "ringy-zingy" sound that is so rewarded by today's Sound Category. We play the song in its entirety. Thirty four years later another Central States quartet would win the International Championship singing this same song — the Rural Route Four.

The Four Teens and military collaboration. This is a remarkable story. The quartet had formed in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in 1949. Three of them were still in high school. A friend, Mike Egan, acted as their MC and booker throughout their existence as a quartet. In January of 1951, all five of them enlisted in the Air Force and went to boot camp in Texas, where they continued to sing. The military scheduled them to sing in a base show at which Bob Hope was to appear, but a week before the show their bass developed a foot problem and was given a medical discharge. Fortunately, they found another enlistee, Don Cahill, from Cincinnati, to fill the bill. They sang the show and thereby came to the attention of Dr. Norm Rathert (third Society President), from St. Louis, who was helping the generals at Scott Air Force Base to stage shows for the soldiers. It came to pass that the Four Teens were all stationed at Scott (perhaps due to Rathert's influence?) and Rathert and veteran Society member Joe Wodicka coached them and provided arrangements. Rathert influenced the generals to assign them to Special Services, so that they were able to compete, and to rehearse six to eight hours a day. (Is this a violation of our Society's "non-professional" requirement?) Rathert boasted to friends that they would win the championship in 1952, which they did. At this point it both the Society and the Air Force recognized the impending problem presented by the fact that many civilian appearances would be requested of these four fellows, a privilege not ordinarily allowed to military personnel. A unique agreement was reached: Society President Carroll Adams and Col. B. E. Nowotny of USAF headquarters signed an agreement whereby the quartet could appear at chapter shows, with bookings and expenses handled jointly by the Society's International Secretary and the Commanding General of the Air Force, or their representatives, funds being dispensed through the quartet's secretary-manager, Mike Egan. This agreement was scrupulously adhered to by all parties during their championship year. The following year they toured military posts at home and abroad with the All Air Force Show "Tops In Blue." The quartet broke up when their military service ended.

Can't announce song titles; patriotic songs not banned. In Kansas City the Contest and Judging Committee had ruled that it is illegal for a quartet to announce its song titles. Also the rule that previously banned sacred and patriotic songs was altered to only ban religious songs. It was felt that patriotic most songs are unsuitable for other reasons.

Chorus contests begin. By 1952 that facet of barbershopping introduced by Norm Rathert in 1940, and helped along by John Hanson and his Corn Belt Chorus, was thriving. It was the barbershop chorus. In 1948 the Society had issued training materials for chapter choruses, and in 1950 published a folio of arrangements suitable for chorus use. By 1952 several of the fourteen districts were having chorus contests, and they had discovered that these events drew large crowds because they involved far more barbershoppers than quartet contests. In the summer of 1952 both the Land O' Lakes and the Johnny Appleseed Districts held chorus contests which drew over 1000 registrants. In 1953 each District President was invited to select two choruses from his district to compete at the upcoming Detroit International Contest. Sixteen choruses entered this contest (Not all districts were represented; six districts sent two choruses, four sent one.), and the winner was called the International Convention Championship Chorus. Entrants were limited to two per district and were required to have at least twenty singers.

1953 Convention, Detroit. The winner of the novel chorus contest was the Great Lakes Chorus, Grand Rapids, Michigan. They sang with 36 men. The new quartet champs were the Vikings, of Rock Island, Illinois, another product of the Illinois barbershop stronghold. (The Illinois District had provided five of our first fifteen quartet winners, and numerous medalists.) The Vikings were coached by a young but knowledgeable upstart from Peoria, Floyd Connett, who also did many

of their arrangements. They continued in the "straight tone" trend set by the Four Teens. In their singing one notes (1) the dynamic variation ("shading"), and (2) sophistication in the arrangements such as half-step key lifts, probably two of Connett's influences.

Floyd Connett. Inspired and motivated by John Hanson, who had died in 1954, Floyd Connett, a barber from Peoria, became one of the greatest barbershoppers of his day. He had broken away from the Corn Belt Chorus in the late forties and was directing several chapters in the area. He also directed Sweet Adelines choruses, including the Belles of Harmony of Peoria, which had been formed in 1948, four years before they affiliated with the Sweet Adelines (— an interesting fact!). He was active with Sweet Adelines early on, and in 1952 had coached the Pitch Pipers, from Peoria to their championship. (Betty Hanson Oliver, daughter of John Hanson, was tenor in this women's quartet.) He coached at least four subsequent women's quartets to championships. Floyd certified as a judge in all five categories (this kind of "multiple certification" was allowed then). By 1957 he was Assistant Chairman of the International Contest and Judging Committee, and Category Specialist of the Voice Expression Category. Remarkably, Floyd was able to sustain himself as a full time barbershopper from 1951 through 1958, when he went to work for the Society. More on Floyd later.

