



FIFTY YEARS OF HARMONY
THE CAPITAL CHORDSMEN 1966-2016



CONTENTS

PROLOGUE.....	3
IN THE BEGINNING	4
THE SEVENTIES: A DECADE OF EXPLORATION	8
THE EIGHTIES: DECLINE AND RENEWAL.....	12
THE NINETIES: A DECADE OF GROWTH	14
THE 21 ST CENTURY	18
THE TEENS: A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE FUTURE.....	19
SOURCES.....	26
A BRIEF CAPITAL CHORDSMEN HISTORY.....	27
CHORDSMEN MEMBERSHIP OVER THE YEARS.....	29

PROLOGUE

The year was 1966. A new home could be purchased for \$6,900, a longer and wider new car was only \$2,650, and gas to power it could be found for 32 cents per gallon. A war was raging in Viet Nam, China was embarking on a devastating “Cultural Revolution” and Russia softly landed Luna 9 on the moon. Your family finally got a 19” color television and “Dr. Zhivago” filled the immense new movie screens. On the radio (remember those?) Simon and Garfunkel released the “Sounds of Silence”, the Beach Boys quivered with “Good Vibrations” and the Monkees professed that “I’m a Believer.” And in July of that year, a determined group of twenty seven men, after a decade of effort, succeeded in receiving a charter for a Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Singing in America (SPEBSQSA) in Tallahassee, the Capital City of Florida. With the sponsorship and encouragement of the Florida State University (FSU) School of Music under the leadership of Dean Karl O. Kuersteiner, the dream of these men became a reality.

Over 300 men have joined the organization through the intervening years and many of these individuals provided leadership to the chapter. However, in the opinion of the author, twelve stand out for their dedication to this uniquely American form of music. Gary Kissinger, Preston Davis, Jerry Jessup, Ivan Roberts, Don Carraway, Jerry Money, Fred Anton, Chuck Green, Bruce Bickley, Dave Berrien, Art Lanier, and Steve Jacobsen truly deserve credit for their efforts in leading the chapter over the years. Without their commitment, the chapter likely would have failed. These men often kept it afloat through perilous times. Many of them also provided insights, stories and helpful information about our past which are included herein.

The author takes responsibility for any errors of omission or commission in this document. While the text is not annotated, the sources may be found in the reference at the end. Hopefully, this book will provide current and future chapter members with information and guidance in the years to come. Knowing and understanding where we have been should always give direction to the future. The Capital Chordsmen now are ready to move into that unknown with a strong sense of direction and dedication.

*Fred Williams
Chapter Historian
March 2016*

A HISTORY OF THE CAPITAL CHORDSMEN


In the Beginning . . .

According to a brief history in the inaugural 1967 show program, “interest in barbershopping in Tallahassee goes as far back as 1952 when Dr. Vernon Fox and several others contacted the SPEBSQSA chapter in Jacksonville with the view toward sponsoring a local chapter. Nothing came from this request but the desire remained with several to inaugurate a singing society.” Charter President Preston Davis believes this interest was created by two Florida State University students, Gene Cokecroft and Harlan Wilson, who became members of the 1961 International Champion quartet, the SunTones. This foursome changed Barbershopping forever and set a standard of excellence that is still envied by every quartet.

Ashley Brown, Customer Service Center Specialist at the Barbershop Harmony Society, has been extremely helpful in providing information concerning these early years. She found a November 1, 1957 letter from Dr. Fox to the international office asking for suggestions on how to start a chapter. Then, on February 7, 1958, Chick Davies, State VP and Area Counselor, sent a letter to International about a chance meeting in Tampa with Elmer Horne of Tallahassee. Horne “expressed a desire to plant the seed and organize a chapter in our Sunshine State Capitol.” Davies asked Robert Hafer at the International office “to send all available printed material and render all possible aid” to Mr. Horne. However, Horne is not listed in later petitions or chapter rolls.

“The present chapter really got its start at another meeting held at the home of Dr. Fox in the fall of 1963. Present at this formative meeting were Dr. Fox, Mr. Charles Barnes, Mr. Charles Williams, Mr. James Richardson, Mr. Gary Kissinger, and Dr. Wilfred Mears. At this time a definite commitment was received from the Jacksonville chapter.” (Kissinger, by then a ten year member of the Society, maintains that his St. Petersburg Chapter also asked him to assist in starting a new chapter in Tallahassee.) This led to a January 29, 1963 petition, signed by twenty four men, to license a chapter in Tallahassee.

Again, quoting a 1974 District history, the license was issued in 1963 with Gary Kissinger as the licensing President. “On January 19, 1964 Mr. Marshall Walsh, director of the Jacksonville chorus brought a group and presented an evening of barbershop harmony in the auditorium of Kate Sullivan School. The program was well received and resulted in twenty-eight men expressing a desire to form a local chapter. Charles Williams was elected first president, and in March, 1964 a license to operate under the name of the international organization was obtained.” *[It should be noted that William Thomas Greene also is listed as first President in the 1974 District History, but no other record of either Williams or Greene being President has been found.]*



RECEIVED
JUN 23 1966
SPEBSQSA, INC.
KENOSHA, WISCONSIN

Petition for the Chartering


of a

Chapter in Tallahassee, Florida
(City) (State or Province)

Society for the Preservation and Encouragement
of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

To be known as "The Tallahassee
Chapter of SPEBSQSA".

HEADQUARTERS
6315 THIRD AVENUE
KENOSHA, WISCONSIN



State of Florida

Office of Secretary of State

*S. Tom Adams, Secretary of State of the State of Florida,
do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct copy of*


Certificate of Incorporation

of

TALLAHASSEE CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND
ENCOURAGEMENT OF BARBER SHOP QUARTET SINGING IN AMERICA, INC.,
a corporation not for profit, organized and existing under the
Laws of the State of Florida, pursuant to Chapter 617, Florida
Statutes, as shown by the records of this office, and filed on
the 4th day of January, A. D., 1967.

