

LOOK AT THIS OLD NEWS ARTICLE FROM 1973

Tom Kilbride, FFS member (TX)

This weekend I found a newspaper article I clipped in 1973. Thought some of you would enjoy reading it. Here it is from the Waco Tribune-Herald, Sunday, December 16, 1973.

Group Started 25 Years Ago 'Four Freshmen' Still Active by ROBERT B. CULLEN, Asso. Press Writer

RALEIGH, NC (AP) - They are getting a bit old to still be calling themselves The Four Freshmen. They look instead like four middle-aged alumni - an insurance salesman, a haberdasher, an accountant and a lawyer getting together to sing some of the old songs.

But there they were in Raleigh's Frog and Nightgown club, celebrating their 25th anniversary in show business at a time when vocal groups are considered seasoned talents if they stick together for two years.

Two of the four original members - they started out as college boys from Butler University in Indiana - are dead. Ross Barbour and lead singer Bob Flanigan are originals; the group added Ken Albers in 1956 and Ray Brown last March (73).

Since the years when they recorded "It's A Blue World" and "Graduation Day," the group has seen the rise of other styles: Buddy Holly and the Crickets, the Kingston Trio, the Beatles, and then modern rock. All of those groups are gone, but the Four Freshmen continue singing their four-part harmonies and slow rhythms. It's not the big time; before Raleigh they played in French Lick, Ind., and after Raleigh they headed for Titusville, PA. But it's a living, says spokesman Barbour, good enough to permit them to spend half the year with their families in Los Angeles and put their kids through college.

"Maybe one of the reasons we've stuck together" Barbour said, "is that we've avoided the extremes. We were never so big that there was enough money for an individual to go out on his own. We've never been broke, either."

Barbour believes that some of the newer groups could learn a few things from the Freshmen's experience and maybe avoid the pitfalls of dissension and financial ripoffs that seem to contribute to the dissolution of so many acts.

The Four Freshmen travel without an entourage. They carry their own equipment, and years ago they decided, Barbour says, to "pay ourselves" for the jobs of managing and publicizing the group.

Every member has a veto power over the group's plans and decisions. "So if we are asked to play on Dec. 10 and that's someone's wedding anniversary, he can veto it. The others respect it, because they never know when we might be asked to play on their wedding anniversary."

Ed Farran of The Arbors Dies

Posted by Mike McCoy on January 9, 2003, at 23:36:20:

I want to note the passing of Edward J. Farran of The Arbors, a musical group inspired by the Four Freshmen, who died a week ago. Here are excerpts from the obituary by Sean D. Hamill, Chicago Tribune staff reporter. For the complete account, go to: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/obituaries/chi-0301060164jan06,1,1119707.story> (If this link doesn't work when you click it, you should copy and paste it into your browser address line. Or go to www.chicagotribune.com/news/obituaries and enter in the search area Farran's name.)

Edward J. Farran, 65, who trained legions of Chicago singers and was part of the popular musical group The Arbors in the 1960s and 1970s, died of complications due to kidney failure Thursday, Jan. 2, in his brother's Chicago home.

With his identical twin brother, Fred, and brothers Tom and Scott Herrick, Mr. Farran and The Arbors had a long run of success, including several hit singles, during a career that began almost as a lark. "We thought it'd last three or four years, we'd have a few hit records and then we'd get serious about life," said Tom Herrick. "It's been an amazing run. But when you lose one guy, it comes to a crushing halt."

Originally from Grand Rapids, Mich., the Farran brothers' mother was a piano teacher who was criticized in her hometown when she married their father, a Lebanese-born tailor and furrier.

(A)fter singing with the Herrick brothers, the four decided to try to make music their career, styling themselves after the popular group, The Four Freshmen. Their first big break came with a gig on a WBBM radio show, which brought them to Chicago 40 years ago.

The Arbors branched out to club dates, building a following that grew with hits in the late 1960s and early 1970s that included "Symphony for Susan," which rose to No. 29 on the Billboard charts, and "The Letter," which hit No. 17.

They performed around the world with Dinah Shore and Roger Williams and appeared on television on the "Tonight" show and "The Ed Sullivan Show." They had their own 10-part PBS series. But singing for hundreds of commercials paid the bills over the years, said Tom Herrick, everything from the Jolly Green Giant to McDonald's to Kentucky Fried Chicken.

In his official obituary notice, Fred Farran asked people to "be nice to each other!" instead of giving flowers. "That's a sentiment we both appreciated," Fred Farran said.

Editor's Note: The Arbors performed at the 1996 FFS Convention in Lincolnshire, IL.