

## THE EARLY YEARS 1950-1958

By the end of 1949, with two and a half years of experience, the new district had successfully conducted its own Regional Preliminary and District Contests. It had tripled the number of chapters in the district, been represented in contest at the International level, and its members were eager to get on to bigger and better things.

### 1950

Planning for the 1950 Regional Preliminary got off to a bumpy start. The Puyallup and Mt. Rainier chapters were co-sponsors. Shortly after they arranged for the Puyallup High School auditorium for the scheduled May 5 date, the auditorium was consumed by fire. After considerable searching, they obtained the College of Puget Sound auditorium, only to find out shortly thereafter that there had been a schedule mix-up that made it unavailable. Finally, after an exchange of wires with International Headquarters in Detroit, they were able to move the date to April 29th, and were granted the use of the facility.

Thirteen of the district's thirty-four registered quartets took part in the Preliminary Contest, with the **Queen City Four** of Seattle chosen to be the representative at the twelfth International in Omaha, Nebraska. Members of the quartet were Joe Zwirn, Tom Westbrook, Paul Brown and Gene Brown.

Twenty-one chapter delegates and district officers attended the meeting held at the Winthrop Hotel in Tacoma. During those early years the chapter delegates and district officers were referred to as the "Board of Directors," with the term "House of Delegates" not coming into use until 1955. Lester Armstrong of Portland was elected District President with Art Campbell (Eugene) and Leo Barton (Tacoma) as Vice Presidents, Art Warnell (Bellingham) Treasurer, Hub Stone as Secretary, and Chester Green (Lake Washington) and Bob Perkins (Brookings) as the District's two Area Counselors.

At the time members of the International Board of Directors were elected by the International Board, and the Pacific Northwest District did not yet have such a member. Frank Graham, of Eugene, was nominated by Immediate Past District President Tom Hansen as a candidate for the position, but he declined in favor of E.C. Murphy, citing "Murph's" knowledge of the mechanics" of SPEBSQSA. Mr. Murphy received a unanimous vote of those assembled and was designated to await selection. District officers and chapter delegates were asked to write to International urging selection of a member of the International Board from Pacific Northwest District, and E.C. Murphy was selected by the International Board at the June 1951 International Board meeting to serve in that position until June 1954.

District Secretary Hub Stone, in his report to the meeting, proved to be prophetic with his closing paragraph, which read in part, "opportunities and possibilities in this District are limitless. One of these days we shall have a monthly publication mailed to every member; a Regional Preliminary will be held at Spokane; an International Contest will be held in the Pacific Northwest; and believe it or not, there will be so many quartets clamoring to enter our contests that run-off preliminaries will be held in the different areas."

Prior to his death in early 1973, all of these had, or were about to, come to pass. The district bulletin was being sent to all members. The 1953 Prelim had been held at Spokane. Planning was well underway for the International Convention and Contest to be held in Portland in 1973; and preparatory work was nearly completed for implementation of Divisional Contests to select quartets and choruses for the District Contest.

The officers and delegates were giving considerable thought to the issue of equitable payment for quartets appearing on chapter shows, to the degree that a study committee was appointed to examine the issue.

Another area of serious discussion was afoot concerning participation by Society quartets in the Forest Grove Ballad Contest. At the time, the International was working very hard to establish a uniform judging system and was experiencing some problems with non-society groups in some areas staging quartet contests, taking advantage of the Society's publicity and reputation. While this was not necessarily the case in Forest Grove, the district officers were faced with the problem of an effort by the International to discourage participation by Society quartets in non-Society contests, and quartets who wanted to participate in that function. In time the

differences were resolved, and the District's quartets have enjoyed a pleasant and continuing participation in the Forest Grove Ballad Contest, but for several years the subject was a source of serious concern within the District.

