

"Purvis Pearls"

NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

I am pleased to report that 2003 was a very good year for FFS! We enjoyed a great convention in Orlando, we accomplished some important items on our business agenda and were able to continue to maintain our sound financial status. A year end report on our 2003 finances appears elsewhere in this newsletter and you will note that we ended the year with a sound bank balance but...that our available funds have been reduced from the prior year due in large measure to our efforts in support of the **Four Freshmen**. These efforts are outlined below with some explanation.

The only bad news is that our membership continues to remain static, or even in a slight decline. Our recruiting of new members has not been sufficient to offset the loss of members who drop out each year. This has been the situation for about the past three years and, unfortunately, it is probable that this trend may continue as we continue to age and thus often modify our life styles. We did make an effort to recapture some of these disappearing members but with not a lot of success.

Our efforts in support of the Four Freshmen in 2003 consisted of producing a short promotional video for use by their management group and covering the costs for new photos to also be used in promotion of our favorite group. Additional efforts surround three recording projects. We produced the **OLD FRIENDS** CD for sale through the Music Mart, we assisted Greg Stegeman in the production of his very special **CULMINATION** CD project, and currently we are producing a new CD, **THE FOUR FRESHMEN, LIVE IN HOLLAND**, which we hope to release very soon! Our financial contributions to these efforts are repayed through our sales of these recordings, so your patronage and support becomes very important to our being able to continue to contribute to such projects.

I recently received a request from the Smithsonian, National Museum of American History, Behring Center for information about our Society and the Four Freshmen to be included with a new directory of online jazz related societies. This information will be posted on their website - www.smithsonianjazz.org.

In mid-November the Freshmen were interviewed by NPR radio for a program titled Portraits in Swing hosted by Larry Wagner. The interviews will be included in a one-hour program featuring the music of the Four Freshmen broadcast on March 13, 2004. The program originates in Toledo OH and is simulcast on stations in Lima OH, Defiance OH and Bryan OH. (Bryan is the "hometown" of Mary Flanigan.) These stations are heard throughout Northern Ohio, Southern Michigan and Eastern Indiana.

I'll bet you missed it...but our very capable Fresh News Editor was featured recently on CBS-TV on the Early Show discussing his well-known contributions and expertise on handwriting education. The interview was broadcast on January 16th with a several hour interview "boiled down" to about 3 minutes!

Recently retired Membership Director, David Barnes, has sent to me a copy of a newsletter published by the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF THE MILLS BROTHERS MUSICAL HISTORY...wow, that is some title! It appears to be a somewhat "younger" group as the issue is Vol. 9, No. 3, but uses the arguable headline - "The Worlds Favorite Vocal Group." It was very interesting to note some disparities and some similarities. Their 2003 International Convention drew "nearly forty" for their third effort. Their structure, while similar to ours, is facing many of the challenges that we see regularly. It reports "too much to do and no time to do it," a declining membership, lack of money and a shortage of members who will take on some responsibility. It is their intention to incorporate, establish a web site and to soon accept credit cards.

THE FOUR FRESHMEN, LIVE IN HOLLAND

I am pleased to confirm that FFS, working with Brian Eichenberger and the Freshmen, is assisting in the production of this soon to be released recording. The concert was recorded in April 2003 and has been available in some fashion via the Internet. FFS recently provided the funding to acquire the master tapes from Holland and Brian is now completing the final mixing with the intent of being able to offer it for sale this spring. This CD will not be available in record stores. It will only be available from the Freshmen at concert venues and through our Music Mart.

The Freshmen and their management are working toward the preparation of a new studio recording with a new record company. No dates have been established for this project but recording may begin soon.

I am advised that registrations for our 2004 Convention in Grand Rapids MI are being recorded rapidly, a bit ahead of what has been our history. We recently passed the 150 mark with additional registrations each day. It does seem probable that we will have a full house to the limits of hotel capacity. Really great news...do not delay and be disappointed!

We also do not have a single definitive proposal for conventions beyond 2004.

Editor's note: Re FFS Convention 2005 - please note the item from Palle Christensen, in this issue, announcing the formation of an international convention committee for a Reunion in Europe, summer of 2005 in Amsterdam (Netherlands).