

Grady Kerr's
Preservation Project
The Lost Quartet Series



**They Almost Won The Gold
But That Was OK With Them**

The Preservation Project

is published as a continuation and adaptation of the award winning magazine, PERSERVATION, created by Barbershop Historian Grady Kerr.

It is our goal to promote, educate and pay tribute to those who came before and made it possible for us to enjoy the close harmony performed by thousands of men and women today.

Your Preservation Crew

Society Historian / Researcher / Writer / Editor / Layout

Grady Kerr

GradyK@GradyWilliamKerr.com

Patient Proofreaders & Fantastic Fact Checkers

Ann McAlexander

Bob Sutton

Leo Larivee

Photo Consultant

Bruce Checca

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Ralph & Robbie Brandt

Artie Dolt

John Maybury

Mike Kelly

Steve White

Stephen & Bernice Ditchfield

Paul Ellinger

Joseph Livesey

Turner Stiers

Brian Kerr

Derick Sturke

This Just In

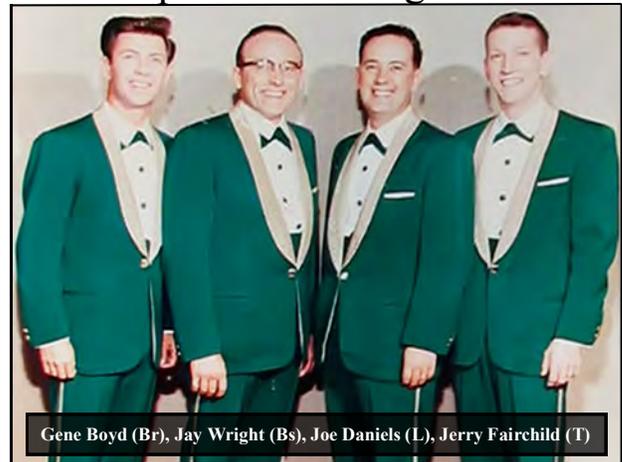
Jay Wright

Bass of the

1964 International Champion

Sidewinders

has passed at the age of 85



Gene Boyd (Br), Jay Wright (Bs), Joe Daniels (L), Jerry Fairchild (T)

Grady Kerr's
PRESERVATION PROJECT
The Lost Quartet Series



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on the
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Remembering Denny Stiers

1939 - 2016

Denny was from Eugene, Oregon and was an accomplished Barbershopper, chorus director and experienced quartet man.



The Journeymen
1964 Int'l Finalists
Roth, Shannon, Koberstein, Stiers

He competed in FIVE International Quartet Contests; **Lion's Share** (11th and 22nd) and **Journeyman** (8th, 14th, 13th). He also formed a quartet

with his twin sons, **Turner** and **Ted**, called **Regeneration**.

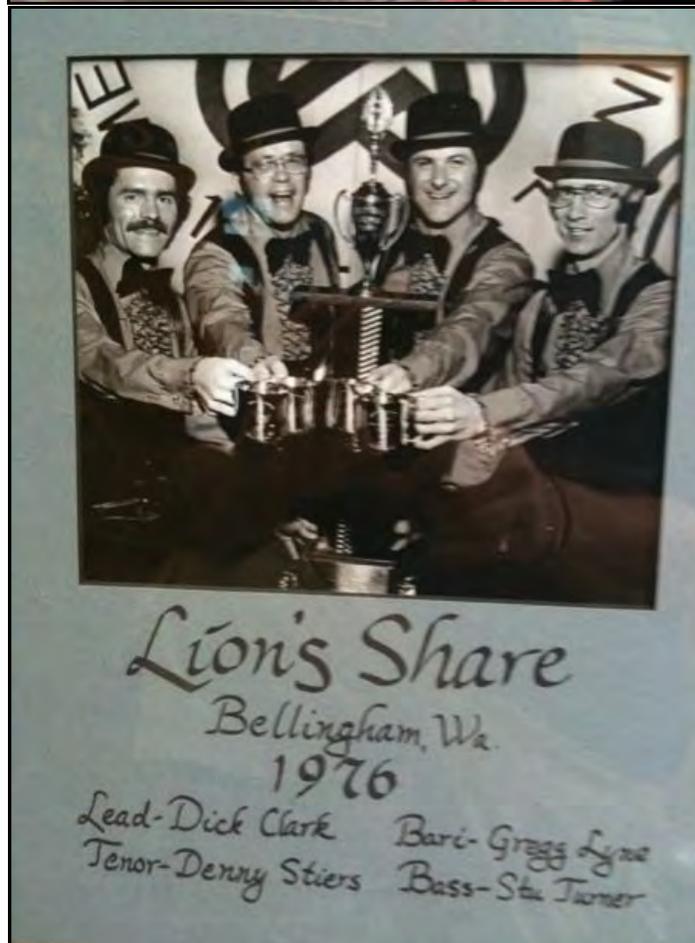
In addition to spending the last 20 years as Associate Director Emeritus of **The Mt. Baker Toppers**, Denny was music director of three choruses who won the Evergreen District Championship and placed high in International competition: The Eugene **Cascade Chorus** (10th, 12th and 14th), The Bellevue **Northwest Sound** (20th), and **Lake Washington Skippers** (13th). He also won the EVG District Championship in 1969 with his quartet the **Westernaires**

Denny was the director for the **Greater Eugene Chorus** of Sweet Adelines for several years. His wife, **Chic**, was an active member of the chorus. They won their 1982 Regional and Denny led them to the 1983 Sweet Adelines International competition.

He was honored by his induction into the Evergreen District's Hall of Fame in 2008. Denny and Chic raised twin sons, **Turner** and **Ted**, who both sing in quartet just like Dad.

Denny died June 27th, 2016.