The Chordettes. This women's quartet was organized in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, in 1946. The original members of the group were Janet Ertel (bass), Carol Buschmann (her sister-in-law) (baritone), Dorothy Schwartz (lead), and Jinny Osborn (tenor). In 1952, Lynn Evans replaced Schwartz, and in 1953, Margie Needham replaced Osborn (who was having a baby), though Osborn later returned to the group. Nancy Overton also was a member of the group at a later time, singing bass. Originally they sang folk music but eventually changed to barbershop harmony. Part of this change seems to be influenced by Osborn's father. She was the daughter of O. H. "King" Cole, who served as president of the Society. After performing locally in Sheboygan, they won on Arthur Godfrey's radio program Talent Scouts in 1949. They held feature status on Godfrey's daily program, and then recorded for Columbia Records. In 1953, Godfrey's music director and orchestra leader, Archie Bleyer, founded Cadence Records. He signed a number of Godfrey regulars and former regulars, including the Chordettes, who had a number of hit records.

Their biggest hit was Mr. Sandman in 1954. Archie Bleyer himself is on that record along with the group. They also hit No. 2 with 1958's "Lollipop" and also charted with a vocal version of the themes from television's Zorro (#17) (1959) and the film Never on Sunday (#13) (1961). Other hits for the girls included "Eddie My Love" (#14), "Born to Be With You" (#5), "Lay Down Your Arms" in 1956, and "Just Between You and Me" (#8) in 1957. Janet Ertel married Bleyer in 1954. Her daughter Jackie married another Cadence recording star, Phil Everly of The Everly Brothers. The Chordettes appeared on American Bandstand on August 5, 1957, the first episode of that show to be broadcast nationally on the ABC Television network. Replacement tenor Margie Needham later married noted barbershop arranger Walter Latzko, who worked as a staff arranger for Arthur Godfrey. Latzko wrote some arrangements for the Chordettes.

"Buzz" Haeger's eight part arrangement. In 1953 the young Buzz Haeger of Chicago arranged a modern eight part piece designed to be sung by an octet of four men and four women. It was "And So To Sleep Again." This is still a popular arrangement for a male-female octet ensemble. Over the years various such arrangements have been written for the "double male-female quartet". Probably the most popular is the "Lida Rose - Dream of Now" counterpoint.

1954 Convention, Washington D. C. The winning quartet was the third Central States winner, the Orphans, from Wichita, who maintained much the same style, but didn't sacrifice so much in voice quality to attain it. The Orphans, like the Four Teens, were having success arrangements that were new, refreshing, and vocally challenging.

In the fall of 1953 all districts had held contests to qualify up to two representatives per district to the first International Chorus Contest. Twenty-three choruses competed in D. C. The winner, and the first to be called International Chorus Champions, was the hometown Washington, D.C. chorus.

Arberg says it's too loud and over-arranged. An interesting article appeared in the March 1955 issue of the Harmonizer. It excerpts from a bulletin that Bud Arberg, who by now was Arrangement Category Specialist, had sent to all arrangement judges and candidates the previous fall. He indicated two complaints about songs being heard in contest: (1) too loud, and (2) over-arranged. Lots of people said "Amen!", including veteran Frank Thorne. Could have been today, no? We travel in circles.

1955 Convention, Miami Beach. Winners this year were the Four Hearsemen from Amarillo, Texas. (Tenor Wendell

Heiny was a funeral director, prompting the group's name and dress.) This group sang in the style more characteristic of the old quartets.

The winners of the third International Chorus Contest were from Janesville Wisconsin.

Also significant: In second place in the Quartet Contest were the Confederates, who would win the next year. Next were the Four-Tissimos. The young man singing tenor in this quartet was Buzz Haeger. Also this quartet brought with them a coach. His name: Lyle Pilcher. When the Four-Tissimos went to Miami Beach in 1955 they learned that only two of their songs were legitimate barbershop songs. So they woodshedded arrangements to four new songs. They used no written music. Pilcher and Buzz Haeger were both skilled at this art. Remarkably, the quartet finished third.

