

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 Chuck Curran, SC

How I first heard met...

While in Pittsburgh the 50s and 60s I had seen the Freshmen in concert, I first met The Four Freshmen in 1977 when they traveled to South Carolina with the Four Lads, the Pied Pipers, and the Ink Spots. After the show at the University of South Carolina's Coliseum, I snuck backstage and cornered Bob Flanigan and told him a story. I thought it was a great story, but Bob seemed unimpressed. Now, 43 years later, I think I agree with him.

Here is the story:

In 1958 I was stationed with the Third Infantry in Arlington, VA. When I learned that the Hi Los were coming to town, I and a fellow soldier, both of us fans of The Four Freshmen and the Hi Los, caught two shows. In between shows, I saw Gene Puerling and Clark Burroughs in a booth and I decided to ask them a question I had long wondered about. In Downbeat I had read a feature article in which the Hi Los discussed The Four Freshmen. They said they thought The Four Freshmen were attempting things beyond their technical abilities. So I interrupted their conversation with two fans and asked them what they meant by that. I think the technical term for that behavior is “being a jerk.”

When the Hi Los came on for their second show, they introduced themselves thusly: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, we are The Four Freshmen. At the time I thought they were reacting to my intrusion, but I think that was just their shtick—something they did regularly.

You know the discomfort you feel when you tell someone a story, and the look in that someone's eyes says, “When will this story end?” Bob Flanigan endured, but I could tell he wished he were elsewhere.

Subsequently, I have had many wonderful encounters over the 23 times I have seen The Four Freshmen perform. My copy of *Now You Know* bears the autographs of 18 Freshmen, including Bob Flanigan! Greg Stegman was very kind to me at the 50th in Las Vegas. Ross Barbour once chatted with me for 45 minutes over the phone. In brief after-show conversations with Stein, Curtis, and Bob, they were always cordial, happy, and appreciative to be talking with fans.

Long live The Four Freshmen!

by Bill Martin, KY

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 the 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. Of course it wasn't long before I heard Stan's discovery—a smaller group that also had 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.

I thought I had died and gone to Heaven. I bought tickets, and Phyllis and I were there when the doors opened. George Shearing was first to perform and was a delight to hear in person. Next, the announcer introduced The Four Freshmen. I thought he had made a mistake as the Kenton Orchestra had not yet come on stage. I did not know that the Freshmen could accompany themselves. When they ran on stage with their instruments and hit *Somebody Loves Me*, we were blown away! I didn't know such a big sound could come from four voices and such few instruments.

Needless to say, we became lifelong fans, having attended countless concerts through the years. We attended our first FFS convention in 1990 at Springfield, Ohio, and have missed very few since. Getting to meet the Freshmen, their families and all the great fans has been an indescribable pleasure!

EDITOR'S NOTE

Hi everyone,

Hope you are all staying well. I want to thank you all for the articles “When Did You First Hear The Four Freshmen.” It seems that you all are liking them and I am certainly getting some great ones.

If you don't see your article in this edition of the *Fresh News*, be patient, I will get to them in order as they come in.

Barb Meyers