*Given under my hand and the Great Seal of
the State of Florida at Tallahassee, the Capital,
this the 4th day of January
A. D. 1967.*




S. Tom Adams
 Secretary of State

“The FSU School of Music under Dean Kuersteiner assumed partial sponsorship of the fledgling chapter, providing both a rehearsal hall and a chorus conductor, Dr. Wilfred “Bill” Mears.” However, “the first blush of enthusiasm wore off and for the next two years Mr. Gary Kissinger as president did yeoman service in holding the chapter together.” Ms. Brown noticed in the International file that the chapter made a request to the Board to have the license extended for six months in order to meet the charter member requirement. Only eight men from the initial licensing petition were repeated among the twenty seven names on the Petition to charter. However, membership began to grow, and the international headquarters in Kenosha, Wisconsin, granted a charter to the Tallahassee chapter. The actual date the Charter was approved by President Reddie Wright and Executive Director Barrie Best was July 5, 1966. The State of Florida issued a Corporate Charter to the Tallahassee Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America on May 31, 1966. Preston Davis was the Charter President, and his Board included Vice Presidents Bill Wymond and Glenn Field, Secretary John Albright, Treasurer Jerry Jessup, and Directors Gary Kissinger and Don Ennessey. These men, along with Vernon Fox, Ed Gordon, and Wilfred Mears were our Founding Fathers.

“At this time the continued sponsorship of the Tallahassee Chapter was assured by Dr. Wiley Housewright, newly appointed Dean of the FSU School of Music.” The Big Bend (Tallahassee) Chorus presented “Their First Annual Night of Harmony” on Saturday, March 11, 1967 at the Moore Auditorium on the FSU campus. By this date, the chapter had thirty three members including all men on the Petition to Charter. Their guest quartets were Sunshine District Champions, *The Gladesmen*, and *The Interstate Four*. Don Ennessey was the 1967 President and Preston Davis served as President again in 1968. In that year, the guest quartet was the International Champions, *The Western Continentals*. What a feather in the cap of a new chapter to have the International Champs in only their second year! Bill Mears was the musical director during the early years but moved to Boone, North Carolina and started a chapter there. By 1975 Mears was Assistant Professor at Winston-Salem State University. His November 1, 1983 obituary states “he had given eight years of devoted and dedicated service to this institution.”

According to the Officer Reports for 1968 and 1969, Jim Haygood and Bud Lovell were Chorus Directors after Mears left. Walton Morris succeeded Davis as President in 1969. During an informal meeting to discuss the early history of the chapter, original members Kissinger, Davis and Jessup, along with Bill Rayboun (1970 President) remembered that, sometime during this period, the Renegades performed as guest quartet for a show, but no record of this show has been found. The first Barbershopper of the Year (BOTY) was Dr. Ivan Roberts in 1974. The Chorus also appears to have been called the Big Bend Chorus and/or the Talismen Chorus until 1974, but in 1975 they adopted the current name, Capital Chordsmen.

The
TALLAHASSEE CHORUS
S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. Chapter

presents

**THEIR FIRST ANNUAL
NIGHT OF HARMONY**

Saturday, **MARCH 11, 1967**
8 P.M. at The F.S.U. Moore Auditorium



The **BIG BEND CHORUS**

The Seventies: A Decade of Exploration

As the decade began, Don Carraway, Jim Fogarty, Lou Reilly, and Ivan Roberts joined the chapter and pushed the Chordsmen to new levels. Reilly and Fogarty quickly moved into leadership positions and Carraway held every office in the Chapter over the next 43 years. Roberts began his long career as “interim” Director. Whenever a Director vacancy occurred over the ensuing years, Ivan often stepped in to fill the void.

According to the District History, no shows were held in 1971 or 1972. However, during the latter part of those years, it seems that the Chapter almost lost its Charter over a situation that today would be sexist. Ashley Brown again provided information on this problem as well as Officer Reports from these years. A wonderful musician, Sarah Rideout Jones, was in Graduate School at FSU. She was a member of the women’s barbershop affiliate, the Sweet Adelines, and was an accomplished Director. Sarah was asked to direct the Tallahassee Chorus during 1972. However, this did not sit well with the International Board. In March 1972, Henry Williams, a representative of the Board, visited the Chapter and shared with them the Board’s prohibition against female directors. In a letter to four time President Preston Davis, he states “I agree with you that Sarah is qualified in education and Sweet Adeline experience, and she is the best director available at this time. In addition, she exerts enthusiasm, which was transferred to those in attendance Tuesday evening. Yet, according to International, she cannot be identified as the officially recorded Director of the Tallahassee Chapter.” Evidently, the Chapter either ignored this warning or adopted Mr. Williams’ request to appoint “at least two assistant directors from your membership.” The reports above show no Director in 1972, but the Chapter retained its Charter. Sarah later returned as Director after she earned her doctorate, and the Society changed its rules.

After this episode and the lack of shows in previous years, the chapter apparently took a new approach to its annual shows. In 1973 and 1974, they requested the local Capital City Kiwanis Club to assist with ticket sales. Since several men were members of both organizations, this seemed to be a way for both groups to raise funds. The Official Minutes of the Kiwanis Club for December 4, 1972 state “The BARBERSHOP SING, an annual affair, is to be held at Leon High on March 31. Tickets to be available are Patron @ \$5.00, Gen. Adm. @ \$2.50 and Child @ \$1.50. Our profit will be 50% of all sales we make.” Then from the Minutes of February 18, 1974, “Tom Folsom moved that we again sell Barbershop Quartet Tickets as follows: 15 patron tickets



@ \$5.00; 200 adult @ \$2.50 and 50 children @ \$1.50.” The motion passed unanimously. Prices have increased a little since then!

In our 1973 show “Songs America Sings” the *Dapper Dans* made the first of their four guest appearances. The next year, Jerry Money began his three year tenure as Chapter President, and Ed Stone, a doctoral candidate at FSU, directed the annual Show. “One Night of Harmony” again featured *The Interstate Four*, who by now were Sunshine District Champions. *The Southern Aristocrats*, a championship quartet from North Carolina, also shared the billing. There were twenty five singers but only six charter members remained. One of these was Roy Dady, a long time society member who had moved to Tallahassee about 1966, and was a staunch recruiter. When he passed away sometime after 1974, the Chapter Barbershopper of The Year (BOTY) Award was named in his honor. From a review of the members listed in the Show Program, the chapter leaned heavily on its affiliation with the university. At least six members of the three featured local quartets were FSU professors, students or employees.

A singular significant event for the chapter occurred in late 1974. At the meeting of the Sunshine District House of Delegates, “The 1974 Fall Convention was awarded to Tallahassee, after an excellent presentation made by Preston Davis. This will be the first convention awarded to any Panhandle chapter.” The event was held in the auditorium of Leon High. After the Quartet and Chorus Champions were crowned, the SunTones were the featured quartet. According to members who were present, they brought down the house! Since that year, no other state Convention ever has been held west of Ocala. Preston was always promoting barbershop but this was a real fait accompli!

