

Dane Hooper's History with Ross, Don, Bob and Hal

by Mike McCoy, FFS Wisconsin Rep.

In my capacity as a State Representative for the Four Freshmen Society, I recently received this personal account from a long-time fan of the group. In it, Dane Hooper recounts his earliest memories of the Four Freshmen. Actually, it's his two earliest memories as they both are the same memories, as you'll realize as you read his account.

Dane tells me he now lives "at the side of our gorgeous 150-foot pond next to the Koshkonong Creek in peaceful Kroghville, Wisconsin, USA." Here's his story:

"Back in 1950 I had just finished my freshmen year at Knox College when I discovered the Four Freshmen playing at Mack McGraw's Play Bowl Lounge at 149th and Burnham Avenue in Calumet City, Illinois. (Editor's note: As long-time fans already know, the original Four Freshmen consisted of brothers Don and Ross Barbour, cousin Bob Flanigan, and Hal Kratzsch.)

"My fellow musician friend, Jim Groves, (he played tenor sax and I played bari) tried to catch them every night even though we were probably under age.

"My sister, Bobby, was a jazz fan, too, and we brought her, maybe because she was legal drinking age and we were not! Bobby was a stewardess for TWA (Trans World Airlines) then.

"The Freshmen left the Play Bowl on August 28th to work their way out West to audition for Capitol Records, as Stan Kenton had promised them.

"The next night, Jim Grove and I were in his 1948 Mercury convertible when we were in a bad accident. Jim's date was killed (front right seat), Jim was injured, my date was injured, but I was thrown out of the car and smashed my forehead. I was in a coma for two or three weeks.

"I lost all of my memory. I could not recall going to college the year before, and of course the name Four Freshmen meant nothing to me.

"Bobbie, being high in seniority with TWA, was to take the University of Illinois football team out to LA for the Rose Bowl late in December 1950, and the coaches of the team invited her to dinner after they arrived. While driving down LaCienega Boulevard they passed Jerry Wald's Supper Club and the marquee sign that said 'NOW PLAYING - THE FOUR FRESHMEN,' so she asked to go there for their dinner.

"Upon entering the club, the Freshmen were breaking their set and they saw her arrive. "Bobbie Hooper" Ross shout out, "How good to see you! How's Dane?" She told them of the accident. The guys autographed an 8x10 photo of their audition at Capitol Records and sent me a dub pressing of 'Mr. B's Blues,' - their theme song.

"Playing that record brought my memory back. I could see the guys playing on the stage at Mack McGraw's Play Bowl Lounge!

"The next year I could no longer blow on my baritone sax due to having no forehead to speak of, so I followed the band I had played with, taking pictures of couples at dances to earn probably more money than I made in the band! But I also got a DJ show on the college radio station (Hoops Street of Dreams) playing a lot of Kenton and Woody Herman and, of course, the only two records the Four Freshmen had made for Capitol.

"I had corresponded with Ross, who wrote me about this new recording they had made but could not get released. I got a dub pressing of it and plugged it on my DJ radio show and on campus started petitions to get it released.

"On the air, before and after I played it, I told the listeners this was a new recording by the Four Freshmen and was not released. BUT IF THEY WANTED A COPY OF IT FOR FREE - JUST LIKE I GOT MINE FREE - write to Capitol Records, 1733 LaCienega Boulevard, Hollywood 28, California!

"'Blue World' got released - not because of my efforts (but mine didn't hurt.)"

Editor's Note: Fresh News told Dane's story several years back....What a story! No wonder The Freshmen continue to be in our hearts.

We Get Letters!

From Raymondo Domingo, Hanamaulu, HI

As a teen in the '50s, I've always been an avid and devoted fan of the Freshmen. I loved their style of singing. But being a kid who had to work hard to get what I wanted, I could only save up enough to perhaps buy a 45 record single, much less trying to save forever for an LP. Now, however, I'm a bit more "matured" in age, but still love the Four Freshmen.

Are their songs now made into CDs? If they are, how can I purchase all, or most of them, or some of them? Do you have a catalog? Please send me one.

Whatever and however ways you can help me to purchase those CDs, and your promptness as well, will be highly appreciated. Thank you.

Note from Bob Lininger: Ray joined the Society and called The Music Mart and ordered one of every Freshmen CD (I had 21 in all). Thanks, Ray.

Now, there's a Freshmen Fan!