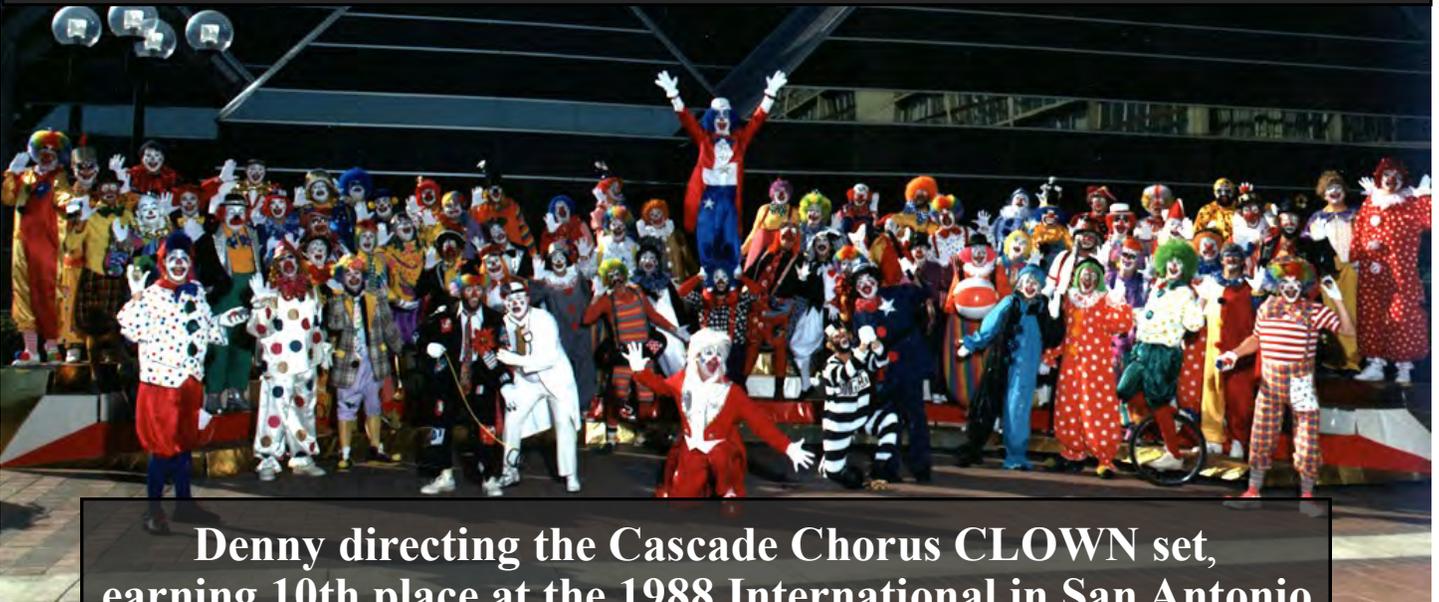
He'll be remembered for his wry sense of humor, his great leadership, and for being a special friend and mentor to many.





Journeymen 11th Place - 1964

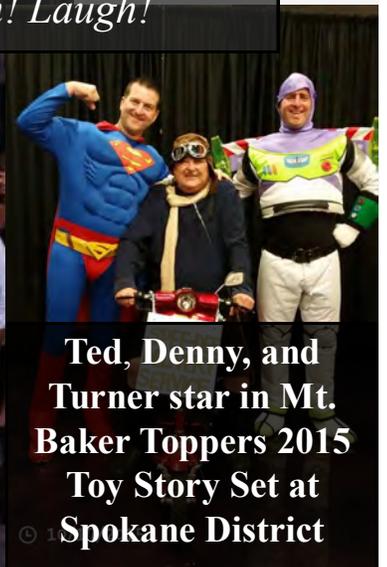
(L to R) Curt Roth (Bass), Terry Shannon (Baritone),
Denny Stiers (Tenor), Allan Koberstein (Lead)



Denny directing the Cascade Chorus CLOWN set,
earning 10th place at the 1988 International in San Antonio
When it's Circus Day Back Home / Laugh! Clown! Laugh!



The famous Cascade Chorus PIRATE SET
1990 12th place in San Francisco
The Pirate's Life / Minnie the Mermaid



Ted, Denny, and Turner star in Mt. Baker Toppers 2015 Toy Story Set at Spokane District

Your Singing Sounds a Little “Mechanical”

A “mechanical” barbershop quartet was recently found in a very unique museum in San Francisco.

Barbershopper **John Maybury** was visiting **Fisherman’s Wharf**. He happened into **The Musée Mécanique**, a private collection of arcade games and mechanical marvels on display FREE to the public.

He discovered that a mere QUARTER will grant you a song by this mechanized “quartet,” a policeman, a barber, a business man and a miner. They “sing” *My Wild Irish Rose* and *That Old Gang Of Mine*.

The museum is the world's largest privately owned collection of coin-operated mechanical musical instruments and antique arcade machines in their original working condition. There are over 200 machines and you can play them. **The Musée Mécanique** is located on Pier 45 at the foot of Taylor Street in San Francisco's **Fisherman's Wharf**.

You can see a sample of this quartet in action.

[CLICK HERE](#)

John is the music director of the **Old Dominion Chorus** in Leesburg, Virginia and the **Catoctones** of Frederick, Maryland.



Photos “Stolen” From the Internet

Grady Kerr's Lost Quartet Series

The Play-Tonics

The Greatest Quartet You've Never Heard Of

How would YOU like to be in a very popular show quartet, good enough to win the International Championship, even place a close SECOND, but not really care if you become one of the elite and legendary gold medalists?

That's the story behind the second quartet in our series of "Lost Quartets."

Allow me to introduce you to **The Play-Tonics** of Teaneck, New Jersey.

The members were **Gene Loeb** (Tenor), **Dave Mittelstadt** (Lead), **Vic Trabulsi** (Baritone) and **Ralph Brandt** (Bass). Replacement bari **Jerry Smith** joined the quartet in 1960.