The 70s was the decade where local members began attending District and International Conventions and getting into the true spirit of barbershop. Ivan Roberts, Don Carraway, Bill Rayboun and their families attended six Internationals in a row from Portland to Kansas City to Indianapolis to San Francisco to Philadelphia to Cincinnati. Other members including Preston Davis and Fred Williams also accompanied them to several competitions.

Those were exciting and fun times to be a Chordsman. A particularly moving event was the national 200th anniversary convention held in San Francisco in 1976. From high above the waterfront, the Tall Ships and the fireworks were a spectacular sight through the fog. However, the night before was even more exciting. In the



“LIFE BEGAN AT FORTY”

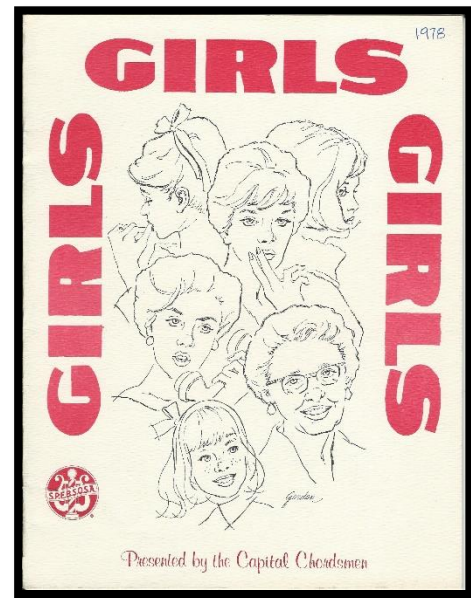
Four Early Presidents: Williams (77),
Wahlen (78), Money (74) & Kissinger (65)

middle of the night, alarms rang out and we all poured out of our rooms in the little boutique hotel, the Raphael on Geary Street. It was only a false alarm, but all of us stood around outside in our pajamas, or whatever, for what seemed like hours.

That same year, again in celebration of the Anniversary year, International produced a show script and music that could be used by every chapter across the nation. Since we were always short of money and ideas, we used the canned production. The theme was “What A Country” and featured songs written by George M. Cohan. *Main Street, USA*, Dixie District Champions from Raleigh, North Carolina, was our Guest Quartet. For the second year, a local high school quartet participated on the show as part of our Young Men in Harmony program which continued through the decade. The next year, 1977, was the first show featuring the music of Irving Berlin. It was so popular that we repeated it again in 1995 and 2006.

One of our members, Ed Gordon, was a nationally renowned portrait artist. His studio was filled with paintings of world and national leaders and celebrities as well as regular folks. It was an amazing display! Beginning with the first show in 1967 and continuing into the 80s, Ed drew the covers and inside sketches for all the programs. They were true works of art and a framed original of the 1973 cover, “Songs America Sings” is now in the possession of Fred Williams.

Another top guest quartet in the 70s was *The Marksmen*, District Champions in 1977. They performed in the 1978 show, “Girls, Girls, Girls” which highlighted the many songs barbershoppers sing about the female gender - Rosie, Peggy, Hannah, Kathleen, Margie, etc. A show favorite was Lida Rose, with the response solo being sung by Sarah Jones. Presidents during the decade included Bill Rayboun (1970), Lou Reilly (1971), Fred Williams (1977), Sam Wahlen (1978), and Max Caskie (1979). Dady Award winners after Ivan Roberts included Preston Davis, Lou Reilly, Fred Williams, Jerry Money, and Don Carraway. Local high school music icon Ray Kickliter brought excellence and growth to the chapter as Director during 1975. Ivan Roberts again filled in as Director in 1976 and 1978, and Rich Coster led the chorus in 1979 and 1980. Good directors and good singing brought in new singers; fifty-three new members joined between 1974 and 1978. During this decade, the Chorus competed in statewide competition at least three times in Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale and West Palm Beach but no



“Girls, Girls, Girls”
1978 Show Program Cover
By Chordsman Ed Gordon

information on their scores has been found. However, this was the decade of District dominance by Miami and Palm Beach with Hall of Fame Directors Gene Cokerof and Harlan Wilson at the helm of those powerhouse choruses.

During the last half of 1977, the chapter experienced the unexpected good fortune of a new Director, Randy Loos. Randy later was Bass for the 1978-79 District Champions, *The Gatortown Good Time Harmony Four*. He was in graduate school at FSU and agreed to direct and coach the chorus while in school. Although Randy was young, his experience and knowledge of barbershop made an immediate impact on the performance of the chorus. He returned in 1995 as Bass in our guest quartet, BACKBEAT, 1993 Sunshine District Champions. His singing and outstanding leadership served him well as he moved on to become Sunshine District President, District Hall of Fame member, and International Board Member. What a great windfall for our chapter!



1977 CHAPTER BOARD

McNabb (Seated)

(Front) Clark, Williams, Caskie, Wahlen, (Back) Hey, **Director Randy Loos**, Fuller

During the 70s, the rehearsal location moved almost every year. After meeting on Mondays at the FSU School of Music during the early years, they moved to the Palmer Monroe Community Center (1969), Lafayette Community Center (1970), First Baptist choir room (1971), Robert Butler Masonic Lodge (1972), Tallahassee Community College (1973-74) and Leon High choral room (1975-77). Except for one year (1989) at Temple Baptist Church, the chorus finally settled at the Florida High choral room from 1978 through 2001 when the school moved off the FSU campus. During the first decade of the new century, the Chordsmen sang at Jim's Pianos, Lakeview Baptist Church, St. John's Episcopal Church and Amtrak conference room, until finally settling in its current location at the Tallahassee Senior Center in January 2008. The Chorus met on Tuesday nights from 1969 through 2007 except for 1972 and 1982 when they met on Monday. However, the move to the Senior Center also meant moving the meeting night to Thursday.