A new Pacific Northwest District Charter, dated June 30, 1950, and signed by International President O.H. "King" Cole, lists "The States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, the Territory of Alaska, the Provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, Canada, and Yukon Territory, Canada." The change to include British Columbia would appear to have been sparked by the May 19, 1950, chartering of the Vancouver, BC Chapter

The 1950 Brookings Chapter show turned out to be more of an adventure than the participants had anticipated, as related in the following excerpt from the March 1951 *Harmonizer*. "Barbershoppers in Brookings, Oregon, will never forget October 1950. Neither will the hundred-odd barbershoppers and wives from Portland, Klamath Falls, and Eugene, Oregon who journeyed three to five hundred miles to help Brookings's stage a Parade October 28th. Brookings is right on the Pacific and was the center of the worst coastal storm in years, with resultant flood and slide conditions never before equaled. Half of the 60 voice Klamath Falls chorus, with the **What Four**, were towed by huge lumber trucks, ferried, and waded into Brookings before the road was closed. The rest of the chorus with the **House Brothers** and the **4 Bills** from Roseburg were either turned back home or were marooned in Crescent City, CA. The **Oswego Four** and the aptly named **Webfoot Four** from Portland, the **Lumber Lads**, **4 Tune Four**, and the likewise aptly named **Plungers**, from Eugene, helped by State Police and various forms of transportation arrived in time for the show. Al Pierce, the M.C., was brought in by Coast Guard emergency crews, wet and late, but willing. Merle Brainard, the 'Brookings Banshee Baritone,' reports that electric power failure caused no end of inconvenience. Stage lighting consisted of one 500-watt construction flood, powered by a small generator. No programs could be printed, living quarters that didn't depend on electricity had to be rustled up for the visitors, kerosene lanterns were at a premium, and the afterglow was strictly a 'gas-light' affair without the bustles."

Sunday morning the deluge continued, and all roads south were closed. Seventy-five barbershoppers, wives, and even a few babies started north hoping to find a way around the floods. Thirty miles north, the Rogue River was rampaging, and the group was forced to stay at the town of Gold Beach. Led by Johnny Houston, Klamath Falls Chorus Director, the troupe promoted a free Sunday evening show at the local movie house, the six quartets and chorus playing to a capacity audience.

Monday, the six feet of water on highway 101 had gone down enough to allow the "road show" to feel its way carefully around slides and washouts sixty miles north to Bandon, where the Coquille River was out of bounds. With undimmed enthusiasm, Houston and the quartets set out to convert Bandon to barbershopping, again staging a two-hour show in the local movie house before a capacity crowd. Local enthusiasts afterward entertained the entire group at the country club.

Not to be outdone in spirit by the men of the traveling troupe, the wives of the Oswego Four cooked up a couple of apropos parodies for their husbands to sing in the impromptu performances. One, to the tune of "Stormy Weather" went like this, 'Can't go on, everything we planned went wrong, stormy weather, we can't pull our poor selves together, keeps rainin' all the time...'

By Tuesday, the roads became passable and the 'Robinson Carusoe Road Show' disbanded for the season."

A postscript to the *Harmonizer* article was contained in Hub Stone's brief District Bulletin of November 1950, when he concluded his article on the Brookings flood by noting, "By this time the program was so well organized that they would like to have continued the presentation at other towns. All had a good time, but the junket was embarrassingly expensive, and they were kept away from their jobs at home."

The same bulletin mentions the **Octogenarian Quartet** of Eugene, ages 82 to 86, who were practicing twice weekly and who had been invited to appear at Henry Ford's American Museum at Dearborn, Michigan. There was much news about chapter activities; an announcement that Puyallup Valley Chapter had merged with the Mt. Rainier Chapter; and notice of the Semi-Annual District Board Meeting to be held November 19th at the Multnomah Hotel in Portland,

Sixteen of the district's potential of twenty-seven directors were present for that November meeting, along with International Director Earl B. Reagan. Laws and Regulation Chairman E.C. Murphy presented ten proposed District By-Laws, along with Articles of Incorporation and a Resolution to Incorporate.

There were no district dues, and district income consisted of a \$.50 per member rebate from the International dues of \$4.00 along with a 50-50 split of profits from district conventions. Proposed by-law 6 would assess chapters 2% of the gross receipts (after federal, state, and local taxes) from all chapter functions where the public was invited, and admission was charged. This assessment was designed primarily to allow for financial assistance to the quartet chosen to represent the District in International competition.