Sadly, four of the five members of the Play-Tonics have passed away. Bass **Ralph Brandt** (86) is thankfully still with us. He proudly claims the title of "*Last Living Play-Tonic*." We had the pleasure of talking with him and learning about the life and times of his favorite quartet.

Singing their first song as MAD's International Qualifiers in 1954



L to R: Gene, Ralph, Vic and Dave



The Play-Tonics learning a new song
L to R: Gene, Vic, Ralph, and Dave

History will show they got oh, so close to winning it all. Had it not been for quartet juggernaut **Confederates**, they would be wearing gold medals today and be a household name among close harmony lovers.

This happened 60 years ago this summer. It was 1956 when they ended up an insurmountable 462 points behind the Memphis foursome but were awarded the silver medals.

Our Heroes make the cover of the **HARMONIZER**



But that's not the Play-Tonics' story. They were MUCH more than just a "second place" quartet.

Researched and Written by **Grady Kerr**, Barbershop Harmony Society Historian

1954 18th place in Washington DC



THE PLAY-TONICS
Loebs, Trabulsi,
Brandt, Mittelstadt

In looking at their International competition history you will find they made a quick climb into the top five with a HUGE jump from their 1955 16th place to the second place silver medals in 1956. Then they had a slow fall, but remained in the top ten for the next four years.

During their history they BEAT, head to head, EIGHT future champs.

These impressive statistics and the score analysis below would be of absolutely NO interest to the Play-Tonics. I'll explain later.

It All Started with a Girl

Ralph Brandt first met Ann Berkshire when she was dating his best friend in college. She dumped him for her ex-high

school beau who was attending Princeton. In 1955, while stationed at Ellis Island, New York, Ralph made a stop in Glassboro and looked her up. They hit it off from day one.

When it came time to ask Harry Berkshire for his daughter's hand in marriage, Harry had a special condition. Ralph was, shall we say, "*gently encouraged*" to first become a member of the Teaneck chapter of SPEBSQSA. Harry was an enthusiastic charter member, chapter officer and totally hooked on singing barbershop harmony.

Now, Ralph had grown up in a singing family. Every Saturday night was "*party time*" in the Brandt house and they always ended up at the piano singing.

In college he joined the choir and made his singing debut in a college play. Ralph also sang in a church choir for a time and still continues to this day. He knew he would enjoy this new, intriguing hobby. As it turned out, his life became a series of quartets. From this hobby he's proud to brag that he also got to marry a "*fantastic woman.*" Harry would also become his best friend.

Ralph really enjoyed his first barbershop chapter meeting, where he met four guys to sing with. They sang a few tags together and Ralph was quickly hooked and recruited into this thing called "barbershop." Ann and Ralph got engaged and, to celebrate, Ann bought Ralph his first year of membership. They were married on April 17th, 1954 at the Presbyterian Church in Tenafly, New Jersey.

Play-Tonics Contest History

Year/Site	Placed	Points	Points from First	Winners
1954 Washington DC	18	2126	-5432 (only 2 of 3 sets)	Orphans
1954 Mid-Atlantic Dist	FIRST	na	na	Play-Tonics
1955 Miami Beach	16	2177	-5700 (only 2 of 3 sets)	Four Hearsemen
1956 Minneapolis	2	7332	-462	Confederates
1957 Los Angeles	5	7169	-342	Lads of Enchantment
1958 Columbus	6	7148	-549	Gaynotes
1960 Dallas	10	6859	-706	Evans Quartet
1961 Philadelphia	10	6802	-885	Suntones

As you might expect, Ralph's newly formed quartet performed at the reception/afterglow. They woodshedded *I Love You Truly* to the new bride.

After the afterglow they all headed into New York City to see the live broadcast of the **Herb Shriner TV Show, Two for the Money**. Unbeknownst to them, Ralph's mother had called ahead on their behalf. They were selected to appear as a contestant and won \$2100. This became a down payment on their first house. The next day, Ralph and Ann left for their honeymoon.

It was Dave who came up with the name *Play-Tonics*. They seemed to lean toward a unique sound and exclusive selection of songs. They weren't always strictly "barbershop" so this allowed them to "play" around with different chords and distinctive arrangements

Ralph tells us, *"The first song we learned was in 1954 in Vic's Bergenfield, New Jersey apartment. Dave and I were still in the service (I was stationed in New York City and Dave was in New Jersey). Gene had two children by that time and Vic had already served in the Air Force."*

"I was the only one who didn't know what a barbershop chord sounded like. Dave taught me by rote to sing my part in "If You're Irish." We had a natural blend and didn't have to work on it – had a great lead/bass match. All we had to do was to learn the music. We were told that a natural blend "made champions." We were pretty happy about the sound we could make."



Their very first competition was in the **Mid-Atlantic District's** International qualifying contest held in York, PA. Ralph remembers, *"Harry Berkshire and Pom Pomeroy (Vic's father-in-law) were our sugar daddies. They brought the quartet four bright red jackets for the occasion. Our wives tagged along and when we WON the whole thing they got pretty excited. So did we! Little did they know this would be the start of so much time away from our growing families."*

But the guys were having a blast.

Headliners

They enjoyed a quick rise to "stardom." The Play-Tonics were in immediate demand and always had a full schedule of shows. They were soon headliners of many chapter shows.

The Play-Tonics had a special skill. They were able to get totally lost in their songs during a performance. They could transport themselves into the message and the story and the audience recognized this. A perfect example of this ability was during their song, *A Cabin on the Hilltop* a sworn favorite of all who had the pleasure of seeing them perform live. This is probably one of the reasons for their considerable popularity.

Vic stood out and was the "personality" of the Play-Tonics. He was enthusiastic, happy, always had a smile on his face and ... short.



Dave was the quartet leader and introduced each song.