The Eighties: Decline and Renewal

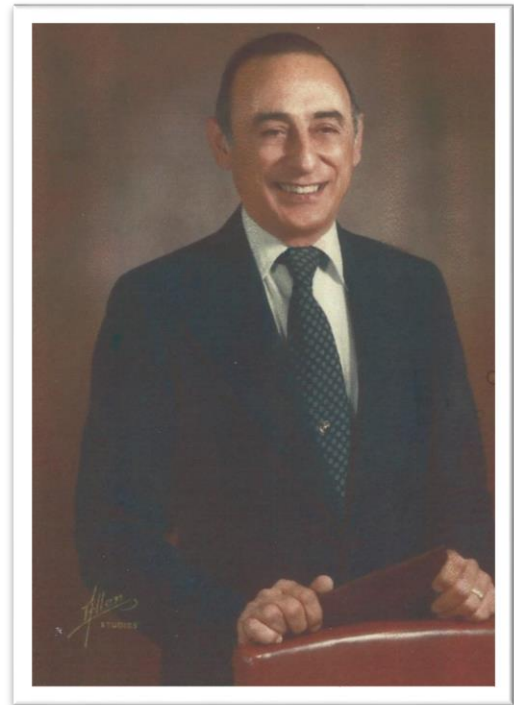
Ashley Brown at International again provided information about the Chapter in the 80s. She responded, “Unfortunately we have virtually no records from your chapter during the 1980’s.” That was “probably because of the inactivity of your chapter at that time.” She was able to provide Officer Reports for 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, and 1989. While sparse, these reports did identify most of the Directors, Presidents and Officers during this decade since they usually included Past Presidents. However, they do confirm her suspicion that the chapter was largely dormant during 1983 and 1984 when it appears there was no Director. This situation was probably due to the departure of many old timers and leaders who dropped out for a variety of reasons. Davis, Kissinger, Rayboun, Williams, Jessup and Roberts, as well as others, were absent in the late 70s and early 80s. While some came back later, this exodus left a large experience void in the Chapter which took years to overcome. This leadership vacuum also led to very minimal recruits. Only five new members have been found in the limited information available from 1980 to 1984.

Ivan Roberts again served as Director in 1982 before taking an extended leave. No Director has been found from 1983 to 1985, and no President in 1983. Chapter presidents included Pat McCaffrey (1981, 1985, 1986), Robert McCartney (1982) and Tom Barnawell (1984). McCaffrey and Past President Sam Wahlen, like Kissinger in the 60s, did their best to keep the chapter afloat, even though attendance was down to six or seven, new singers were sparse, and, it appears, there were no annual shows from 1983 to 1985. The future looked bleak, but it is always darkest before the dawn. A watershed moment was about to occur.

Alfred J. “Fred” Anton retired, moved from Miami, and joined the Capital Chordsmen about 1985. “Fred was active as a barbershopper for over 50 years and was an amazing force as an individual and a musician. The son of an immigrant shoemaker from Lebanon, Fred is remembered for his jovial, upbeat personality and his unending jokes that made everyone his instant friend. Fred was also an incredibly hard-working and self-motivated man who served as a Colonel in the United States Marine Corps and also as a successful lawyer. Barbershop was one of Fred’s great passions and his dedication to Florida’s Sunshine District was unparalleled. In 1977, while he was a member of the Miami chapter, Fred won the statewide Barbershopper of the Year award in recognition of his tremendous efforts in promoting barbershop singing. In fact, Fred developed the highly successful “Wanna Sing?” program to recruit new members and himself recruited at least 16 barbershoppers for the Miami chorus. Fred’s unflagging energy and commitment to four-part harmony performance also helped The Miamians win the international barbershop chorus championship in 1965. Fred was honored as an inductee into the Sunshine District Barbershop Harmony Society Hall of Fame in 1988. His daughter, Cheryl Naylor, remembers her father as “a non-stop barbershopper” while his son, Gary Anton, recalls the debates

he would have with his father over which musical genre was more important, barbershop or blues? Of course, the January/February 2015 edition of *The Harmonizer* would have settled that dispute for them with its telling examination of the shared African-American roots of blues, jazz, and barbershop musical traditions.” [The above was written by Katherine Douglas.]

When Fred joined the Chapter, the whole chorus changed. As Membership Vice President in 1986, he virtually re-built the chapter, one member at a time. According to a recent Email from Chuck Green, “In 1985 I was invited by Fred Anton to come to an organizational meeting of the local Barbershop Chorus. The chapter was active but had no director. . . . He and others wanted to get the chapter going again. In attendance were Don Carraway, Max Caskie, Ike Jacobsen, Ivan Roberts, David [Busby] who was to be the new Director, Jerry Money and a few others that I can’t recall. After that meeting we began to meet every week. We grew to 15 to 18 quickly.” When there were enough men to form a chorus, they put on a show just for wives and families.



FRED ANTON

Anton is widely recognized by long-time members as the person who revitalized the Chordsmen. While he was never President, he was always the force behind the scene. Anton’s leadership was greatly enhanced by the work of Director David Busby. For three years beginning in 1986, Busby provided stability in this important role. He led the chapter to new heights in singing and performance. The vocal quality of the chapter also was greatly enhanced by the rich and powerful Lead voice of Chuck Green. These three individuals led a growth spurt that continued through the next decade. They were aided by the continuous efforts of those at the organizational meeting above plus Dr. Bruce Bickley, Charles “Ken” Ford and Herb Parker, our first black member. Green was President in 1987 and 1989 while Carraway served in 1988.

Jim Woods began his three year leadership as Director in the summer of 1988, and was BOTY in 1989. He also directed the fledgling Sweet Adeline chapter, Southern Blend, during its first years. The Chordsmen went to District Competition in 1991, finishing 8th out of 15 choruses. Jim’s “skill, enthusiasm, personal warmth and great sense of humor” served him well as he led the Chordsmen into a decade of progress. He is now Sunshine District Director of Marketing.

The Nineties: A Decade of Growth

All of the Chapter leaders named above were there to start the new decade. They were joined by a host of members who worked to take the chapter to new heights. This was a gradual process for, from 1990 to 1995, membership was stuck at around twenty five. However, new members in this time period, such as Dave Berrien, Glenn Lillibridge, Samuel “Skip” Rowley, Dr. Sherwood “Woody” Wise, Jim Lee, Steve Jacobsen, Art Lanier, and James “Hoagie” Carmichael created a sound base for the growth that occurred in the next five years.

The late eighties and the early nineties also were a time of movement toward more formal attire. A review of pictures and programs through the years (see following pages) reveals a definite change in appearance. In the 1967 show, the chorus wore white shirts with a black string tie, a popular accessory in those years. Around 1974, they added white coats with dark pants and shoes, but the string tie remained. One competition outfit during this time was a loose light blue short-sleeve shirt with white pants and shoes. Certainly these uniforms were not style setters but they were comfortable. By 1978, we had moved to long-sleeve white shirts with white bow ties and aqua vests, but the white pants and shoes remained a staple. By 1988, the look became dressier, with a black coat and red tie. An informal option to this set was a light blue long-sleeve shirt worn open, but the white pants and shoes were still around.

