

The Timeless Brilliance Of The Four Freshmen

Larry Osborne, Jack Osborne (NC)

Eric Osborne (VA)

Bob Flanigan, this one's for you.

This is not another of those "I first heard the Four Freshmen when..." articles, but rather is a testament to the ageless quality of the Freshmen sound.

I was raised in Wapakoneta, a small farm town a little south of Lima, Ohio, on the western side of the state, and was introduced to the Four Freshmen in 1955. A friend of mine, who had gone to university, returned home for the Christmas vacation and said, "You've got to come over to my house and listen to this group playing on the juke box at Ohio University." I did, the group was the Four Freshmen, and the album he played was *Voices in Modern*. I was hooked on the sound from that moment and bought every Freshmen album I could find when they appeared in the small combination camera and music store downtown. I also had the pleasure of attending Freshmen concerts featuring Ross and Don Barbour, Ken Albers and Bob Flanigan at Indian Lake in Russell's Point, and at Ohio University, The Ohio State University, and Grand Lake, Celina, Ohio.

My wife, Susan, was born in London, England, and was unfamiliar with the Four Freshmen when we married, but quickly became enamored with the intricacies of the music as she listened to the albums with me. Our sons, Eric and Jack, grew up hearing the Four Freshmen playing on our stereo record player, particularly on Saturday morning when we all helped with housecleaning, and when they returned to university after vacations, I made 90 minute audiotapes of the Freshmen to play during their trip. We called it "travelin' music." They still have those tapes and continue to enjoy them.

Eric was married three years ago and his wife, Iana, who is from Bulgaria, has also become a Four Freshmen fan. Her parents, Elena and Ivan Konstantinov, physicians who practice in Sofia, Bulgaria and Kuwait, came to the wedding in Greensboro, North Carolina, and I was delighted to learn that they knew of and appreciated the Four Freshmen, so, of course, I sent them home with a Freshmen CD.

All of this is to provide background for a great family event we recently experienced. The Four Freshmen reunion in Reston, Virginia, provided a wonderful opportunity for Susan, Jack and me in Greensboro and Eric and Iana in Charlottesville, Virginia, to meet and hear some fantastic music. I was surprised that so many attendees remarked about the "young" persons with us at the reunion. To us, and to our sons and daughter-in-law, the music is timeless - good music is always to be appreciated.

It was also a delight for me to see how committed Eric, Jack and Iana were to meet as many Freshmen as possible and tell them how much they enjoy their work, and to observe how gracious the Freshmen were to talk with them and pose for pictures. They were eager to discuss what they learned about the group

and music from their conversations with Ross, Bob, Bill, Ray, Greg, Brian, Vince, Curtis and Bob Ferreira, discussions lasting sometimes until 3 a.m. about conversations that will never be forgotten.

We often hear worried talk about the future of the Four Freshmen and the need to attract a younger audience to enjoy their music. I agree, and can tell you that there is no question about their music appealing to another generation of listeners, as exemplified by my own family. The present edition of the Four Freshmen is the best ever, with all due respect for the many others who produced wonderful music, and as they continue to play memories and make new ones for other generations, their popularity will be extended. Those in my family intend to do everything we can to assist with that.

Bob, that's the whole story, as promised. Our heartfelt thanks to all at the reunion who made it such a special time for us, and our best wishes to you, Bob, and Mary.

