

MANY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENJOYMENT OF FFS CONVENTIONS

by William E. Martin, Ashland KY

The Grand Rapids Convention was a most enjoyable experience! My congratulations to Jack & Mary Morrison and crew for an outstanding job. They left no detail to chance - everything was planned and executed exceptionally well. The facility, its convenient location, the food, the friendly staff, and the evening's entertainment could not have been better.

There is also a man who has long deserved recognition for the wonderful contribution he makes each year for the enjoyment of a number of Freshmen fans. He lives in Nara-Shi, NARA, Japan, and, surprisingly, the gentleman has never attended an FFS reunion. In fact, he has never visited the United States, as far as I know. I'm speaking of Yutaka ALAKI, the talented musician who has transcribed numerous Freshmen vocal charts used each year by the "Freshmen Wannabes."

I first became acquainted with Mr. ALAKI's ability before the FFS convention in 1995 at Sawmill Creek Resort in Huron, Ohio. A few months before the convention, Yasushi "Yas" Ichiura sent me some copies of Mr. ALAKI's Freshmen transcriptions with the suggestion that he (Yas) and I, along with two others, get together to sing them privately. We needed a piano in order to get our starting pitches, but the only place we could locate one was in a public meeting area called "The Birdcage." As we started singing, other fans became involved and the Freshmen Wannabes had its beginning.

We had originally planned to sing the charts a cappella, but we became dependent upon the piano, as each singer had to strike a note here and there to stay on pitch. Finally, I sat down and started playing chords behind the vocals and Yas began playing the instrumental solos on his horn. So, Yas and I became the accompanying "orchestra" for the Freshmen Wannabes. Now, if we could just pick up a drummer and bass player...

Mr. ALAKI has continued to add more arrangements to our list, and we remain most grateful for his generosity in sharing them with us. The sing-alongs have gained so much popularity through the years that they became scheduled events at this year's gathering. And, many thanks to Jack Morrison for arranging to have a good, freshly-tuned piano for our use - just one more detail he performed to make the Grand Rapids Convention so very special.



FRESHMEN PACK THE HOUSE AT FITZGERALD'S

by Will Cochran (IL)

The concert at Fitzgerald's on Father's Day evening was superb. The house was packed and is so intimate that people could almost feel they were on stage. Bill Fitzgerald was effusive in his enthusiasm for the crowd and surely he will book the guys again soon.

It was a cool, sunny, perfect early summer evening. Many came early and dined in the Beer Garden. The food was ample and tasty, the draft beer just right.

The first set began with *Day In Day Out*. Then *You Stepped Out of a Dream*, *Invitation*, *Young & Foolish* (a Brian arrangement), *You've Got Me Cryin Again*, Brian on *If I Only Had a Brain*, *Angel Eyes*, *Somebody Loves Me*, *I Could Have Told You*, *Somethings Gotta Give*, *Skylark*, Vince's *Around The World*, *Indian Summer*, *My One and Only Love*, *You Call It Madness*, *Everytime We Say Goodbye*, and a cappella *Their Hearts Were Full of Spring*.

If the guys had left town at that point everyone would have gone home ecstatic. As it was, we had a second set as follows: *Route 66*, *Poinciana*, *Goin Fishin* (Brian's solo), *In This Whole Wide World*, *How to Tell Her* (that song Ross B. says was never written down), *There Will Never Be Another You*, *You've Changed* (solos from Brian and Curtis), *That Old Feeling* (Brian arranged), *Mamselle*, *Rain*, *September Song* (Vince's outstanding arrangement), *Graduation Day* with Vince taking the solos instead of Bob, *Day By Day* (Vince's evolving trombone solo modeled after Bob Flanigan's classic one), *Blue World*, a stunning solo from Bob on *How Do You Keep the Music Playing*, *After You've Gone* and *And So It's Over* as the encore. There were two standing O's on the last two numbers.

The guys were very loose and having a lot of obvious fun on stage while singing better than any of us who are fans have heard them yet. They are so talented and so likable. And Fitzgerald's is the greatest venue for this music. CD sales were brisk. The guys stood outside the front door and autographed as folks left.

I took a group of 20. Some had seen the FF when they were in college and not again until now. They were very pleased. Hopefully we have some new fans and Society members coming out of this.

From Jim Healey, CA -

Two DJ's are using "And So It's Over" by the Frosh as their closing - Saturdays just before noon on "Magic 63," a Monterey CA radio station. They are Ed Dickinson and Don Coy.