In the nineties, the black coats remained, but the pants were now gray with black shoes and black bow ties. In 1998, the chorus made a fashion statement; they sported light blue tuxes with dark lapels, bow ties, and cummerbunds. You either liked them or you didn’t but they were never seen again. The next year, the singers returned to a somewhat formal look with white shirts, red vests trimmed with black, black bow ties, and black pants and shoes. This outfit continued to be used for at least five years before moving to a full black tux for major performances and competition in 2006. The vests are still occasionally used for small groups and special events such as Bandstand. For less formal events, we also have green polo shirts with khaki pants, and multi-colored long-sleeved shirts with black pants. What a difference fifty years makes!

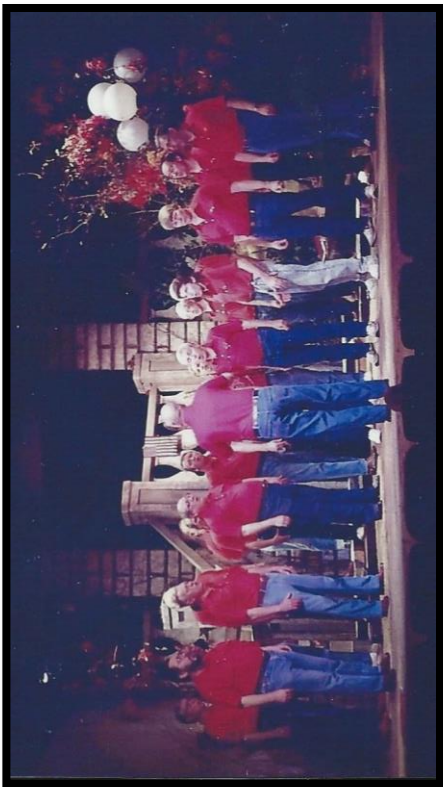
During the first half of the decade, performance and impact were limited by the small numbers. The annual shows were good but not great. They followed a fairly typical pattern of old barbershop stand-bys with a few “bell-ringers” to entice the audience. 1993 was a good example. “Riverboat Days” featured old standards such as Minstrel Montage, Back in Dixie Again, Way Down Upon the Suwanee River, Honey/Lil Lize, and Carolina in the Morning. These were good songs that had been sung for almost a century but they did not challenge the chorus. After the 1994 show, a host of members, including the Director, left the chapter. There were only about 15 members left, but that number included all those leaders above and they formed a strong core.



DISTRICT CONTEST 1974 (up) DISTRICT CONTEST 1990 (down)

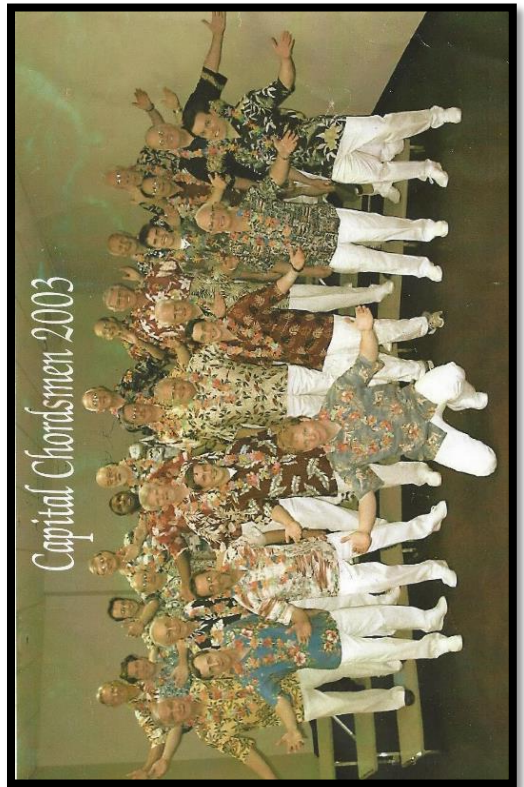
DISTRICT CONTEST 1978 (up) DISTRICT CONTEST 1991 (down)





ANNUAL SHOW 1992 (up)

DISTRICT CONTEST 2002 (up)



Then the scene changed. In the Fall semester 1995, a Scholarship for area college students was established, and in 1997 was named to honor Fred Anton after his passing. This brought in young members like Ben Luttge, David Arce, Jackson Maynard, Joey Walz, Eddie Cox, Eric Glave, Erich Brough, Toren Wagner, Bobby Berrien, and Tommy Berrien who brought new levels of both youth and musical ability to the chapter. Older singers Eddie Gray, Fred Harper, Roger Harrington, Gene Kelley (Sr. and Jr.) joined, and two former members, Dr. Mert Ekwall and Dr. Ivan Roberts, returned to add their experience and talent. Beginning in 1996, membership ballooned from 23 to 32, then to 41, and finally reached over 50 registered members at one point – our largest membership to date. This was a boom-time for the Chordsmen.

Much of this growth was the result of outstanding leadership from Presidents Glenn Lillibridge, Steve Jacobsen, and Dave Berrien from 1995 through 2000. Better singing also led to better annual shows. Performances in this time period all were under the guidance of Director Art Lanier and provided a level of quality that had not been seen before. Imaginative shows were supported by outstanding Show Programs written and illustrated by Ken Ford, Bobby Berrien and



“RARE RENDITION”

Rowley, Green, Berrien, Jacobsen
Four BOTYs over Three Decades

Max Caskie. They were filled with lots of ads, meaning more income, and lots of relevant information, meaning more audience knowledge and enjoyment. Guest quartets *Backbeat*, *Dapper Dans*, *Wise Guys* (twice) and *Saturday’s Heroes* (International Seniors Champion) were superb musicians and entertainers, and led to many return customers over the years. Finally, the Show Chairmen pulled it all together. Jerry Money, Roger Harrington, Dave Berrien, Fred Harper and Max Caskie assembled outstanding teams and led great musical performances with audience appeal. It was truly a renaissance.

