

## **(from page 1) Tribute to Ken Albers**

Bob shifted into high gear on their brass ensemble, the roof of where we happened to be at the moment would inevitably be raised a minimum of several inches. He could also **shout!** When called on to play an obbligate (obligation!) to a vocal solo, he did it with complete understanding of his role as accompanist rather than soloist. He complemented rather than competed by knowing how to play exactly the right thing at the right time. So very musical! I have talked to so many musicians over the years who were awed by the subtlety and restraint of his playing. On dates with the Kenton, Herman and other bands, some of the young horn players would talk about how they would like to "study jazz" with Kenny. And I remember how Woody would speak fondly of his playing. A nice litany of tributes from his peers.

His writing was just superb. Along with the late Dick Reynolds, Kenny contributed a great many of the most significant vocal arrangements in the Four Freshmen repertoire. His charts on "Fools Rush In" and "It Could Happen To You" are truly among the classics. And then the original songs - "Lonely For My Love," "The Freshman Year," "Spring Isn't Spring Without You," "Oh, Lonely Winter" and others leave us with a poignant reminder of the "Kenny Albers Years" with the group.

The "little town over in Jersey" was Pitman, a quiet, homey, bucolic Middle America town, about fifteen miles southeast of Philadelphia. Kenny, oldest of three sons from a loving, genteel family grew up there. He played sports, worked in the gas station and, most importantly, studied the trumpet and played in the High School band. Shortly after graduation came the service and valuable experience playing in bands in the US and Europe,

After army service there was further study at the Philadelphia Conservatory in trumpet, theory, harmony and arranging. And so the career began. Locally at first, then on the road with groups including several years with the highly regarded vocal and instrumental group, "The Stuarts." This led to Boston, New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Reno and Lake Tahoe, with lots of Shamokins, Uticas, Pottsvilles and Newark Ohios thrown in for balance. There were also recordings and TV in this period. And then, finally, The Four Freshmen. He stayed for twenty-five years of playing, singing and writing original songs, as well as rehearsing the group for recordings and new material. Kenny was a vital participant in the ongoing development of The Four Freshmen.

Kenny matured into a superb musician. He also matured into a gentle man and a gentleman. He was kind, sensitive to the feelings of others and, if unable to say something good about someone, he preferred to say nothing at all. (I do not believe that Kenny ever realized that people spoke harshly to each other and I believe that he was very disappointed on finding that they did.) Shy, retiring, almost to the point of being reclusive, he never cared much for parties or large gatherings of people. He often seemed "confounded" by the machinations of the "regular world." Kenny loved his family and that is where he was most "at home" with himself.

Kenny Albers was a rare and gifted individual. I take great pride in having had such a long and meaningful association with him. We were friends and colleagues and I learned a lot from him (strangely enough, he once told my wife Sue that he had learned from me...another instance of his grace and generosity). We will not hear him play again except for the recordings which I, and I'm sure many of us in the society will be listening to as well. We will miss you, Kenny, but I know that the heavens will rejoice in the glow of your presence. Go joyfully old friend and know that your music and your spirit are with us.....Bill Comstock

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