



News Notes

Four Freshmen Music Foundation, Inc. – www.FourFreshmenMusicFoundation.org

THE SONG IS YOU

Imagine you are a teen-aged boy in the late 1960s. You love music and are a musician. Your friends are listening to the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, maybe the Beach Boys. But you do not feel like a rocker or a surfer, you feel fresh!

Fast forward about twenty years... That same boy, now a man, receives a phone call that goes something like this... "Hello, this is Flanigan. We need someone who can play keyboards and trumpet and sing the third part for us." How would you answer? If you are Greg Stegeman your answer is, "I'm your guy!" The rest, as they say, is history.

How did this situation come about? Let's go back to the 1960s. Greg Stegman is a talented music student, drawn to the sound of the Beach Boys. His father encourages his musical tastes and introduces him to the Freshmen harmonies. Greg listens to Freshmen records and learns all their popular arrangements, not just the melody, but all the parts. He records himself singing all four parts.

Then, when he was 17 years old, Greg and his dad embarked on a journey from Carmel, CA to Los Angeles, to arrive at the "Hong Kong Bar" where the Four Freshmen were performing. It was an upscale night club in an area known as Century City. The Freshmen loved playing there. At the back of the stage sat a large Chinese Gong, which the Freshmen used in the song "Bird Avenue". The club's manager would strike the gong on cue. [...Northwest Orient...] *gong*

Greg and his dad enjoyed the show and met the Freshmen, backstage. Greg played the recordings of himself singing all four parts of their hits. The guys listened patiently. Greg was grateful for the meeting and surprised they took so much time with him. He remembers Bob Flanigan commented, "That's great ear training" [kid].

In the years that followed, Greg continued to learn his craft, earning his degree in Music at Cal State University at Hayward. He also kept in touch with the Freshmen and attended more of their performances. Greg had grown up and become a friend of the guys. Then, in 1988; Greg made a new demo of himself singing and playing and sent it to Bob Flanigan.

The Big Break...

In 1989, the band was comprised of Bob Flanigan, Mike Beisner, Autie Goodman and Gary Lee Rosenberg. But there was a change coming. Baritone singer and horn player, Mike Beisner, had received a plum job offer to be musical director for a TV Show. It was a great opportunity. Mike was an amazing musical talent. He crafted powerful arrangements, played all kinds of horns, keyboards, you name it... he could play it, and he had sang the second, third and even the bass part, for the Freshmen when the need arose. Bob and Mike began to look for someone to fill the opening.

"What about this guy?" They listened to Greg's demo. Soon Bob was making that fateful phone call. Greg was working as music director and disc jockey at a local radio station, KRML - the radio station where Clint Eastwood filmed the movie "Play Misty for Me" in 1971. Of course, there was an audition and a period of learning - but essentially, Greg had been training for this gig his whole life. He knew the songs and had a passion for that sound.

And so, in 1989, at the age of 38, Greg began life on the road. More than twenty years after he had first met the guys, he was finally a fully-fledged member of the Four Freshmen. Bob Flanigan, who had now been with the group for more than forty years, was the only original member still performing. They toured together for that first year, building a strong bond.



Left to right: Gary Lee Rosenberg, Autie Goodman, Greg Stegeman, Bob Flanigan

Now what?

One day in 1990, the Freshmen were touring with Woody Herman's Band. While waiting to perform in upstate New York, Bob was not feeling well. He was struggling to catch his breath and felt very tired. They performed that night, but Bob was still feeling unhinged. Soon after, they discovered that he had suffered a heart attack and would require surgery. There were many things to think about, Bob's health overreaching all else. He needed to come off the road to recuperate. The Freshmen still had a few weeks left in the tour with Woody Herman and other scheduled commitments. Now what? Greg spoke to Autie, "I know Bob's part. Let me see if I can pull it off."

Meanwhile, as often happens in *Show Biz*, the TV job for which Mike Beisner had left the group, evaporated with the cancellation of the show. Mike, who had been an integral member through most of the 1980s, came back to the Freshmen, temporarily, singing the third part. Greg moved up to the high part - Bob's part. No one had ever sung that part but Bob.

Of course, they did pull it off. Key to their success was Greg's ear, plus his familiarity with the sound. He knew the inflections and timing that Bob used. Best of all, he could hit the notes. Mike too, had not forgotten a thing. The (modified) Four Freshmen finished the tour with Woody Herman's band and played several more gigs before Bob returned to reclaim his part. For the following three years, Greg returned to singing the third part.

