

# John Skinner

by Yas Ichiura

John Skinner, trumpeter and pilot, passed away in Dayton, OH

Almost 40 years ago, John and I met each other in Tokyo, introduced by our mutual friend from the US. We had a big common interest between us, as we were both jazz players, professional trumpet for him and amateur trombone for me, and coincidentally, we were the same age. We were both Four Freshmen fans, too. He often flew to Tokyo, as he was B747 pilot for Flying Tiger, later FedEx. So, he had two jobs, as professional trumpet player (as well as band leader) and pilot.



Every time he was in Tokyo, he called me to see if the amateur big band I belong to had rehearsals or gigs. He joined us many times and we had no problem playing together, even though he didn't speak Japanese and my fellow band members didn't speak English. You can be good friends and enjoy playing together, as music is an universal language, as you know well.

Early 90s, I started to attend the FFS Conventions and I tried to contact him in Carmichael, CA. I visited him twice, once by myself and another time with Michiko. John and his wife, Susan, treated us very well. We always had great time together. Of course, he was a fan of The Four Freshmen, but, not joined FFS at that time. I encourage him to attend FFS Conventions. About ten years ago John decided to come to FFS Convention by himself.

He very much enjoyed The Four Freshmen performances and talking with attendants from all over the world. That's why he brought his lovely wife, Susan, to next year's reunion and she became a big star, singing Route 66 on Thursday jam session. She became very popular since her first day in FFS Convention. I was so glad and proud that John and Susan kept attending, since then.

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## Brief History of the Four Freshmen Fan Clubs and Newsletters

by Dot Lydic

As a young, enthusiastic Four Freshmen fan, I began in 1954 keeping scrapbooks of any Freshmen material I could find—photos, articles, newsletters, etc. As of 1965, when Harry and I were married, additional material has gone into a large box and is not very organized! Several people at the recent convention in Dayton (which was great, thanks to Hank and Sue Roysden!) asked me about my scrapbooks and encouraged me to dig into them again to find something of interest to share with *Fresh News* readers. I hope you find the following informative.

### First Fan Club

Did you know that the first Four Freshmen Fan Club was called "The Freshies?" I started a chapter in Pittsburgh in 1954. Peggy Flanigan was the national fan club president, and Babs (Pleischl) Frederick was vice-president. Has anyone from the FFS been a member of this fan club? I know only of two: Babs Frederick (FFS board member Emeritus) and Greg Stegeman (loyal FF fan and former Freshman). Evidently, John Bangs was active in the "Freshies," as he signed Greg's membership card.



### First Fan Newsletter

In 1957, Bill Wagner became the group's personal manager, and he reorganized the FF fan club. Babs Pleischl was appointed as national president, and Dot Matviya (me!) became the national vice-president. Bill launched the first-ever newsletter to connect the Four Freshmen with their adoring fans. The first issue didn't have a name, but Bill ran a contest to choose a suitable name for this publication. Issue #2 announced the name—

### The Fifth Freshman.

Bill had written approximately 50 issues of this newsletter and, with the exception of a few, I still have all of them.

When Bill Wagner "retired" as personal manager in 1964, Ross Barbour took over as editor and continued mailing this valuable newsletter to FF fans. In July of 1977, Ross stepped down as a current Freshman, and Bob Flanigan continued to mail *The Fifth Freshman* to us for a couple more years.

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