First use of choreography by a chorus. A precedent was established at the Miami convention when the previous year's (and first official) chorus champions from Washington D.C. appeared to perform as outgoing champs. (NOTE: I do not know how often this tradition has been broken. The only breaches I know of were in 1976 when the Vocal Majority didn't come to San Francisco and in 1984 when the Phoenicians failed to appear in St. Louis. It should be emphasized that this is certainly understandable, given the expense of such an appearance.) In doing so, they gave the first known demonstration of choreography, which started a trend that has developed greatly over the years. The act was conceived and planned by Jean Boardman. Before this, choruses performed and competed in glee club manner — hands at side, no planned motions.

Lyle Pilcher. He was one of the first bona fide "coaches," and he came to be perhaps the greatest quartet coach our society has seen. We mentioned earlier the occasion on which Doc Nelson introduced the young Lyle Pilcher to the Capitol City Four and to barbershopping. He then began doing some quartetting, able to sing lead, baritone, or tenor. Doc Nelson tried to convince him to go to the 1940 New York City contest, but he couldn't get away, whereupon Doc organized the Plow City Four to make the trip. (One of Lyle's quartets was also called the Plow City Four.) Later, in the 40's, he attended Bradley University in Peoria, and during that time he worked as a studio singer for the local radio station. He attended his first Convention in Milwaukee in 1947. His interest in barbershopping increased and he became adept at woodshedding and arranging (by ear). On one occasion at a contest in Jacksonville, Illinois, he was woodshedding in the lobby of the hotel when one of the Four-Tissimos invited him up to their room to hear the quartet. Lyle thought they wanted to perform for him and said "Sure, I'll be right up." He then proceeded to become further engrossed in his woodshedding for another hour or two. Finally one of the Four-Tissimos came down and said "Hey, we're waiting for you." So Lyle went up to the room and the quartet sang a song and Lyle said "Great. What else do you know?" The quartet said "No, no. We want you to make suggestions to improve our song for contest. That started Lyle in coaching. His only condition for coaching was that if he was going to take time to coach a quartet, he had to do it his way, right or wrong — a position he maintains to this day. He went on to coach the Four Renegades (1965 Champs), the Imposters (medalists in 1964, 1965), the Auto Towners (1966 Champs), Sundowners (medalists from 1966 to 1971), the Avant Garde, medalists in 1968, 1969), the Gentlemen's Agreement (1971 Champs), the Vagabonds (medalists from 1975 to 1977), Grandma's Boys (1979 Champs), the Boston Common (1980 Champs), Chicago News (1981 Champs), and Center Stage (medalists from 1981 to 1984). In 1965 three of his quartets were International medalists: Four Renegades 1st, Imposters 3rd, Auto Towners 4th. Lyle was also coach of Sweet Adelines champions the Nota-Belles (1955), Sweet and Lows (1958), Rarities (1970), 4th Edition (1972), Tiffanies (1973), Sounds of Music (1974), Tetrachords (1978), and Jubilation (1985).

Dave Stevens "sees the light." There was a fellow from San Francisco attending his first convention in Miami. He was a young professional musician — had a Masters in music from Northwestern — who had been directing the San Francisco Chapter since 1950. It was the experience at Miami that got Dave really interested in barbershopping, for the first time.

Arrangements and arrangers. As the art of barbershop arranging grew more sophisticated, quartets began to sing material with portions of the song created by the arranger. We saw a few examples of the early on, but in the fifties, the great masters like Embury, Reagan, Thorne, Staab, Bill Diekema, Rudy Hart, Arberg, and Connett were producing what at the time were considered real masterpieces, compared to the previous decade. Some well-known introductions which appeared:

"Hello" intro (Schmitt Brothers)
 "Sonny Boy" intro (Baytown Four)
 "Frisco Town" intro (Berkeley Californians)

The last one was no doubt written and directed by that new guy on the block — Dave Stevens, from the San Francisco area. Another new fellow who began to make a mark was S. K. Grundy, of Springfield, Missouri. Yet another was a young man

from Salt Lake City named Val Hicks, who entered the judging program in 1954 and was certified as an arrangement judge in 1956. Jack Baird also began as an arranger and Arrangement Judge in this era. (NOTE: Find out more details on Jack.)

There were tags — much more rousing and exciting than before such as:

- "Shanty In Old Shanty Town" (Colonials)
- "When The Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along" (Schmitt Brothers)
- "Wedding Bells Are Breaking Up That Old Gang Of Mine" (Four Pitchikers)
- "Sugar Cane Jubilee" (Four Tissimos)

This last one was from one of the songs that Pilcher, Haeger, and the Four Tissimos had worked out woodshed-style at the '55 contest.