If you really knew Gene you'd know he was a little ... shall we say ... cocky. Once, without telling anyone, he took flying lessons. He got his private pilot's license and was flying solo. Since getting to Boston for a show took more time to drive than fly, out of the blue Gene announced that he would FLY them there. Their plan was to do this and get back early to surprise their wives.

Now, Vic was in combat in WWII so he was concerned. They all agreed (with some trepidations). They got there just fine, did the show, but (could you see this coming?) a funny thing happened on the way back home.

As they headed to New Jersey's Teterboro airport they encountered heavy fog just a half hour out of Boston. As they got lower and lower they realized the fog wasn't going to clear. They never made it much further. Vic suggested when they get to the airfield Gene land using instruments. Gene had to admit that he didn't yet KNOW how to land IFR. So, they spotted a farm house and a wind sock. White knuckling it, they found an open field and landed safely. Thankful to be alive, the other three were a little upset and caught a train home leaving Gene in the farmer's field with their stranded plane.

Since it was close by, they decided to compete in the annual Manhattan **American Ballad Contest for Barbershop Quartets**.

On June 15, 1954, The Daily Mirror reports:

Manhattan Barbershop Quartet Wins

Some 18,000 New Yorkers with a yen for the music of the Mauve Decade quaffed deep and satisfying draughts of it Tuesday night at the Central Park Mall, where they heard The Play-Tonics win the 20th Annual American Ballad Contest for Barbershop Quartets, sponsored by the Mirror and Parks Dept.

Runner-up, in order given, were the Golden Day Four, last year's champions from Brooklyn, and Three Quarts and A Pint, a Staten Island quartet.

The Play-Tonics scored with Harrigan and Somebody Stole my Gal.

The New York City Parks Department transformed the stage into a real looking antique barber shop flanked by two huge striped poles.

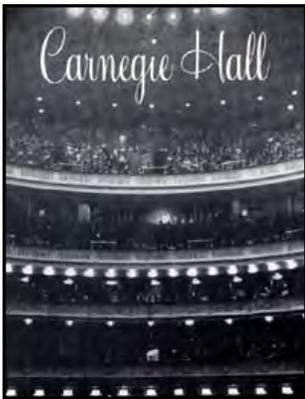
Judges included Moses, McCabe **W.C. Handy** (composer St, Louis Blues), **Sigmund Spaeth** (Tune Detective), **Geoffrey O'Hara** (composer of K-K-K Katy) and others.

[ED: **Spaeth** and **O'Hara** were Barbershop Quartet Society members and later inducted into the Society's Hall of Fame]



The boys won the contest and were presented with nice watches. Ralph tells us he lost the watch but remembers the event as a great crowd and fun to win.

They won this same contest again the following year. Ralph says, “*I needed to replace my watch!*”



One performance highlight was singing for a sellout crowd at **Carnegie Hall**, not only ONCE but TWICE. The second time was on April 26, 1957, with the **Confederates, Easternaires, Schmitt Brothers**, and the **Manhattan Chapter Chorus**, directed by **George O. Pranspill**.

For The Record

In July of ‘59 they had the distinct honor of recording their very own record for a major label - **Warner Bros. Records**. They went down to the WB Recording Studio in New York City, (again, it was conveniently close by.) Dave was the one with the connections that got them the deal. And this WAS a big deal as it was the home of several stars including **Spike Jones** and **Bob Newhart** among others.

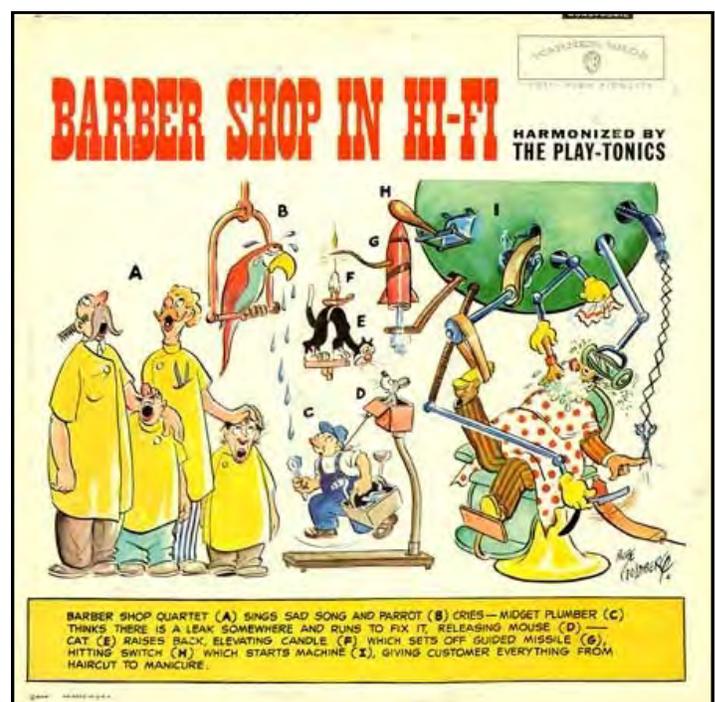
The Play-Tonics session (may have been done in two) was a special experience. Ralph recalls the producer decided to put Vic up on a stool for the optimum recording height (the guys got a nice laugh about this but Vic wasn’t too thrilled about it). They sang all the songs they knew, most only once. Theirs was the first barbershop quartet recording in a brand new thing called “Hi-Fi.”

Ralph recalls, “*After recording we adjourned to the legendary Joe Allen’s Restaurant for a celebratory drink! I still enjoy listening to my tapes of the occasion.*”

In addition to having a top-quality recording, they were also surprised to find the cover art of their WB recording featured an original illustration done especially for them by **Rube Goldberg**.

Goldberg’s cartoons were well known for depicting complicated devices that performed simple tasks in indirect convoluted ways such as, in their case, getting a customer everything from a haircut to a manicure from a barbershop quartet singing a sad song. The concept itself is genius.