The **Lumber Lads**, Eugene, 1950 District Champions.  
From the left: Gene Rounds, t, Dick Bussey, l, Harry Huffman, br, and "Murph" Murphy, bs.

Proposed by-law three provided that "the District shall be divided into six areas to be established by the Executive Committee. Each area shall be under the supervision of an Area Counselor." It goes on to say, "These areas may be increased or decreased in number or size...at the discretion of the Executive Committee." Thus, the basis was established for what was to become the "Divisions" the District was later to employ.

The **Lumber Lads** of Eugene, with past District President E.C. Murphy singing bass, won the 1950 District Quartet Championship in the contest held at Benson High School auditorium. The other members were Glen Rounds, Dick Bussey and Harry Huffman.

## 1951

The February 1951 issue of the *Harmonizer* pointed out that Idaho and South Carolina were the only states that did not yet have chapters. Hub Stone opined that since Alan Cornwell, bass of the **Mountain Aires** quartet, had moved to Lewiston, it was assumed there would be a chapter there before too long. Extension was at the forefront at most of the meetings, and increased attention was being given to how best to strengthen existing chapters.

The 1951 Prelim was hosted by the Seattle Chapter. The meeting of the Board of Directors saw 20 officers and chapter delegates in attendance. Elected to lead the District were: Art Campbell of Eugene, President, G.C. "Milly" Millington (Portland) and O.B. Falls (Seattle), Vice Presidents, L.H. Stone, Secretary, and A.M. Warnell (Bellingham), Treasurer. Included in the minutes was a worried comment to the effect that too many quartets were not singing real barbershop.

The Committee on Judges, consisting of E.C. Murphy (Eugene), B.A. Loftsgaard (Medford), and J.H. Leabo (Eugene), was seeking qualified men to bring into the judging program, in order to strengthen the district's position in that area. They submitted the names of seven applicants, and reported that more were in the offing

Prompted by the sponsoring by the Brookings Chapter of a new chapter at Crescent City, California, a vote was taken to include northern California, to the 40th parallel, in the Pacific Northwest District. This action had, at the request of the Pacific Northwest District, previously been approved by the Far Western District and the International office. With the issuance of a new Charter dated May 28, 1951, the change became official.

At the International Convention held in Toledo, Ohio, June 6-10 E.C. "Murph" Murphy was selected to the International Board, the District's first such representation (although George Christensen of the Seattle Star-KIRO Chapter had served briefly in a similar role in 1941). The **Agony Four** (Eugene) represented the District and entertained the crowd with medleys consisting of "Honey Gal-I Had A Dream" and "Lindy-I'd Love To Live In Loveland". The newsletter from the convention mentioned that "Smilin Joe Einwaller, bari of the **Agony Four**, flew home after the convention to get married June 14th." The other members of the quartet were Gerry Robison, tenor, Bob Blair, lead and Bob Day, bass.

The District Convention was held in Bellingham, November 23-25, and the **Puget Sounders**, of the Mt. Rainier Chapter were crowned as District Champions. Members of the quartet were Frank Hawthorne, Bill Judkins, Fred Cornwell and Houstie Allen.

The efforts of the Committee On Judges were beginning to bear fruit, and, for the first time ever, the judging panel at a contest in the Pacific Northwest District was made up entirely of judges from within the District. The panel was made up of Mel Olene (Mt. Rainier), Voice Expression, O.B. Falls (Seattle), Stage Presence, Gene Brown (Lake Washington), Balance and Blend, Benny Loftsgaard (Medford), Harmony Accuracy, Bud Leabo (Eugene), Arrangement, and "Murph" Murphy (Eugene). Although accredited in the Harmony Accuracy category, Murph served as the Chairman of the panel.

Much effort was being put forth on an International program of "Armed Forces Collaboration." With the Korean conflict, large numbers of men had again been called into the military, and both the Society and the government recognized the value of Barbershop Harmony as a recreational tool. The districts and chapters were working with the Recreation Officers at local military installations, providing music and assistance for those interested in singing four part harmony. No effort was to be made to organize a group under the name of the Society. The idea was to offer any help possible to further the enjoyment of singing barbershop harmony.

