

we met Stan Kenton and he became very interested in the potential of the group and he said he wanted to help. That triggered it, and we kept doing it. We never went back to college. We were in our freshman year when we quit.

Q: Hence the name?

A: Yeah. Two of us are still alive - me and Ross (Barbour, Flanigan's cousin). He lives in Simi Valley, California. We're going to receive an honorary music degree from Butler University in May.

Q: So Stan Kenton launched your career?

A: Yeah. He introduced us to Capitol Records and they recorded a couple of things on us and nothing happened. But then we had a thing called "It's a Blue World." We were going to Detroit for an engagement and we had a friend who was a DJ there. He said give him something he could play, so we gave him "Blue World." It got 40 plays a day. That was 1952. That record launched our career.

Q: You started at a time when there were some great musicians. What was that like?

A: We tried to be as musical as possible. In those days we had Hoagy Carmichael and (Johnny) Mercer. You had so many great songwriters and so many great tunes. We were kind of like Frank Sinatra in that we had a run of some great, great material. We were lucky. We did exactly what we wanted to do, musically, and we still do. The guys in the group now are performing some old things but also doing some things that guys in the group have been writing. They're good tunes.

Q: You were hot in the '50s and '60s. Was it easy from the beginning or did you struggle?

A: We were having a lot of trouble till we had "Blue World" We worked some strange places. But after "Blue World" we were lucky enough to connect with the college kids. We did every major university in the United States in a 10 year period. A lot of those people we met and played to are still fans of the Freshmen.

Q: Did you ever play Vegas?

A: The first job we played in Las Vegas was at the El Rancho in 1952, when I was a mere child. We never worked Vegas for any long period of time but we've played at every hotel that's been imploded.

Q: Do you consider your music pop or jazz?

A: We were more in the jazz field. We were adopted by Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington. We were very closely associated with those people. They had a lot of respect for us and we had a lot of respect for them. The music was great. Charlie Parker. Dizzy. Woody Herman. Stan Kenton. Count Basie. It was a thrilling time to be around the music business.

Q: How did the so called British Invasion affect the group?

A: It did affect us in some ways, but we've kind of been out there almost by ourselves with that kind of singing. I mean we influenced people like Brian Wilson (The Beach Boys). I met him when he was very young. His father brought him to see us. After that he said he decided to write music that sounded like the Four Freshmen. But he took it to his own level.

Q: What about today's music? Like it or hate it?

A: I don't go out and listen to it much. I'm not very pleased with today's music. There's so much background it's hard to tell what anyone's singing. I'm not into that at all. I won't even watch the Grammy's on television. It's ridiculous. It has nothing to do with music.