Oh, the 90s...

There were many changes for the group during the 1990s. Bob Flanigan made the decision to come off the road. Although he continued to be involved with the group for several more years, he stopped performing in 1992. Autie Goodman decided to take his life off the road, as well. Autie had played drums and sang the second part since

1977. Their last performances were on a ten-day tour in England, coming back home for the Freshmen "changing of the guard."

Gary Lee Rosenberg left, in 1991. This made a permanent opening for Mike Beisner to return. Then in 1992, a young man, straight out of college, came on the scene. Bob Ferreira joined, playing drums and singing the fourth part. He took on many of the solos and was the token "young guy" for a long time.

With Flanigan's departure, Kevin Stout was brought into the group. Kevin was a talented trombonist and guitar player, but he could not sing at the top, so Greg, once again, took on the high notes. At the 1992 Four Freshmen Convention in Columbus, Ohio, Bob Flanigan introduced the new Freshmen line-up: Greg Stegeman, Kevin Stout, Mike Beisner and Bob Ferreira.

Things shifted once again in 1994, when Mike Beisner came off the road for good; and fans met Alan MacIntosh. This found Greg taking on more of a leadership role. Alan played bass and sang the second part, but soon discovered the road did not suit him. So, a new search began. A young singer, a guitar player was recruited - Enter Brian Eichenberger in 1996.



Bob Flanigan (front) gives thumbs up to the new group
Left to right: Bob Ferreira, Greg Stegeman, Kevin Stout, Mike Beisner

Greg continued to sing the high part until well after Brian entered the group. Brian was originally brought in to sing the second part, but it was not long before it was evident his true tenor voice could take on the high notes with ease. He and Greg switched it up once more.

Staying in harmony with three other guys - both on and off stage - can be challenging. Although, they continued to record, travel and build their fan base, the 1990s were all about transition for the Four Freshmen. But Greg never lost his passion. He kept his cool and kept the sound alive through all these unsettled years.

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Stability began with Group #21, a promising configuration comprised of Brian Eichenberger, Vince Johnson, Greg Stegeman and Bob Ferreira. Vince, who began in 1999, was a brilliant bassist and consummate whistler, along with being an excellent singer. Bob, who



Left to right: Kevin Stout, Bob Ferreria, Mike Beisner, Greg Stegeman

had already been with the group for five years, had made himself a permanent fixture, playing drums, singing the bass part and solos. Brian was wowing fans with his

thoughtful guitar and easy tenor voice. Greg continued to sing the third part, playing keyboard and trumpet, just as he had been commanded to so many years before.

The New Millennium...

When Greg retired from the group in 2001, fans met Curtis Calderon. Curtis sang the second part with aplomb and played riveting horn solos. This configuration (group #22) played together for about 13 years. They recorded fresh versions of the original hit songs and many other American Songbook classics - while traveling much of the year, just as the original group had done. They worked hard at perfecting their sound. The Four Freshmen had survived the 1990s and had come out *swingin'*!

Though the current group and the fans have each one of these men to thank for keeping the sound alive through these years; possibly none more so than Greg Stegeman. Greg continues to show support for the group by serving as an advisor to the Four Freshmen Music Foundation, attending Four Freshmen Society Conventions, leading sessions of the "Wannabes" and participating in the "Fresh Memories" segments. We are so fortunate he is still involved; and he is still Fresh!

BARBERSHOP HARMONY LEGACY

"The event could not have gone better," reported Joe Cerutti, director of Outreach for the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS), describing the response at the BHS January Mid-Winter Convention in Jacksonville, FL, and thanking the FFMF for its support. Joe was referring to a workshop given by the Four Freshmen through a grant from the FFMF. The workshop helped high school students learn the Four Freshmen arrangement of "Poinciana," which Joe said they "absolutely loved."