- A. Barbershop Quartet a Sings a Sad Song.
- B. Parrot Cries.
- C. Midget Plumber Thinks There’s a Leak Somewhere and Runs to Fix it.
- D. Releasing Mouse
- E. Cat
- F. Raises Back, Elevating Candle
- G. Sets Off Guided Missile
- H. Hitting Switch
- I. Starts Machine Giving Customer Everything from a Haircut to a Manicure.



Of course, they also appeared on the **Decca Records** contest recordings done during the conventions sometimes just before or sometimes just after they appeared on stage. Both their Warner Bros. LP and convention LPs were in everyone's record collection at the time. Many learned their songs off these records and their song choices were popular among other quartets and their fans.

Play-Tonics Complete Discography



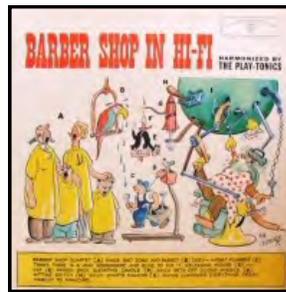
Top 5 Quartets 1956
(Decca DL 8372)
Cabin on a Hilltop
Did Your Mother
Come from Ireland
My Cutie's Due At
Two-To-Two Today



Top 5 Quartets 1957
(Decca DL 8615)
Cotton Pickers' Ball
All By Myself



Top 10 Quartets 1960
(Decca DL 4069)
If You Were the Only
Girl In The World



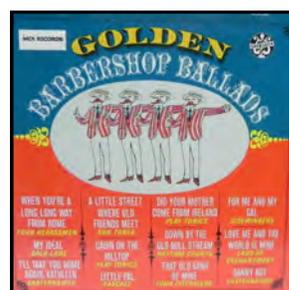
Barber Shop in Hi-Fi
1959
(Warner Bros WI 1311/
WS 1311)
Harmonized by The
Play-Tonics

Coney Island Baby
If You Were the Only Girl in the World
If You're Irish, Come into the Parlor /
Harrigan
Sunbonnet Sue
Oceana Roll
You'll Never Miss the Water
Chocolate Whiskey and Vanilla Gin
I'm All Dressed Up with a Broken
Heart
My Ideal
When You Wore a Tulip
Sweetheart of Sigma Chi
Doin' The Raccoon / Collegiate /
Varsity Drag

In a recent online poll among Barbershoppers, BARBER SHOP IN HI-FI was voted one of the Top Ten Best Barbershop record COVERS of all time.



Top 10 Quartets
1961
(Decca DL 4189)
All by Myself



Golden Barbershop
Ballads – 1965
(MCA 235 AND
Decca DL 74674)
Cut 6 - *Did Your Mother*
Come from Ireland
Cut 9 - *Cabin on the*
Hilltop

Most of their arrangements were leftovers from Dave's old quartet and arranged by **Rex Reeve**. **Bob "Moose" Haeger** (Buzz's brother) didn't like his quartet's arrangement of "*My Cutie's Due At Two-To-Two Today*" and passed his on to the Play-Tonics. **Lou Perry** gave them *Did Your Mother Come from Ireland*. **Floyd Connett** arranged their *Mammy's Little Coal Black Rose*. **M.K. Bolds** did *Cotton Picker's Ball*, and **S.K. Grundy** gave them *Never Miss the Water*.

Peer Pressure

Everywhere they went family, friends, and fans kept telling them they were GREAT. They felt it too. The sound was tight. "*You could win the gold medals,*" they were told.

So, by 1956 the Play-Tonics got serious about competition and did what the other serious quartets did - they rehearsed more, got a little coaching, and made some adjustments to improve.

Their one-and-only coach was Manhattan chapter member **Ed Hubbard**. Ed arranged their versions of *Peggy O'Neill* and *Come A - Courtin' Corabelle*. He didn't need to help coach the sound, it was already there. He helped with some technical aspects like attacks and releases and helped hone them into a "*Singin' Machine*."

So, by convention time, they went to the contest and left the families at home. In order to WIN, the quartet decided to isolate themselves in one hotel room (just as champions did), perfect their contest songs (just as champions did), and work with some top coaches (just as champions did).

Ralph admits, "*All that work turned out to be a little too much for me. I was so hoarse after one of the high-pressure coaching sessions that I could hardly sing. Actually, one of the coaches recommended a pill to relax us. We didn't need relaxing!!*"

"We worked to the point that it was almost no fun. That was our one and only contact with any other coaching other than Ed."

Despite the extra coaching and extra work, The Play-Tonics were the HIT of the convention. No one expected them to be this good after placing just 16th the year before. This was the Play-Tonics THIRD International and they hadn't cracked the top ten yet.



But when the audience (and the quartet) heard The **Confederates** in Minneapolis they KNEW they had heard the best.

"We were backstage with the Confederates and we were rooting for them. Once you win, you can't compete anymore. That's where the fun comes in! I know I breathed a breath of relief when they were announced winners! We liked them and were very happy for them."

Minneapolis Was "NO FUN"

The quartet pretty much MISSED the convention while solely focused on doing their best, which they did. Of course they were THRILLED with second place! Jumping up to the silver medals was a surprise.

Afterward, there were many who encouraged them to work harder . . . "*Maybe Next Year*" was the most popular pat on the back.

Ralph tells me, “*To tell the truth, we were terrified that we might actually win!*”

In those days the International Headquarters handled all the bookings of the champion quartets. They also had a lot of dates the quartet was REQUIRED to do as the Society’s worldwide ambassadors.

Each of the Play-Tonics had young children, jobs to attend to, and wives. They wanted to retain CONTROL of their quartet schedule and not allow it to be dictated by someone else. This fear of being out of control was really one of the reasons they collectively chose to back off the drive to be first. They felt they were good enough and if they won it would be fine, but they wanted to have FUN and not let this “*go for the gold*” consume the quartet.