Within the District, the Board continued to wrestle with how best to serve the needs of the members and chapters within its boundaries. Efforts continued toward the establishment of a regularly issued District Bulletin (the bulletin was, by now, a four-page legal size mimeographed document), establishing and supporting chapters, encouraging public service by chapters and quartets, and development of the judging program. The first draft of the criteria for what was to become the Hub Stone Achievement Award was being considered, with an eye toward encouraging and recognizing chapter achievement in a variety of fields.

By the end of 1951, the number of chapters stood at 21, with several new chapters gained, and a few either lost or merged with nearby chapters (see appendix I). Membership was at a new high of 557, and there were 34 registered quartets.



The **Puget Sounders**, Enumclaw, 1951 District Champions and 1952 International contestant.  
From the top, Frank Hawthorne, t, Bill Judkins, l, Fred Cornwell, br, and Houstie Allen, bs.

Many new thoughts and programs were afoot, and enthusiasm continued to grow, the number of members and quartets taking an active part in District functions was increasing steadily, and the future of the District was in capable hands.

## 1952

The 1952 Regional Preliminary Contest and Convention was the first district convention to be held in Canada. All the district officers and seventeen of twenty-one-chapter delegates attended the Board of Directors meeting held following a no-host breakfast on Sunday morning, May 4, at the Georgia Hotel in Vancouver, BC (such time being, as they say, the custom in those days).

The Quartet Contest held the day before had seen the current District Champion **Puget Sounders**, of the Mt. Rainier Chapter, chosen to represent the District at the upcoming Kansas City Convention, with the **Varsitones** of Seattle as alternates.

Elected for the May '52 - May 53 year were: O.B. Falls (Seattle), President, Gus Witte (Medford), and T.W. Brown (Vancouver, BC), Vice Presidents, Doug Smith (Lake Washington), Treasurer, and Hub Stone (Klamath Falls), Secretary.

The Pacific Northwest and Dixie Districts were the only districts to show membership increases during 1951. The Medford, Oregon, Chapter was praised for its increase from 16 to 58 members, and it was named the first recipient of the newly created "Chapter Achievement Award" (later to be renamed the "Hub Stone Achievement Award").

Elmer Burke of Seattle reported that once again the Seattle Park Board had set aside a date for a Barbershop Music Festival in Seattle's Lincoln Park on July 27th. The 1951 event had seen an enthusiastic audience of 3000 entertained by the choruses from Lake Washington, Seattle, and Mt. Rainier Chapters, and the **White Caps** (Lake Washington), **Varsitones** and **Kornaires (Seattle)**, **Mountain-Aires** (Mt. Rainier), and **Melody**

**Men** (Tacoma) Quartets. Eddie Hotten of Mt. Rainier had led the combined choruses and quartets in singing "Coney Island," and Gene Brown of Seattle had directed "Keep America Singing."

Plans were also announced for another "International Picnic" to be held at Peace Arch Park at the city of Blaine, on the border between Washington and British Columbia. The event, under joint sponsorship of the Bellingham and Vancouver Chapters was a popular and successful example of inter-chapter activity.

More discussion was held on how to finance the District Publication now entitled *Pacific Northwest News Notes*, and a proposal for chapter remittance, equal to 50 cents per member, was sent back with the Delegates for chapter consideration.

The financial statement for the period from May 1951 through May 1952 showed District receipts of \$3,173.99; disbursements of \$2,959.64; and a balance-on-hand of \$214.35.

One subject of discussion was the growing sentiment in favor of holding a District Chorus Contest, and it was decided that the subject would be taken up at the November 8th District Board Meeting.

The eastern-most chapter in the District at the time was Glasgow, Montana, and an example of why it had the reputation as one of the most active was its 1952 show. Between February 16 and March 8, it was presented twice in Glasgow, and once each in three other cities.