Octavo size publications. Up to this time, the Society was getting arrangements to its members in folios which were published by commercial publishers, like Spaeth's books. By 1955, publishers had lost interest, and the Society had begun putting out its own annual collection, "Songs For Men," which consisted largely of songs composed by barbershoppers, to avoid copyright problems, and was printed in folios 8 1/2 by 11 inches in size. It was not attracting the interest of quartets. In 1955, Jean Boardman, a past Vice-President, proposed that the Society begin publishing a series of arrangements of public domain songs, issued separately, and published in "octavo" dimensions — 6 7/8 by 10 1/4 inches — which was traditional for choruses and choirs. The plans were approved in 1956, and the first arrangements that went out were "When You Were Sweet Sixteen," "Mandy Lee," "Story Of The Rose," "Asleep In The Deep," "Gypsy Love Song," and "Honey That I Love So Well." Boardman, Embury, and Thorne provided valuable musical arrangements. Eventually the "Songs For Men" series changed to this format, so that in 1961 the annual folio was discontinued, and copyrighted songs began appearing in the now familiar octavo form under the name "Songs For Men." But the Harmony Heritage Series still exists.

International Chorus Contest under fire. In 1955, only ten of the fourteen districts entered choruses in the International Chorus Contest. The high cost was cited as the reason. Moreover it was pointed out that in the larger districts, only those choruses near the contest city competed in the district contest, making it questionable that the best choruses were represented. There was substantial sentiment against the International Chorus Contest, and at the Denver Mid-Winter meeting in 1956 there was a motion to abolish it. The motion required unanimity because it had not been circulated 30 days in advance, and failed. Then at the International Convention of 1956 it was brought up again at the House of Delegates meeting, and there was a lively debate, after which a vote was taken, and the motion to discontinue the International Chorus Contest again failed. Frank Thorne argued eloquently and convincingly in favor of the contest, and many who were there believe it was his influence that turned the tide. This was a critical juncture in Society history, for if the vote had gone the other way our history would be quite different.

1956 Convention, Minneapolis. (This was the first of three conventions to be held in this city. Later ones: 1979, 1985.) Chorus Contest was won by Michigan City, Indiana, directed by Rudy Hart, who would become one of the great pioneers of the Harmony Education Program.

Quartet winner was the most illustrious quartet of its era, the Confederates, from Memphis. They were coached by Floyd Connett, who was to become our Society's first field representative.

Confederates. They were probably the greatest and most popular Champs since the Buffalo Bills of six years earlier. They had a profound influence and clearly shaped the future of the style. Coached by Floyd Connett, this quartet had a big ringing sound and sang some very interesting and somewhat audacious material. "The Sunshine Of Your Smile," arranged by Bill Diekema, was a song they made famous in the barbershop world. In this one notes the degree of dynamic variation. This was called "shading" by the Voice Expression Category. The stylistic propriety of this arrangement caused much talk. Molly Reagan strongly objected to the major sevenths created by the melodic line "Give me your smile." He felt that they should be harmonized in other ways. Others, like the younger Val Hicks, deferred to this judgment, but felt inwardly that the major seventh should be allowed in this situation.

The Confederates were organized in Memphis, Tennessee in 1953, and from the beginning had gone "all out" on the show circuit and in contest. Baritone Bill ("Buzz") Busby was musically knowledgeable and did some of their arranging. Their songs became favorites, copied by other quartets. An example is "Redhead". The Confederates continued to sing for many years and were always a favorite. Crowds loved their colorful southern costumes and Dixie songs. Doug Miller recalls being swept off his feet at a show in Clear Water, Michigan in 1956 which featured the Confederates along with the Mid States

Four. In the early sixties, baritone Busby was involved in a terrible automobile accident in which a lung was punctured. He continued to sing with only one lung functioning. Tenor George Evans studied for the ministry. They continued to sing until 1969.

Concluding remarks. The quality of singing was improving. The great quartets of the fifties had brought on a bright ringing timbre and a phrasing that

and sixties introduced the modern barbershop sound, but would be surpassed by quartets who would combine this sound with more smoothness and style. And in the realm of chorus singing the super choruses of the seventies and eighties were to tingle our senses with sights and sounds never experienced before. We'll hear about it in the next lesson.