

News from the editor.

We are seeking those of you who want to tell their story about

“How I first Heard the Four Freshmen.”

I will publish them in future Fresh News depending on room.

How I First Heard The Four Freshmen

by Bill Martin

I could certainly relate to Chaz Cone's experience (*Fresh News* July-August-September 2020) when he first exposed his mother's ears to The Four Freshmen sound, where she responded, “They sing off-key.”

When I became a teen, I discovered the sound of George Shearing and began playing his arrangements. If I was playing one when a neighbor dropped in, I would hear my mother apologetically say, “Billy isn't playing wrong chords—that's the way the music is written.”

When I was still a teen, I started playing piano with a local orchestra. It was then I discovered Stan Kenton. I had never heard such a big sound—The Four Freshmen. My orchestra leader played trombone, so he purchased the LP “Four Freshmen and Five Trombones.” The song I first heard from that album was *Speak Low*. I immediately knew that gorgeous sound would be with me for life.

In my early twenties, I was hired by an engineering firm in Columbus, Ohio. It was a big city with lots to do, but every weekend I was traveling back to Kentucky to visit my family and bride-to-be, Phyllis. We married in February, 1958. No longer was I traveling much, so I got to read a Columbus newspaper and find out what the city had to offer on the weekends. You can imagine my excitement when I came across an ad that announced a concert with George Shearing, Stan Kenton, and The Four Freshmen.

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By Vern Keeling, Liverpool UK

I have my older brother, Graham, to thank for bringing The Four Freshmen into my life, when one of my ears was tuned into his music coming across from the AFN (Air Forces Network in Germany) during the mid-fifties, when I was in early teens. The top American vocalists shared the airwaves with the likes of Kenton, Shearing, Brubeck, the Hi-Los and The Four Freshmen.

November 1962 was the first time I saw The Four Freshmen - group #4. They appeared at the Liverpool Empire with Stan Kenton and June Christy. I was completely blown away. The show was on for two nights in Liverpool; Graham and his wife Ellen had tickets for the Saturday performance while my three friends and I went to the Sunday show.

Sadly, I had to wait another thirty years to see them again. This time it was group #17 when Bob Flanigan courageously appeared despite being in poor health.

I make this point because of a truly remarkable happening. My wife, Pam, and I were sitting in the back row of the balcony with Graham and Ellen and on my left was an American couple. At the end of the performance, the gentleman asked me how we came to know of The Four Freshmen. He surprised us by asking if we would like to meet them. We didn't have an opportunity to introduce ourselves to the gentleman before he whisked us up to the area off which were the performers' dressing rooms. He then disappeared down a corridor. Moments later, he reappeared with Bob, who graciously shook our hands and posed for a group photograph. WOW!

Since then, Pam and I have timed our regular Florida vacations to coincide with The Four Freshmen performances. In 2009, we travelled from Orlando to Fort Pierce where I registered with The Four Freshman Society, then Plant City in 2010, followed a year later by Palm Coast and finally a memorable 2012 Christmas-feel dinner show at The Colony Hotel in Palm Beach.

On our 2010 vacation, we travelled down from our lakeside villa in Wellington Lakes, Fort Myers Beach to the Red Rose Hotel just off the Int.

4 at Plant City, where we were staying over after the show. As we were bringing our bags into the reception, we literally bumped into Bob Ferreira on his way to the dining room. When I recognised him and said “Hi,” he made us so welcome.

We plan to return to Florida in 2021, God willing. So hopefully, we will, once again catch up with our favourite group.

We can't wait.