At the International convention held in Kansas City, Pacific Northwest District's quartet representative, the **Puget Sounders** of the Mt. Rainier Chapter, was exclusively featured in a 15-minute radio broadcast on the Kansas City Star radio station. Those attending the convention from Pacific Northwest District in addition to the **Puget Sounders** were: O.B. Falls (Seattle), E.C. Murphy, J.H. "Bud" Leabo, Frank Graham, and George Potter (all of Eugene), and L.H. "Hub" Stone (Klamath Falls).

In 1952 the Society had 77 certified judges. Six were from the Pacific Northwest District: Gene Brown (Seattle) Balance and Blend, O.B. Falls (Seattle) Stage Presence, Bud Leabo (Eugene) Arrangement, B.A. Loftsgaard (Klamath Falls) Harmony Accuracy, E.C. Murphy (Eugene) Balance and Blend, and Mel Olene (Mt. Rainier) Voice Expression.

The following excerpts from Hub Stone's November bulletin nicely sum up the 1952 District Contest held in Portland

"Singing before an enthusiastic audience which packed the Benson High School Auditorium, the **Evergreen Four** of the new Yakima Chapter won a favorable verdict from the audience as well as from the judges at the annual District Convention on November 8th. They were three brothers plus Bill Gable and they had enough blend, balance, harmony accuracy and whatever else it took, to cause the judges to put down the right numbers on the score sheets. That these boys had really trained was quite evident. The positions of this smooth-singing quartet are: Bill Gable, tenor, Jim St.Mary, lead, Bob St.Mary, baritone, and Don St. Mary, bass. Bill had perfect coordination with the brotherly blend of his three cohorts." (Note: a later article pointed out that there were two Evergreen quartets in the District: the **Evergreen Four** of Seattle, WA and the Evergreen Quartet from Yakima, WA, "Second place was taken by the **Varsitones** of Seattle, the same quartet that had captured the alternate position in the Regional Preliminary last May. These college boys are hard to beat in a contest and they are wonderful entertainers. They are Clyde Hobbs, tenor, Jim Iddings, lead, Mervyn Clements, baritone, and Jim McLees, bass."



The Evergreen Quartet, 1952 District Champions and twice International contestants.  
From the left, Jim St. Mary, l, Bill Gable, t, Bob St. Mary, br, and Don St. Mary, bs.

With only eight quartets in the contest, additional entertainment was furnished by the **Rose City Four** of Portland; the **Chord Kings**, high school students from Everett, and the Portland Chapter Chorus.

Hub also notes: "The Master of Ceremonies job was handled efficiently by none other than Bob Perkins, who also contributed to the entertainment with his famous 'Blood on the Saddle' skit and as usual he rolled them in the aisles."

At the Board of Directors meeting (which still included the chapter delegates) on Sunday morning, Ross Relyea was announced as Vice President to replace T.W. Brown, who had resigned due to his business keeping him out of the country.

Lengthy discussion of methods of financing trips of competing quartets to International resulted in adoption of a resolution in favor of raising the assessment on chapter show gross receipts from 2% to 5%, with delegates instructed to take the matter to their chapters for consideration.

Also receiving much discussion was the subject of the first ever International Chorus Contest to be held at Detroit the following summer.

## 1953

In early 1953 it was announced that the **Cascade Chorus** of Eugene would represent the District in that contest. The contest required no qualifying round, and the District was eligible for two choruses, but the distance to Detroit was a big barrier.

The subject of a new name for the district was receiving much attention, and at the meeting of the Board of Directors held at the Regional Preliminary in Spokane, it was unanimously voted to adopt the name Evergreen, which had been suggested by Ross Relyea of the Vancouver Chapter. Also, at the suggestion of Gus Witte of the Medford Chapter, the name of the district bulletin was, in a move described by Hub Stone as "redundancy overcome," changed from *Pacific Northwest News Notes* to *Timbre*. Hub also ventured the opinion that the new name "seems to have a euphonious tingle when pronounced and is not cumbersome."

At the same meeting, the 5% parade tax was reduced to 3%. Also, a trust fund was established to accumulate funds toward the International Building Fund, which had been established with the intent of constructing a headquarters building (a plan which was abandoned with the purchase of Harmony Hall in Kenosha). Finally, "at least \$200.00 per year" was designated toward District Officers' expenses attending the two District Board meetings each year.