The next year, in 1957 in Los Angeles they decided to do things a lot differently. They brought their wives out to sunny California and decided to enjoy themselves.

Ralph says, “*Los Angeles was our kind of fun! We had a fun host. We managed to hit all the clubs. More than once we’d end up singing in the bar.*”

They enjoyed the convention, saw more friends than they ever imagined and sang LOTS of tags. And, without going overboard with the seriousness and extra work ... came in FIFTH PLACE and took home their second medal.

After the convention, they went to **Disneyland!** Ralph borrowed their host’s car and he and Ann took a road trip and drove eastward through the desert to the Salton Sea.

Everyone had a BLAST!

THIS was more like “*Barbershopping!*”

They would continue to qualify for Internationals and place high but never win ... and they were perfectly OK with that.

1958 Finalist - 6th



PLAY-TONICS

Loehs, Mittelstadt, Trabulsi, Braudt
(Teaneck, New Jersey—Mid-Atlantic District)

You Never Miss the Water; If You Were the Only Girl in the World; Oh, Mister Railroad Man; Mammy’s Little Coal Black tose; Cabin on the Hilltop; Oceana Roll.

Watch for the NEXT issue of our
LOST QUARTET SERIES
where we profile
Four Under Par

Through the years the quartet family also suffered tragic losses. Dave's and Arlene's daughter passed away. They were all deeply affected by this and being in a quartet and having this close-knit family really helped the Mittelstadt family get through this difficult time. In later years, Gene and Ralph also lost daughters.

But The Show Must Go On

Being medalists, very active on the show circuit and having a full schedule gave them some clout and made them more popular for radio and TV appearances. Living in the New York area afforded them the opportunity to be on top-rated shows, unlike other Society foursomes.



on West 66th Street in New York City.

On December 13, 1959, the Play-Tonics made a special appearance on ABC's national, live TV broadcast of **Dick Clark's World of Talent** from ABC's Studio One



They auditioned for show regular and comedian **Jack E. Leonard**. He listened to them and picked their novelty up-tune for the show, *Oceana Roll*. It was a BIG hit.

The others on the show, **Jack Carter** (comedian), **Hal LeRoy** (dancer), **Phyllis Kirk** (actress) and **Martha Wright** (singer) were very impressed as was **Dick Clark**.

They also performed on the **Dave Garroway** NBC TV Show (the first host of the Today Show). Also on that same show was the popular quartet **The Crew Cuts** (*Sh-Boom, Sh-Boom*).



They traveled to Atlantic City to appear on the **Ernie Kovacs** TV Show (he was Trenton, New Jersey's native son). At the same hotel, they got to see **Jack Paar** doing stand-up comedy years before he hosted the Tonight Show.

They did not compete in 1959 due to Vic's issues with heart disease. They recruited the help of a young baritone named **Jerry Smith**. With Jerry they finished up their last two contest years in 10th place.



TENTH PLACE

PLAY-TONICS

Ralph Brandt, bass; Jerry Smith, baritone; Dave Mittelstadt, lead; and Gene Loeb, tenor
(Teaneck, New Jersey—Mid-Atlantic District)



TENTH PLACE

PLAY-TONICS

Gene Loeb, Tenor; Jerry Smith, Baritone;
Dave Mittelstadt, Lead; and Ralph Brandt, Bass
(Teaneck, New Jersey—Mid-Atlantic District)
6802 Points

After nine fun years, The Play-Tonics disbanded in 1962.

Ralph admits; *“I know I was over extended. Maybe we all were. I dropped out of barbershopping for about four years before meeting **Tom LaMotte** at a party for **Bob and Renee Craig** in New Jersey. I was wearing a tennis tie and Tom was looking for a fourth for tennis in New York State. This came to be known as the **Racket Squad**. But that's another story.”*

Another rare accomplishment for the Play-Tonics came in 1977 when, after being retired for 23 years, they discovered three of their songs were part of the in-flight music available to passengers on all **American Airlines** 747 jumbo jets. While flying cross-country one could enjoy the Play-Tonics harmonizing *Doin' the Raccoon/Collegiate Varsity Drag, Chocolate Whisky and Vanilla Gin, and If You're Irish Come into the Parlor / Harrigan.*

2 American's Music Hall

The Bird On Nellie's Hat (Joan Morris)
 Jonah Man (Max Morath)
 Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay! (Joan Morris)
 Nobody (Max Morath)
 Shine On, Harvest Moon (Joan Morris)
 Mr. Johnson, Turn Me Loose (Max Morath)
 Doin' The Raccoon/Collegiate Varsity Drag
 (Play-Tonics)
 Roses of Picardy (Barbershop Winners)
 Blue Room (Buffalo Bills)
 Chocolate Whiskey And Vanilla Gin (Play-Tonics)
 In The Shade Of The Old Apple Tree (Barbershop
 Winners)
 Something To Remember You By (Buffalo Bills)
 If You're Irish Come Into The Parlor/Harrigan
 (Play-Tonics)
 South Rampart Street Parade (Murphy
 Campo/Jazz Saints)
 That's A Plenty (Bert Peck/Kings of Dixieland)
 Dance To The Mardi Gras (Murphy Campo/Jazz
 Saints)
 Panama (Bert Peck/Kings of Dixieland)
 Bourbon Street Parade (Murphy Campo/Jazz
 Saints)

Where Are They Now

Sadly ...

Vic Trabulsi died February 4th, 1978 (56)

Jerry Smith died February 13th, 2005 (71)

Dave Mittelstadt died April 6th, 2013 (82)

Gene Loeb died December 3th, 2013 (86)

Ralph Brandt – Bass

As the self-proclaimed *“Last Living Play-Tonic,”* **Ralph Brandt** retired from education (as teacher, counselor, assistant and acting Principal, and a tennis and basketball coach). He and Ann enjoyed 14 more wonderful years living in Florida and Hawaii before Ann died of cancer in 1999. Ralph married a member of First Presbyterian Church choir two years later.

