

# Behind the Scenes with Chaz Cone

By Linda Harrison

Everyone knows his name, but few know how much and how long he has supported The Four Freshmen behind the scenes. Chaz Cone has been managing the Four Freshmen Society (FFS) website since 2000. He is also the Membership Chairman, which means he manages the member database and encourages new members and renewals (as well as attendee lists and badges for conventions).

He first encountered Group #3 (Bob Flanigan, Don Barbour, Ross Barbour and Ken Albers) at Georgia Tech, where he was a college freshman in the spring of 1958 and was smitten from the beginning. As part of an all-school celebration with invited bands, the Freshmen were playing on the back of a flat-bed truck in a basketball arena parking lot, and he walked up to them and was fascinated by what he heard. He hung around during the concert and went out right away to buy the *Voices in Modern* LP. His passion for their music continues to this day.

Chaz grew up in Arkansas, where his father had a wholesale liquor business. One day when Chaz was 14, his father installed a new IBM system and Chaz was enthralled. From that day on, Chaz was determined to work only for IBM when he graduated from college. For a brief moment after graduation, his plans were sidetracked as his application was rejected. He had only interviewed for one company – IBM – and he says, “Here I am – 21 years old – dedicated and committed to working for IBM and they don’t want me. So I wrote a letter to the branch manager and told them they were making a big mistake. This official had never had someone challenge the results before, so he offered me an aptitude test -- which I knocked the top off -- and I worked for IBM for 22 years!”



After Chaz left IBM, he started his own software company for 13 years. After he sold it in 1998, he was free to perform pro bono work. In addition to The Four Freshmen Society, he handles the membership and database for The Four Freshmen Music Foundation, his Corvette club with 300 members, and a ham radio group with 300 members. He supports them with databases, dues reminders, follow-ups and all the behind-the-scenes activities that he does for the FFS. He goes on, “Occasionally, I will do a website for young businesses just getting started and I don’t charge them.”

While working for IBM, he was moved around a bit (Greenville, SC, Tampa, Boca Raton) but always wanted to come back to Atlanta. At one point he was sent to Manhattan to help IBM compete with RCA. What started out as a 6-week position ended with 14 months in a Holiday Inn. But he feels he didn’t take advantage of what New York had to offer while he was there.

During this stay, he was invited to participate in a friend’s wedding in Baltimore. He was at the Newark airport looking for the shuttle to Baltimore, when he asked a “cute girl” for directions. Chaz and the cute girl (Gael) have now been married 59½ years (60 in November). Chaz says, “With 90 seconds in either direction, we might not have met.”

The couple has one daughter and two grandsons; both grandsons were present at the Nashville gathering.

Chaz and Gael produced the 2009 Four Freshmen Convention in Atlanta. Prior to the event, they invited the Freshmen for a home-cooked meal. While they were sitting around, Brian (Eichenberger) started singing and the rest joined in, resulting in an hour’s impromptu concert at the dinner table.

Chaz says, “I think having a commitment to support the Freshmen is a result of getting to know the players. Once you are friends with them, it’s not just entertainment.”