Ultimately, 650 high school singers performed, first in their large chorus, and then with the Four Freshmen to the sold-out audience at the BHS convention. In Joe's words, "The crowd went crazy!" About 250 students fit on stage with the Freshmen, while 400 students sang from the balcony. The microphones mostly picked up the Freshmen singing, but Joe affirmed the actual sound of all those voices coming together was "pretty unbelievable,"

Bob Flanigan and the Four Freshmen were inducted as Honorary Members of the Barbershop Harmony Society in 2003. The BHS cited the collaboration and historical connections with the Four Freshmen in their FFMF grant application. This coupled with their ongoing efforts to teach the unique Four Freshmen harmonies weighed

favorably with the FFMF board. The Legacy of the Four Freshmen definitely lives on!

Two BHS convention video links on YouTube are available to view at the FFMF website, www.FourFreshmenMusicFoundation.org.

SPECIAL DONATIONS

In Memory:

Would you like to donate to the Four Freshmen Music Foundation in memory of someone who loved their music? A letter will be sent to their family letting them know of the donation.

Gift Memberships:

Wouldn't it be nice to acknowledge an anniversary for a couple who love the Freshmen sound? Or perhaps a birthday donation for a long-time fan? A letter will be sent to let them know of your donation.

Leave a Legacy:

How about donating in the name of your child or grandchild? Your donation of five dollars or more, makes your child or grandchild a member of the FFM Foundation for life!

Send gift donations to: FFMF, 41 Parish Road, New Canaan, CT 06840

FFMF CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

JUNE 2020

The COVID-19 challenges are unbelievable. Of enormous consequence to the Four Freshmen are their cancelled performances. Our favorite four will be on the live scene again. And, we'll be right there with them! Thankfully, the FFMF can continue our efforts to help ensure their Legacy lives on. The FFMF is fully operational with virtual board meetings.



Trudy Feigum chairs the board of directors of FFMF

Grant applications are being acted on, but due to COVID are not being distributed as timely as everyone would like. Schools are not in session; choral groups cannot meet; and Four Freshmen workshops cannot be presented to students. Technology is great and alternatives to live instruction continue to be explored, but nothing can beat the face-to-face, live interaction with those Freshmen harmonies!

With sadness we said last good-byes to board member Hank Roysden and our friends Jack Morrison and John DeMuro. These men will long be remembered for their

ongoing contributions to the Four Freshmen Music Foundation and the music they loved.

We welcome two new FFMF board members. **Mike Condit** is a well-known, longtime Four Freshmen fan and Four Freshmen Society member from Houston, TX. A retired rheumatologist, Mike plays trombone in several Houston area musical groups, lectures at a local community college, is grandfather to three grandsons, and husband to wife Linda. **Ray Hoffman** hales from Stamford, CT and is heard on his syndicated (CBS Radio Network) CEO Radio, WCBS Newsradio 880 in New York. Ray also hosts, produces, writes and interviews for a podcast, "This is Capitalism" for Stephens, Inc. A longtime fan of the Four Freshmen and a jazz aficionado, Ray's professional background will add a new dynamic to the board.

Thank you for remembering to support the Four Freshmen Music Foundation with your donations. The Four Freshmen Special Archive at Bowling Green State University in Ohio is added to frequently. A large collection of Four Freshmen charts are now archived at Butler University in Indiana. THANK YOU for making all this possible!

WELCOME

The Four Freshmen Music Foundation Board congratulates new President of the Four Freshmen Society, Donna Gallaway. As Ex-officio member, Donna will attend our board meetings, whenever possible, and help us coordinate with the Four Freshmen Society. We welcome Donna to our Board. She has been involved with many aspects of the Four Freshmen Society and we know she will lend us helpful insights and information coming from her experience.

CONCERT INFORMATION

The Freshmen Society website offers great information for fans. Keep an eye on the upcoming events - one day soon, the Four Freshmen will be performing again.
www.fourfreshmensociety.com/events.htm

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP:

While the Four Freshmen Society and the Four Freshmen Music Foundation are two different groups with different missions, we work in tandem on many levels to bring information and events to fans and members. Many FF Foundation members are also FF Society members and vice versa. If you have not done so, consider joining the Four Freshmen Society. To join visit:
www.fourfreshmensociety.com

SPECIAL THANKS

The Four Freshmen Music Foundation thanks Gil Petersen for his service to the Board. Gil has been an FFMF Board member since 2015 and has made so many valuable contributions. At our last meeting, he accepted an advisory position to the Board. We are delighted Gil will continue to provide us his knowledge and we anticipate his participation for many years to come.

Contact: newsletter@fourfreshmenmusicfoundation.org Kathy Feese, editor

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