Ralph and Robbie have been happily married for 15 years and live in Honolulu. Until recently he has been an active member of the **Sounds of Aloha Chorus** and has written many of their shows and music parodies.

After Play-Tonics he sang with popular show/comedy quartet **Racquet Squad** for 20 more years. He also did all of their arrangements. Two of their highlights were appearing with **Gwen Verdon** in a theatrical performance and making a national **Kentucky Fried Chicken** TV commercial that was broadcast nation-wide in 1984.



An active member of the Hawaii chapter, he filled in for all 4 parts of the **Tiki Tones** and was able to sing baritone with them in Japan for a week. They sang three or four times a day at different places and ended the week in a huge musical program at the **Shimani Festival** with a huge chorus and orchestra.

He still remembers the feeling when, after hearing the orchestra and chorus perform, they walked to the mic and sounded their little pitch pipe before a full house of non-barbershoppers. Ralph was also thrilled to have sung in several venues to inspire barbershop singing in Japan.

Ralph and Robbie are contemplating moving to a senior living facility on the mainland. Unfortunately it would mean giving up Hawaii's weather. As of now, they're still enjoying their condo in Makiki.

Ralph tells us, *"I just turned 86 in February and Robbie is a mere 75. I guess I better make up my mind soon!!!!"*



Road Trip: Ralph and Robbie were thrilled to visit a **Voices of Lee** rehearsal

Vic Trabulsi - Bari

Vic was married to **Pom Pomeroy's** daughter **Sally**, who is believed to still be living in Michigan. She married another barbershopper after Vic's death. Ralph and the Racquet Squad sang on a show in Massachusetts. Vic was show chairman and quartet host.

Gene Loebs - Tenor

Gene worked as a sales manager with **General Rubber Company** in Tenafly, New Jersey. He was the father of six children. Gene died in 2013 and his wife died a few weeks later. Gene was chorus director for Teaneck for several years. He also directed the local Sweet Adelines chorus.

Jerry Smith – Bari (replacement)

In 1966 Jerry moved to Colorado to be an aerospace engineer for **Bendix Corp.** He sang with Denver's **Sound of the Rockies** chorus and at least three fine quartets, **Prime Suspects**, **Sound Syndicate**, and **It's About Time**, who went to International twice and placed 42nd (1985) and 39th (1988).

Dave Mittelstadt - Lead

Dave worked as a salesman for **Mapes and Sprowl Steel Company** in Union, N.J. They had 2 children, one of whom died. **Arlene**, his widow, is well and still lives in New Jersey.



He won the 2004 MAD Senior Quartet Championship with **SAGE** (with Dick Webber and gold medalists **Freddie King** and **Tom Felgen**) and also placed second with them in the Buffalo Bills Era Quartet Contest in 2007. Dave was named to **DELASUSQUEHUDMAC** (for 1963) and their Hall of Honor in 1992.

One has to wonder if **Dave Mittelstadt** has been nominated for the the Barbershop Harmony Society's Hall of Fame?

Dave was an established quartet-man before joining the Play-Tonics. In 1950 he first placed 6th with the **Village-Aires**. After the Play-Tonics he went on to get another medal (with the **Easternaires**) and would appear on the International Quartet Contest stage a grand total of 15 times. He was also a fine arranger.

He wasn't just a quartet man, he also directed the Livingston, NJ **Dapper Dans of Harmony Chorus**. He took them to SEVEN International Chorus Contests and won the Championship TWICE (1967 and 1970).