“It’s Your Life, Irving Berlin” in 1995 began this string of entertaining and enjoyable performances. The 1996 show, featuring songs from the Disney movies and *The Dapper Dans* was a tremendous hit and was repeated in a revised format in 2014. In 1998, “It’s a Great Day

for the Irish” sold out three shows in Opperman Music Hall. While the songs were mostly traditional Irish songs, the sequence of the show told a great story and captivated the audience. Then show music began to be more difficult, more appealing and featured more modern barbershop music. In 1999, according to a note in the program, “A Century of Song” was one of the “most challenging shows, with eight new songs and only four that have been used at some time in the past.” Also in that program, Max Caskie’s history of song in America supported the show and provided great background information for the audience. The chorus also regularly competed in the District during this time, finishing as high as first in their Plateau and sixth overall in 1997. The Chorus finished 6th again in 1998, and reached a new high with a score of 775 and 5th place in 1999. Then a new century began – **Y2K!**



The Jan. 18, 1999, cover of **TIME**

The 21st Century

The year 2000 opened with great fear and trembling that all computers worldwide would crash because they were programmed for the 1900s. Of course this “manufactured crisis” did not occur but led to a great deal of discussion, many conferences, and constant media. However, this did not affect the Chordsmen; they were at a peak of membership and performance. Art Lanier continued as Director through 2001 and the annual shows were unusual but highly entertaining.

The Humdingers (AKA the Dapper Dans) were our always popular headliners with “Barbershop Follies” in 2000. “Mr. Ferdinand Fritz” and the Miracle Production Company sought to produce a money-making show and “unabashedly a comedy” with a secret love interest. Steve Jacobsen was Show Chairman for the first of many times over the coming decade and beyond. A great production team put on a solid performance with smashing “reviews from all over the world,” to quote the show program.

In 2001 the chorus took a sentimental fantasy back to the International stage in Minneapolis, 1946. Of course, they did not win, but this train journey included many musical locales from Minnesota to Tallahassee, rousing numbers about armed forces and broken hearts, and of course, girls. Then who ever thought of combining western songs and barbershop, or

Hawaiian music and four-part harmonies? Well Don Carraway, our innovative Show Chairman for both 2002 and 2003, did and the shows were exceptional and fun-filled performances. Both the Chordsmen and Southern Blend, the Sweet Adeline Chorus, participated fully and the stage was filled with singers. The BOTYs during these years reflected the impact of the youth scholarship program as collegians Governor Staten, Erich Brough and Sean Stork were all recipients. Long time members Eddie Gray, Skip Rowley, Bruce Bickley, Art Lanier, Fred Harper and newcomer Tom Brandt also were recognized.

However, beginning in 2003 and extending through 2009, the chorus encountered a difficult and often sluggish time. During these years our directors were graduate students from FSU. While they were accomplished singers, none of them were experienced barbershoppers and they often were “learning on the job.” The meeting location seemed to be constantly moving, causing uncertainty. Rehearsals were often loosely organized and unchallenging. Sometimes there was a lack of enthusiasm and the lack of prior practice was evident. Membership declined again, dropping into the thirties with attendance often below twenty. The chorus did not compete in District conventions from 2000 through 2006 and then suffered our lowest score ever (594) when we returned to competition in 2007. Scores improved between 2008 and 2010, but the performances were not exceptional and the Chordsmen did not compete in 2011 or 2012.

The annual shows during these years moved from Opperman Music hall at FSU to Turner Auditorium at Tallahassee Community College. Three shows on Friday and Saturday continued to be held around the last weekend in May. The move from the intimate and musically friendly environment at Opperman to the increased capacity at Turner created both positive and negative conditions for the chapter. While the possibility of increased profits from the shows existed, that meant we had to produce larger ticket sales. This was impacted by the reduction in membership and a change in sales procedures. Super salesmen Fred Harper, Don Carraway and Eddie Gray passed away after 2007 and these untimely deaths resulted in the loss of over \$3,000 in ticket sales. Chapter membership and attendance declines exemplified a common problem that many social, service and fraternal groups have faced since the turn of the century; loss of commitment. From 2000 to 2009, thirty-six new members joined the Chordsmen, but only seven remained when 2010 commenced. But again, a sea change was about to sweep through the organization.

The “Teens”: A Springboard for the Future

The real hero of the early years of this century was Steve Jacobsen who joined the chapter in 1994. After serving as Show Chairman and about every other office, Steve became President in 2005 and has remained in this post for **twelve years**. He says he continues because no one else will take the job. The real reason is that no one else believes they could match the enthusiasm and

organization that Steve brings to every rehearsal and meeting. His mission is to change the culture of the chapter and this drives every action he undertakes. He has been Show Chairman seven times since 2000 and will be so again in 2016. Even through several bouts of illness that have sidelined him and sometimes prevented him from singing due to a lost voice, he has provided strong leadership which has turned the chapter around.

The start of this latest chapter revitalization was the hiring of Mike McGee as Director in 2010. Mike joined the Society in 1985 and became Associate Director of the highly successful *Masters of Harmony* chorus in the Los Angeles area. The “Masters” began their run of International Championships in 1990 and won eight times through 2011. As part of the chorus, Mike also sang with *Metropolis*, the Bronze Medalist Quartet. Mike worked as a *Dapper Dan of Disneyland* and was employed by the Disneyland Resort from 1992 through 1999. He married a Tallahassee lady and, after moving here, continued his education at Tallahassee Community College (2003-2005) and FSU while working for an insurance agency. After several tries, Jacobsen finally convinced him to become Director of the Chordsmen in 2010.

Because of his lengthy experience in California, Mike was intimately knowledgeable of barbershop and how to get the best out of the singers. He provided great direction and challenged every member to sing better. Singing became fun again. In 2010, the Chordsmen returned to District competition and achieved one of their highest scores, 772. They also were recognized as the Most Improved Chorus. After two years, during which he spent most of each week in Orlando as a Dapper Dan, Mike finally moved to Central Florida for good. In 2012, he became Entertainment Manager of Disney World, a position he still holds. Even though his salary almost broke the chapter, his time in Tallahassee laid the groundwork for the emergence of a better and more professional chorus.

A major key to the growth of the chapter was the hiring of current Director, Gregory Hilliard, Jr. in 2012. Although technically still a “youth member” Greg has been a barbershopper for over ten years. He has sung on the International stage with both the *Sunrise THX* chorus and the *HD Chorus*, Champions of the Youth Chorus Festival at the 2012 Midwinter Convention. His tutelage under highly acclaimed Director Tony DeRosa has provided him with a vast knowledge of what it takes to become a championship chorus, and he imparts that to the membership at every rehearsal. He expects the best from every member every night.

At the same time, the chorus was blessed with another stroke of good fortune. Jackson Pinder came to Tallahassee to attend FSU (his wife is an alumnus). He sings bass with *The Vigilantes* (now *Rooftop Records*), Silver Medalists in the 2011 Collegiate Quartet championship, and agreed to join us as Associate Director with responsibilities for warm-ups, tags, and coaching.

