

## HAL PURDY

Written By Bob Royce

One evening in 1943, this gentleman was passing a hotel in Galesburg, Illinois when he heard some singing which he found quite pleasing to the ear. He began a search to locate the source of this singing, and after rather a long time, he did in fact find some men singing Barbershop. He joined in that evening, and very shortly thereafter, became a member of the Society, which -- bear in mind -- was only five years old at the time.

Our hero was making his living in those days in machine design – designing machines used in the fabrication of aircraft. He continued in this occupation throughout the war years, moving frequently, living in places like Marietta Ga; New Orleans, Los Angeles; Burlington Vt; Sidney Oh; and Indianapolis. In 1946, he had a bout with cancer and was treated at the Mayo Clinic. He owned a 9-hole golf course in Sidney which he sold when he moved to Indianapolis. By this time he was involved in the design of machines used to manufacture smoking pipes, and worked for a while as Greens Keeper at a golf course in Lima Ohio.

When he moved to Indianapolis he went into the home building business, but abandoned this new career shortly thereafter, because at least in Indianapolis, there was severe over-building compared to the demand. He moved to Philadelphia where he managed a job shop for several years. He and one of his sons were involved in a major automobile accident; he broke several ribs and underwent lung surgery.

While in Indianapolis in 1950, he served as District President for Indiana/Kentucky District (now Cardinal District). Entrepreneur that he was, in 1954 he got into golf course architecture, buying up land and building golf courses on that land. He and his wife bought a home in Kingston, New York in the early-1960's that was in need of considerable work – he and his family lived in the basement of this home for five years, while he renovated the house himself. He opened a golf course architect's office in Livingston N.J., became a dual member of the Kingston and Livingston Chapters, and sang on the International stage with the Livingston Dapper Dans of Harmony from their first appearance in 1964 thru the 1967 International Championship, and again in 1970, as well as their Medalist performances in 1974 and 1977. He continued to be active in Livingston until its merger with Montclair in 1982. Both his sons became avid and active Barbershoppers, and one of his two daughters is still very involved in Sweet Adelines.

He has sung in many quartets over the years, including many which were registered with Kenosha, and many which were not. An indefatigable baritone, he sang in a quartet called the Ripple-Aires in Indianapolis, together with his older son, back in the early 1950's, and has competed in the 1980's and '90's in a number of International Senior Quartet contests at Mid-Winter. He loves to teach and sing tags, and when he lived in an Assisted Living facility in N.J. before his death, he has formed a quartet with other men with no prior Barbershop experience.

He is perhaps best known for his outstanding generosity, having hosted a Hospitality Room every year at the International Convention for over 40 years. Most all of you know "The Purdy Corral" the Hospitality Room that bore his name, and virtually every International Medalist and Champion Quartet, plus countless others, have sung in that famous room. Hal became a member of DELA in 1972 and he died in 2001.

This is the story of a 50-year plus Barbershopper and member of DELA for almost three decades, to whom we wish to pay special tribute this weekend.

Always a man with foresight and more than a little grit, in Second Grade a saucy Irish lass caught his eye, and would become his wife right after high school graduation. In high school, he played varsity football, playing quarterback – although he only weighed 145 lbs. – and was offered a college football scholarship. Instead of accepting this offer, he married his childhood sweetheart and their first child was born -- precluding a college career. He subsequently played semi-pro ball, took a correspondence course in drafting and landed a job with Indiana Truck in Marion Ohio. In 1932, he took a job with the maintenance crew at Lost Creek Country Club; a year or so later, when the greens keeper retired, our hero was promoted to that position (\$900 a year and a house was a great deal in 1932!). He subsequently was promoted to pro and general manager at the club, and became a par golfer and an “A” member of the PGA. In 1939, the bank foreclosed on the Sidney, Ohio Country Club, and offered the golf course, clubhouse and equipment for lease – an offer our hero took. In 1940 he bought the club for \$11,000, on which he made a pretty handsome profit when he sold it for \$21,000 a few years later.

He found Barbershopping and joined the Society in 1942. One evening in 1943, as he passed a hotel in Galesburg Illinois, he heard some Barbershop singing. He began a search to locate the source of this singing, and after rather a long time, traced the singing to a meeting room in the hotel. Standing outside the door, he perceived the baritones were obviously in need of help. As one participant left the room, he said to him, “I believe I can straighten out the baritone part,” and he was invited in.

