

Apples or Pears

By Jorgen Bjorno, Denmark

Nov. 16th, 1973 was the first time Keith Murray from New Castle in England, and I, from Aalborg in Denmark, met at a workers social club in the little town of Spennymore in Northern England. The performers on the little stage were The Four Freshmen (Group 5) to whom we both were greatly dedicated Freshmen Fans. That meeting became



the start of a lifelong friendship. Later again we met at the first FF-convention in 1988 held in Las Vegas. Through the following years we met at several conventions in USA and concerts in Europa (Amsterdam, Malmø, Oslo, etc.) Many years have gone by, but through letters and E-mails we still keep close contact with each other.

The latest example: Feb. 2022 I wrote: Dear Keith Sorry my mail-account has been shut down for three months, (I had forgotten my "login") Now I have to get a new one. I will remember the rest of my time: "4Freshmen22". The "22" is not the year. It relates to the best group ever through the years. The group we experienced through 12 years of conventions in USA and Holland (2005) as well as shows. Do you remember Chat Noir in Oslo in 2008? What a night. There will always be good Freshmen, and we would loved to have gone to the next Convention in Bay City in June - but sorry... we are too old and vulnerable. Besides we now have a dangerous war going on only few hours from our border.

March 2022 Keith wrote: Dear Jorgen I can't argue your admiration of Group 22. They were a fine vocal group, but to my ear not the best ever. For best ever blend and vocal technique they cannot be better than either the Hi-Los or the Suntones. In my years those two quartets produced

almost perfect vocal technique. I studied under a few vocal coaches from USA and the King Singers in UK. Neither Group 4 (Bob Flan – Bill C – Ross B –Ken A), nor Group 22 (Brian E –Vince J – Curtis C – Bob Fer) ever came close to that perfection - BUT! After Group 4, the groups never generated that FRESH sound - nor gave the impression that they were feeling the harmonies rather than re-creating them. Group 4 was the last group to generate that energy. It is not easy to remember how we felt listening to them making their sound. It is good that you and I can have different opinions on our favourite line up. I love the rougher sounds of the original groups 1 to 4. They had to work to find those harmonies.

March 2022 Jorgen wrote: Dear Keith, Thanks for your mail with your response about our favorites. I love the old discussion about which fruit taste best: - apples or pears - "Group 4 or Group 22"- ?? The first one will always be something special wonderful for me because that was the four men I first experienced live 1966, in Tivoli, Copenhagen. They knocked me down. Later, Betty and I saw Group 4 again in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1972.

Group 22 was created in 2001 at a convention in Kentucky, and I still remember that special enchanting feeling of the absolutely optimum quartet sound. It became the one and only for me. At a dinner we spent some time with Betty Kratsch (widow to org. Hal Kratsch – Group 1). She said: "I am in shock! This group sounds better than the original." I could only approve.

April 2022 Keith wrote back: In regard to the war close to you, we too are concerned. The EF, USA and Uk cannot be involved because that would lead to a World War and the next one might be the last !! - In regard to our difference sight on "Freshmen Sound and Quartets" - I still cannot agree that Group 22 was the best ever. Yes, they sang and played perfectly whenever we were at a concert. Chat Noir in Oslo was a special warm atmosphere, BUT those four young men were studio standard session musicians. Everything

(continued on page 11)

