

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Donna Gallaway

Perhaps you have wondered, as I have, about what life is like for those Freshmen who have left the group and gone on with their lives. Having been a member of FFS for 28 years, I have been priviledged to know many of the Freshmen over the years, and I have thought about them long after we are no longer seeing them as part of our favorite vocal group. Below you will find the first of a series of columns bringing us up to date on the Freshmen whom we now refer to as former Freshmen.

## Curtis Calderon

*Curtis Calderon provided a wonderful video for all of us at the recent Denver convention, so I asked him to be the first in this series to fill in all of you who were unable to attend the Denver event. He was a valued member of the Freshmen legacy for more than 15 years. Thanks for the memories, Curtis!*

Hey friends! Life has certainly been non-stop since I "retired" from The Four Freshmen. At first it was mainly just being a dad, trying to keep my kid alive, to adding another, and then trying to keep two kids alive! That really was always the fear for me, and still is. There's always so much that can go wrong, but overall they're are doing well and we are all happy and almost getting some semblance of sleep these days.

The first two years after leaving the group, I essentially did some evening gigs and watched my kids. It's been great and times I know I'll never regret, nor forget. I've taken bunches of pictures and videos and even now, I do enjoy looking back and seeing how small they were and the silly things they would do and the silly things I would do!

Fast forward to about a year ago or so. Once time started to be a little better managed, the kids were getting old enough where during lunch, I could give them a bowl of fruit and they could hold it, eat it and not throw it across the room. So, as that time freed up a little, I started writing a little music here and there. I actually wrote some older style pop songs, influenced by musicians I admire, like Carole King, Stevie Wonder, The Beach Boys, The Eagles, etc.... Lots of the west coast sounds from the 60s move me for whatever reason it is. Maybe it was this southern Cali explosion, beautiful weather, this sense of freedom and exploration of new beginnings while reviewing some of the past. So, that started my writing and at some point, I'll likely release a CD of all that stuff. Fast forward another year to this year.

I have been playing a lot at the premier jazz club in San Antonio called "Jazz, TX". In fact, I even booked The Four Freshmen in here the last time they toured through Texas. At the beginning of 2019, I decided I wanted to do all original music there. So, the first week of January, I took a long weekend and wrote about 25 pieces of music. I basically rose in the morning and started writing and did so until about midnight. Got up the next day and did it again. Here we are almost a year later and I've added maybe a dozen more originals and have weeded out the weaker tunes. It's been a great experience and I really enjoy sitting at the piano and creating music. I've written a few new tunes in the style of The Four Freshmen as well, but more pop related. Maybe one day I'll release those and you all can see where my music mind is at - cause music is to be shared!

I still listen to The Four Freshmen all the time and am always in awe of Group 1. I'm also in awe of the beautiful playing Kenny Albers displayed

on live and studio recordings as well. I sometimes miss Don's huge personality on the recordings after he left, though my dear friend Bill Comstock put the part right in there beautifully. I now also try and sing some of Bob Flanagan's parts and have learned so much about lead singing from trying to copy him and Brian Eichenberger. Though they are so different in approach to the music, they both were remarkable lead singers, not just great, but beyond. I love listening to Ross talk and try to hear inflections in his voice on the live CDs where I could feel Bob Flanagan was messing with him - ha ha. By the way my kids tease each other, you'd have thought Bob and Ross were brothers! I heard *Ain't Seen Nothing Like You* there other day and wow, I really wish Hal could have stayed with the group a few more years before Ken Errair and eventually Kenny Albers joined. His voice was soooooo smooth and relaxed, cool.

I never mean any group or individual was better than any other when I say all this, I'm just simply expressing my favorites and why. I have great respect for all the men who have come in and out of this group. Such a fantastic legacy.

So, my kids are getting older and soon, one will start school, then after I'm done blinking, I'm sure the other will as well. I have a cornet that sits out and every once in a while, we get it and try to get the kids to make sounds on it. They are getting there! My daughter loves singing as well and sings all the time.