Our hero was making his living in those days in machine design – designing machines used in the fabrication of aircraft. He continued in this occupation throughout the war years, moving frequently, living in places like Marietta, Georgia; New Orleans, Los Angeles; Burlington, Vermont; Sidney, Ohio; and Indianapolis. In 1946, he had a bout with colon cancer and was treated at the Mayo Clinic. By this time he was involved in the design of machines used to manufacture smoking pipes.

When he moved to Indianapolis he went into the home building business, but abandoned this new career shortly thereafter, and moved to Philadelphia to manage a job shop for several years. In 1953, one of his sons was also working in Philadelphia, and the two decided to go to the Purdue - Michigan football game. They figured if they left Philly right after work Friday and drove all night they could make it. However, as his son was driving their Olds 88 convertible outside Springfield Ohio, he fell asleep, and a serious accident ensued; our hero broke several ribs. Under scrutiny at the hospital, lung cancer was discovered, and one lobe of his lung was eventually removed.

He sang in many quartets over the years, including many which were registered with Kenosha, and many which were not. An indefatigable baritone, in the 1940's as a member of the Broad Ripple Chapter near Indianapolis, he sang in a quartet with one of his sons called the Rippleaires, who averaged about three public performances a week. In the 1948 International Prelimaries, the Rippleaires placed in the top five in the first round; in the second round, however, their lead went into a near-continuous loop on “Carolina In the Morning,” and they achieved a time-penalized conclusion. He attended Internationals in Buffalo in 1949, in Omaha in 1950, and in

Toledo in 1951. At Internationals in 1950 & 1951, he heard a quartet called the Villageaires, which included another of our “old” DELA members, place 6<sup>th</sup> in two consecutive years.

Doubtless, a few of you already know of whom I speak, but when I add the following details, more and more of you will catch on. He served as President of the Broad Ripple Chapter in 1949 and was asked by International Secretary Carroll Adams to host an unofficial chorus contest in Indianapolis. (Up to this time, the chorus was a vehicle provided specifically for those who simply were not currently involved in a quartet.) This was the first time in Society history that choruses would compete. He served as President of the Indiana/Kentucky District (now the Cardinal District) in 1950.

By 1954, he had taken a position with a golf course architect in Montclair, NJ and he and his family moved to West Caldwell. The firm received a commission from IBM to design and build a golf course near its facility in Kingston, New York, and our hero was given the assignment. So successful was this endeavor that IBM proposed he buy up land nearby to build homes for their executives. Accepting that assignment, he bought a home in Kingston, New York that was in need of considerable work – he and the family lived in the basement of this home for five years, while he renovated the house itself. He joined the Kingston Chapter and sang in a quartet called the Kingtones which had a weekly TV show. Shortly thereafter, however, the IBM project was cancelled by the senior Thomas Watson. Our hero opened his own golf course architect’s office in Livingston New Jersey with his first commission in New Jersey (Upper Montclair Country Club), and became a dual member of the Kingston and Livingston Chapters. He sang on the International stage with the Livingston Dapper Dans of Harmony, from their first appearance in 1964 in San Antonio, Boston in 1965, Chicago in 1966, the winning of the International Championship in Los Angeles in 1967 and again in 1970 at Atlantic City, and their Medalist performances in 1974 and 1977. He continued to be active in Livingston until its merger with Montclair in 1982.

His late wife, the beloved Ruth, was a major Barbershop booster and loved the music as much as he did. Both his sons became avid and active Barbershoppers, and Mary Jo, one of his two daughters, is still very involved in both chorus and quartet activity with the Sweet Adelines. He has competed in recent years in a number of International Senior Quartet contests at Mid-Winter. He loves to teach and sing tags and, now living in an Assisted Living facility in New Jersey, he has formed a quartet with men with no prior Barbershop experience.

He is perhaps best known for his outstanding generosity, having hosted a Hospitality Room every year at the International Convention for some 40 years, even to this day. This hospitality room got its present name in Chicago in 1966; the facility used there was furnished with leather-upholstered couches and chairs, and on the walls were a number of deer-heads, elk-heads, etc. Of course, by now all of you know I speak of the gentleman whose Hospitality Rooms bear his name, “The Purdy Corral,” and virtually every Medalist and Champion Quartet, plus countless others, have sung in this famous room. The ageless gentleman we honor today is none other than Hal Purdy. Thank you, Hal, for all you have done in and for Barbershopping throughout the years. Gentlemen, Mr. Hal Purdy!