

# The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Marlene Lobsiger, Co-chair  
2023 FFS Convention

The celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Four Freshmen and the 34th Four Freshmen Society convention made history this year in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Members came to our city from 30 states in the U.S. and Japan. Dave and I want to thank each of you for being here. It was a joy to see over 210 members and guests come together to renew friendships, and most of all to meet the Four Freshmen who favored us with their harmonies and songs from the past to the present. We only wish we could have personally welcomed each of you to the convention.

Thursday night a grand welcome from Donna Gallaway, President of the Four Freshmen Society Board and Gil Peterson, Chairman of the Board was given to all members in attendance. Roses were presented to Barbara Meyers in memory of Mel, DeLee Purvis in memory of Tom, and Phyllis Martin in memory of Bill.

Dave Blackwell and the "Four Freshmen All Stars" followed with the theme of the opening night, **BACK HOME AGAIN IN INDIANA** ..... then came the big surprise when Curtis Calderon, former Four Freshmen, appeared from behind the curtains with his golden trumpet and joined the group with a most impressive improvisation of the tune. Dave was extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to play with Curtis on a Dixieland tune and **All of Me**, with both Jake and Curtis; and unexpected pleasure.

Society members are so fortunate to have so many talented musicians in our membership to entertain us on opening night. Dave sends out a big thank you to those who participated in the jam session making it one of the best; including a vocal solos by Ryan Donaldson, Don Barbour's grandson, Kathy Barbour Feese, daughter of Ross Barbour and Geoff Comstock, son of Bill Comstock along with Kirk Marcy, former Four Freshmen who blew us away with "scat" singing, **It Could Happen To You**.

Friday night was the GALA with glitter and diamonds throughout the Anthony Wayne Ballroom which included a champagne toast to 75 years, presented by Ron Orman. Mayor Tom Henry read a Proclamation and welcomed everyone to the city of Fort Wayne where the Four Freshmen presented their first professional performance at the 113 Club. Upon opening the Four Freshmen concert, a video of the four original Four Freshmen was shown

singing **Poinciana**, and **Ain't Seen Nothin' Like You**. It

was exciting to see the four originals performing in those early days. Following the video, the current Four Freshmen entered the stage singing and repeated the same tunes.

The Four Freshmen never sounded better. They are THE BEST! Their program consisted of tunes in chronological order beginning with the late 40s as they were presented over the years. Friday afternoon the Four Freshmen held a Master Class with the "Singing Dons" of Purdue Fort Wayne under the direction of Dr. William Sauerland. A grant was issued by the Four Freshmen Music Foundation to vocal students to learn and study the harmonies and legacy of the Four Freshmen. The "Singing Dons" were invited to perform Friday evening the tunes that they had studied with the Freshmen in the Master Class earlier in the day. The Afterglow ended with singing around the grand piano in the hotel atrium.

The Saturday night banquet tables were aglow with flowers and glitter flowing from metallic trumpets in honor of Curtis and Jake. Following dinner families of former Four Freshmen and others present were welcomed to the stage including Sue (Ross) Barbour and her entire family, Gary Barbour, Kent Barbour, and Kathy Barbour Feese. Donalyn Barbour Donaldson, daughter of Don Barbour, Kurt Kratzsch, son of Hal Kratzsch, Geoff Comstock, son of Bill Comstock, Ray Brown, Jr, son of Ray Brown and Marti Albers Scanlan, daughter of Ken Albers, Kirk Marcy and Curtis Calderon, former Four Freshmen,

Special honors were presented to Donna Gallaway, President of the Four Freshmen Society, Gil Peterson, Chairman of the Board, Chaz Cone, webmaster and Linda Harrison for years of service and contributions to the Four Freshmen Society. An engraved crystal star was presented to each of the honorees. Stars were also presented to the current Four Freshmen for keeping the group performing into this 75th year.....after all they are the "STARS." We will be here to support them in the future as we have since the year 1948 beginning in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