His unique ability as an arranger and his keen understanding of barbershop musicality greatly enhanced the sound and quality of the chorus.

Twenty year member Erich Brough continued in his role as Associate Director responsible for warm-ups, leading the chorus, when necessary, and directing smaller groups such as our Very Large Quartet (VLQ) in regular performances. Then in the Fall semester, 2014, an avid young barbershopper named Jonathan Riviere entered FSU and joined the chorus. A relentless recruiter of college students, Jonathan brought in eleven new members in 16 months and quickly became a Student Director. These college members are excellent singers and add not only numbers but rich tonal quality to the chorus, not to mention at least one new chapter quartet.

Now the chapter had an outstanding quartet of young, knowledgeable Directors who all had extensive barbershop experience, along with a leadership team committed to excellence. The majority of the Board of Directors, along with President Jacobsen, had served in their roles for at least five years. This stability and dedication to their responsibilities enabled the chapter to move forward with lofty expectations. This led to new levels of performance in both competition and annual shows. Now the chorus was providing over twenty performances a year throughout the community as well as surrounding counties.

However, annual shows in this decade got off to a rocky start. The 2010 show was beset with problems beginning with the Turner Auditorium staff neglecting to place our regular date on the calendar. We ended up six weeks later than usual and the show program was beset with glitches; gremlins somehow got in the printer. The middle of summer is not a good time for an annual show! However we persevered and produced “A Harmony Home Companion” featuring local Bluegrass Band *Pasture Prime*. Director Mike McGee challenged us with several intricate numbers and the crowd acknowledged our efforts. In 2011, we were constantly learning new songs as we turned over almost our entire repertoire. Our show “A Year in the Life” was just what it sounds like. We recreated our numerous activities and performances in a typical year – with improved sound quality. McGee spent a lot of time honing our singing skills and polishing old songs so that the show demonstrated our new quality.

Due to increased auditorium costs and smaller audiences, the 2012 show was limited to two performances on Saturday only. However, the creative computerized program covers by Frank Broen added to the long time perseverance of ad sales chair Bobby Berrien in making the show programs both attractive and informative from 2012 through 2015. New director Greg Hilliard, Jr. expanded our repertoire and we added many new songs never before heard on our stage. “Everything Old is New Again” show-cased our improved vocal production and produced a quality level of entertainment. *The Vigilantes* showed us why they are Silver Medalists with their show stopping songs.

2013 was a special moment in the history of our chapter. Don Carraway joined the chorus in 1970 and over the years was a rock supporting the chapter through good times and bad. He was President three times and Show Chairman three other years. During the middle of 2012, he learned that his health was quickly deteriorating and the end was not far away. He came to President Steve and told him he wanted to produce the next show. He spent “eight months researching, writing, and re-writing a story of our country, captured in music and history.” The finished product was a musical journey across America. “This is My Country” truly was a testimonial to his devotion to our chapter and a legacy for the ages. Don passed away on August 19, 2013, only two months after the show. It was his last gift to the chapter!

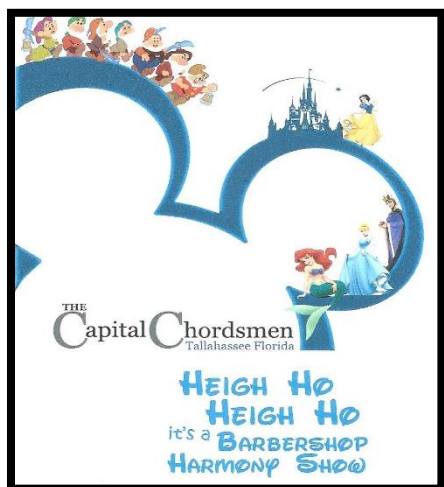


DON CARRAWAY
Barbershopper for Life

“Don Carraway was a barbershopper for 40 years and demonstrated the matchless dedication, spirit, and joy that embody the barbershop tradition and serve as his legacy. His close friends remember Don for always having a song in his heart and for his ability to light up any room with his warm and engaging personality. Don served several terms on the Board of Directors and as the president of the Chordsmen. He was a passionate and steadfast patron of the chapter, as was his wife, Kay, who remains a devoted supporter of The Chordsmen. Like Fred Anton, Don was a wonderful recruiter and enlisted 10 or 12 new members during his time with the Chordsmen. When he wasn’t attending rehearsals, preparing for shows, or performing, Don worked as a soil test engineer and was just as dedicated to his job and his family as he was to the Chordsmen. Don was also a past president of the Capital Rotary Club and active in Holy Comforter Episcopal Church. Don’s commitment to barbershopping was also affirmed in his creative talents. Completely from scratch, he organized, coordinated the music, and scripted four of the Chordsmen’s two-hour annual shows. His wife, Kay, is proud to know her husband will long be remembered for his “profound and unwavering love of barbershop.” *[The above was written by Katherine Douglas.]*

We tried something new with the show in 2014. We brought in the Humdingers again for a very entertaining show featuring songs from all the great Disney movies. However, in addition to Matinee and Evening performances, we produced a shortened version on Saturday morning which was specifically tailored to children. “Heigh Ho, It’s a Barbershop Harmony Show” was a smashing success for all three times. Many of the songs performed by the chorus and quartets

were Academy Award winners and the audience often was singing along, particular the kids at the



early show. Several of the songs were arranged by Associate Director Jackson Pinder and Sweet Adeline Donna Lerner, and much of the choreography was provided by Steve Jacobsen, Theresa Jacobsen, Rodney Atherton, and Linda Atherton. This show set a new high for quality but the best was yet to come.

Director Greg Hilliard was Show Chairman in 2015 and warned us a year in advance that this would be the most challenging music the chorus had ever attempted. He was right! We performed nine entirely new songs that were extremely difficult and complex. However, the chorus rose

to the occasion and proceeded to “Swing Into Harmony” along with Special Guests, *Tallahassee Swing*. This orchestra has been performing locally since the late 1970s and their repertoire includes an appealing mix of the big band era, jazz, blues, and popular dance music. The combination of the two groups literally had the sell-out audience dancing in the aisles throughout the night.