1964 7th
1965 4th
1966 2nd
1967 FIRST
1970 FIRST
1975 3rd
1977 5th

Dave Mittelstadt

International Quartet Man

16 Appearances – 3 Medals

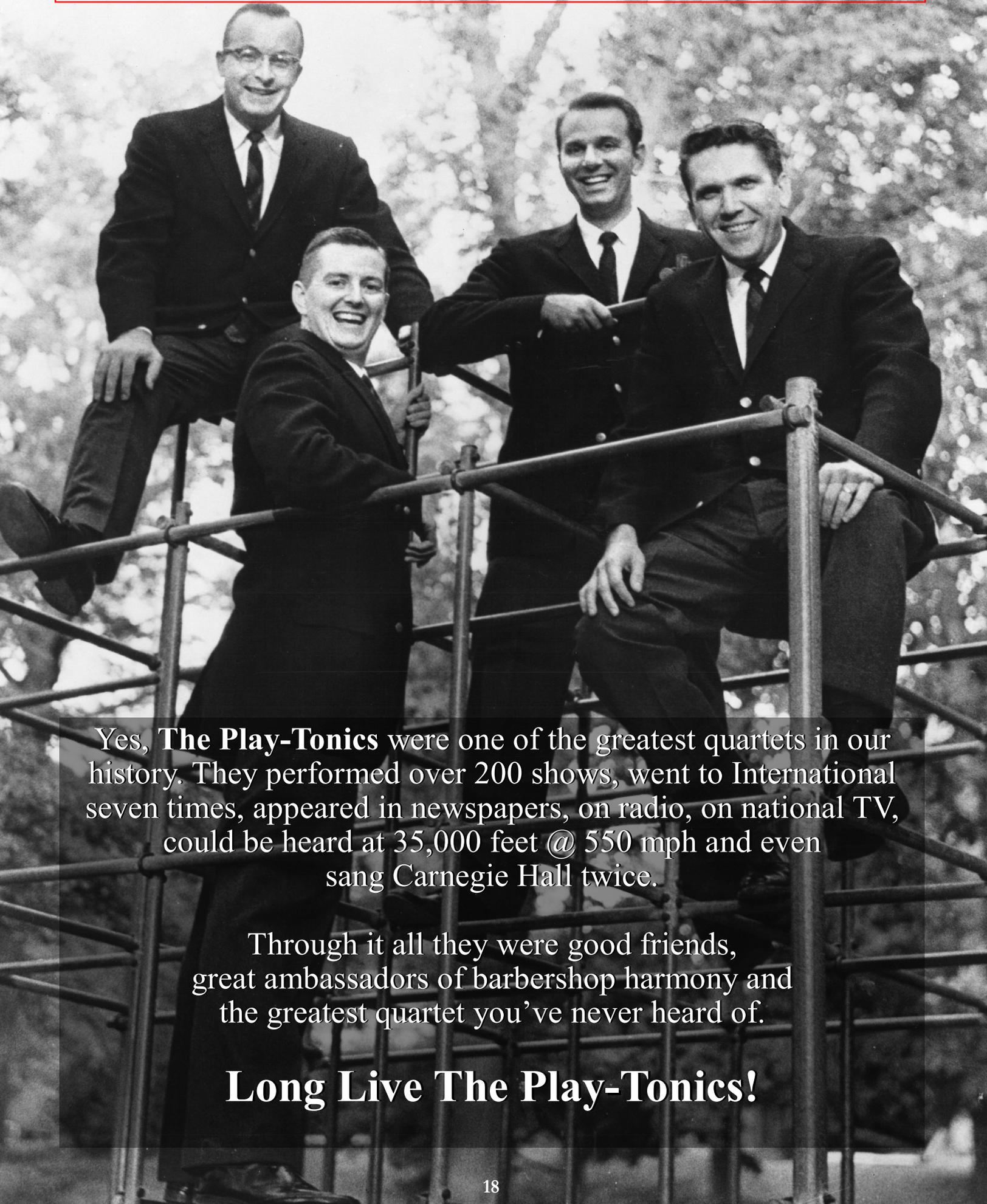
1950	6 th	Village-Aires	(lead)
1951	6 th	Village-Aires	(lead)
1954	18 th	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1955	16 th	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1956	2 nd	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1957	5 th	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1958	6 th	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1960	10 th	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1961	10 th	Play-Tonics	(lead)
1964	12 th	Main Street Four	(lead)
1965	22 nd	Main Street Four	(lead)
1969	9 th	Easternaires	(bari)
1970	5 th	Easternaires	(bari)
1971	6 th	Easternaires	(bari)
1972	8 th	Easternaires	(bari)
1976	31 st	Easternaires	(bari)

1970 Dapper Dans of Harmony - Livingston, NJ - International Chorus Champions
Dave Mittelstadt - Director / 85 men on stage
Jimmy Durante Medley / Love Is The Sweetest Thing



1967 Dapper Dans of Harmony - Livingston, NJ - International Chorus Champions
Dave Mittelstadt - Director / 68 men on stage
Goodbye My Lady Love / Broadway Rose





Yes, **The Play-Tonics** were one of the greatest quartets in our history. They performed over 200 shows, went to International seven times, appeared in newspapers, on radio, on national TV, could be heard at 35,000 feet @ 550 mph and even sang Carnegie Hall twice.

Through it all they were good friends, great ambassadors of barbershop harmony and the greatest quartet you've never heard of.

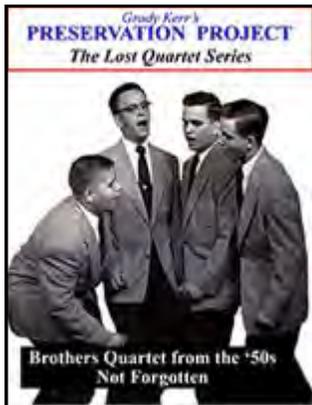
Long Live The Play-Tonics!



We Got Mail

(E-Mail, FaceBook Posts, and Tweets)

Thanks to all those who responded to the previous issue



Antón Chamberlin – Louisiana
(grandson of **Kenneth Chamberlin**)

Oh my Lord! Thank you soooooooooooooo much for doing this.

It's above and beyond what I was hoping for!

I smiled from ear to ear the entire time I was reading it.

Thank you for giving me so much information, presented in a phenomenal manner, of my family's barbershop history. I know so much more about it, thanks to you, and for that I am grateful.

I will send this out to everyone I know, and I will send it to my Dad to send to his siblings. I am so happy I inquired about all of this! Again, thank you so much for everything you did.

P.S. I don't know if you'd be interested, but in case you didn't see it on Facebook, I recorded myself singing the *Last Night Was The End Of The World* tag.

[Click Here](#)

[EDITOR: You're very welcome. Yes, it was YOUR inquiry via the BHS website that started this journey and the story just kept getting better and better. Thanks for asking.]

Lizzie Green – Florida
(**Toast of Tampa Sweet Adeline**)

I was born in South Bend/Mishawaka and my father, Paul Green, was an avid barbershopper who passed away in 1966.

It is such a thrill for me to read this article about the Chamberlins! It's a little glimpse into my dad's world through people I'm sure he knew. Thank you Grady Kerr and the Chamberlin family.

Stephen Ditchfield - Florida
(**Ditchfield Family Singers**)

What a great job, Grady! So inspiring to know so much more about **Joe Chamberlin** than we ever had a chance to learn while I was directing him with the **Sarasota Chorus of the Keys**.

The **Chamberlin** family was doubly blessed with two quartets in the same family ... we have the distinct pleasure of having a second generation **My Three Sons** quartet... **Nathanael** and all four of his boys sing together, too. Depending on whether Nathanael sings with them, or if "*Grandpa*" sings with them, we have **My Three Sons 2.0** or **My Three Grandsons!**

Barbershop has added so much joy to our entire family.....and given us an extended family of hundreds of friends we might never have had the opportunity to meet otherwise!

Thanks, Grady, for confirming once again what we already knew....that Barbershop is a wonderful, family-friendly, lifelong hobby!!