QUARTETS OVER THE YEARS

YEAR	QUARTET NAME	MEMBERS
1975-1977	Two Lads, a Dad and a Grandad	Bishop, Reilly, Dusseault, Sklute
1975-1977	Governor’s Proclamation	Rayboun, Harnage, Roberts, Davis
1978-1980	Touch of Class	McClellan, Sandburg, J. Wahlen, Eacker
1978-1980	Sunshine Express	Clark, Caskie, Ekwall, Davis
1979-1980	Life Began at Forty	Williams, S. Wahlen, Kissinger, Money
1991-1992	The Chordless Shavers	Rowley, Caskie, Carmichael, Burgin
1991-1992	The Harmony Grits	I. Jacobson, Woods, Tanzy, Ford
1993-1998	Capital Chord Company	I. Jacobson, Ford, Tanzy, Money
1994-1998	Rare Rendition	Rowley, Green, S. Jacobsen, D. Berrien
1996-2003	Seniors Four	Lee, Parker, Harper, Lillibridge
1999-2002	Common Time	Campbell, S. Jacobsen, Lanier, Furbish
2001-2016	The Tally Tones/Rolling Tones	Brough, Broen, Brandt, Fagen
2003-07	All American Good Time Harmony Boys	Campbell, Taylor, S. Jacobson, Staten
2006-2007	Fortune	Rowley, Brunger, Stork, DeZego
2008-2011	The Bar-Berriens	R. Berrien, Maurer, T. Berrien, D. Berrien
2008-2009	PBQ	Folkes, Stork, S. Jacobsen, Spang
2009-2016	In-A-Chord	Brunger, Pennington, R. Atherton, Linzy
2010-2011	The Metro Four	Rowley, S. Jacobsen, Roberts, Moody
2014-2016	Stevie J & the Kids/Ring Tones	Nowlin, Jacobsen, Hilliard, R. Berrien

For many years, the chorus sang impromptu and informal sing-outs for senior living facilities both during the year and at Christmas time. Most of these were “hit-or-miss” events with sporadic attendance and very little organization. However, after moving to the Senior Center, the Board approved a new approach recommended by Vice President Rodney Atherton and the Music Committee. In our partnership role with the Senior Center, we sang during their annual “Deck the Halls” fundraiser in December 2007. This helped to increase the Center’s revenue and also offset our facility rental cost. This show has grown into a separate performance and is the centerpiece for a series of holiday shows throughout the region. Now there are two shows at the Senior Center each year and total attendance has exceeded 400 in the past two years.

The success of these shows led the Music Committee to develop another set of songs based on a gospel theme. The first show at Capital City Christian Church on Sunday, October 17, 2010 was an immediate success and led to numerous performances over the next five years. Then on August 10, 2014, at Thomasville Baptist Church, we performed our first Americana set as a tribute to Don Carraway. It featured songs from “This Is My Country,” his final show in 2013, and was enthusiastically received in six performances over the next two years. The latest theme show, “Love is...” premiered on January 31, 2016 at Havana Presbyterian Church. Standing ovations have followed all three performances of this show because of the great love songs that touch a chord with everyone. A new gospel show now is in the works for Fall 2016.

Not only have we done theme shows, but along the way, the chapter sponsored a Quartet Show, marched and sang in Springtime Parades, sang the National Anthem at FSU baseball games, entertained at numerous Bandwagon programs for political candidates, and of course, delivered Sweetheart Valentines. The chorus now has a working repertoire of over fifty songs and provided over thirty public performances in 2015. What a difference a decade has made!

Of course, the chapter would not be anything without all the members putting forth the effort required to be a top chorus. Since 2003, Tallahassee has lost many stalwart chapter members: Dr. Mert Ekwall, Fred Harper, Charter Member Bill Wymond, Gene Kelley Sr., Jerry Money, Roger Harrington, Don Carraway, Eddie Gray, Arlen Schwerin and Herb Parker all were consummate barbershoppers and their passing left many big shoes to fill. Chapter leaders Max Caskie, Chuck Green, and Ken Ford, among others, all have moved to other communities. However, since the start of this decade, forty five new members have stepped in and picked up the torch left by these men. Scholarship recipients during that time include Governor Staten, Sean Stork, Scott Atherton, Jordan Nowlin, Jackson Pinder, Jonathan Riviere, Collin Dougher, Ben Galivan and Josh Nieves. The Chordsmen now have the lowest average age of any chapter in the Sunshine District and our new young singers have pushed our older men to perform better.

The Chorus reached a new plateau when it scored 810 in the 2013 District Competition; the highest ever at that time. We felt like we performed even better the next year but the score did not reflect our thoughts. Then we broke through in 2015 with a score of 861 and Second Place in the district. The Chordsmen have been the Most Improved Chorus in 2010, 2013 and 2015.

Now we are in 2016 and we want to continue the upward trend. We will reach our goal of a 900 score! We may not beat the large choruses like *THX*, *Big O*, and *Heralds of Harmony* but we can compete with anyone. Our motto is “Sing better every day”. We will continue to be a leading male choral group in north Florida. Today we are stronger and better than at any time in our history and are looking forward to another fifty years of excellence!



THE CAPITAL CHORDSMEN
District Competition 2015

SOURCES

- Anton, Fred, by Katherine Douglas.
- “Barbershopping in Tallahassee” March 11, 1967 Show Program.
- Board Minutes, Capital City Kiwanis Club, December 4, 1972. Club Archives.
- Board Minutes, Capital City Kiwanis Club, March 4, 1974. Club Archives.
- Carraway, Don, by Katherine Douglas.
- Chordsmen Annual Show Programs, 1967-2015
- Email from Chuck Green, January 22, 2015.
- Email from Jim Woods, December 23, 2015.
- Lashat, Simonette. ”Perfect Harmony” in Tallahassee Magazine, July-August2007, p. 17*f*.
- Letter from Chick Davies, February 7, 1958. Ashley Brown, Customer Service Specialist, Barbershop Harmony Society.
- Letter from Dr. Vernon Fox, November 1, 1957. Ashley Brown, Customer Service Specialist, Barbershop Harmony Society.
- Letter from Henry A. Williamson, March 3, 1977. Ashley Brown, Customer Service Specialist, Barbershop Harmony Society.
- “Official Report of New Chapter Officers,” 1966-1995. Ashley Brown, Customer Service Specialist, Barbershop Harmony Society.
- Rosters of the Tallahassee Chapter, 1986 *ff*
- Petition to Charter, June 6, 1966. Ashley Brown, Customer Service Specialist, Barbershop Harmony Society.
- Petition to License, January 29, 1963. Ashley Brown, Customer Service Specialist, Barbershop Harmony Society.
- “SA-TELL-IT-E” Sunshine District, SPEBSQSA Newsletter, January-February, 1973.
- 1959-1974 History, Sunshine District, SPEBSQSA.