Eugene's **Cascade Chorus**, under the direction of Bud Leabo, competed at the first International Chorus Contest held in Detroit in 1953, coming in fourth. The chorus also competed in Washington, D.C. in 1954 (tenth place) and Minneapolis in 1956 (second).



The chorus earned a District Championship in 1955, the date of this picture.

While expressing a reminder about the International's policy of discouraging participation in non-Society contests, the Executive Committee noted it would not attempt to control the activities of quartets wishing to participate, providing the name of the Society was not used.

The number of district vice presidents was increased from two to four by unanimous vote. Elected for the 1953-54 year were: O.B. Falls (Seattle) President, Ross Relyea (Vancouver, BC), Dwight Caulkins (Spokane), B.A. Loftsgaard (Klamath Falls), Charles Ricketts (Roseburg), Vice Presidents, L.H. Stone (Klamath Falls), Secretary, and D.G. Smith (Seattle), Treasurer. O.B. Falls was transferred to New York a month later, and Weldon Sloan of Portland was elected by the District Board to fill the unexpired president's term.

Yakima's **Evergreen Quartet**, reigning District Champs, was chosen to represent the district at Detroit, with the **Stratochords** named as alternates.

Evergreen's representative in the first ever International Chorus Contest, the only entry from west of Kansas, was a force to be reckoned with. Director Bud Leabo and a chorus of 24 finished fourth in a field of 16. With a possible point total of 3000, they were 8 points below third place, and nine points below second. Comments from knowledgeable witnesses from various parts of the Society indicated that the **Cascade Chorus** demonstrated that a chorus could sing like a quartet. The Johnny Appleseed District Bulletin was quoted as expressing the opinion that they sounded like a 25-man Schmitt Brothers.



Both the **Cascade Chorus** and the **Evergreen Quartet** had drawn 13th position, with the Chorus Contest scheduled for June 13.

An outstanding example of public service was demonstrated in early 1953 by the **Lake Oswego Four**, a very popular quartet for many years, and charter members of the Portland Chapter, when they purchased an iron lung with proceeds from their appearances and donated it to the Polio Foundation.

The District Contest, for the second year in a row, was held at Benson High School in Portland. Winners, after two previous second place finishes, were the **Varsitones** of Seattle. The battle was hard fought, however, with the **Sharp Four** of Eugene finishing only 46 points behind, and the **Timber Tones**, also of Eugene, only 2 points behind them in third. Youth had certainly prevailed, for the members of the **Varsitones** were all of college-age, and the second place **Sharp Four** was made up of 16- and 17-year-old high school students.



**THE VARSITONES, SEATTLE, WASH.**

**The Varsitones**, Seattle, were 1953 District Champs.

They competed twice at International.

From the left, Clyde Hobbs, t, Jim Iddings, l, Merv Clements, br, and Jim McLees, bs.

Once again, the judging panel was all Evergreen: Bud Leabo on Arrangement, Benny Loftsgaard of Klamath Falls on Harmony Accuracy, Gene Brown of Seattle on Balance and Blend, Mel Olene of Buckley, WA on Voice Expression, Bob Perkins of Coos Bay on Stage Presence and Marvin Knutson of Eugene as Secretary.

Past International President Charles Merrill of Reno, NV did the emcee work in inimitable style, and the **Portland** and **Cascade Choruses**, plus the outgoing Quartet Champions, the **Evergreen Quartet**, rounded out the show.

Before completion of the interstate bridge and causeway connecting Oregon and Washington at the mouth of the Columbia River, travel was accomplished by a long ferry trip. The Astoria Chapter demonstrated some innovative planning for their 1953 show, by holding the afterglow aboard one of the ferries. There was ample time during the round trip to be served and plenty of singing by the eight quartets from the show.

The Coos Bay Chapter may have set some kind of a record with their September Charter Show, by featuring five choruses (**Crescent City, Brookings, Roseburg, Eugene, and Coos Bay**), and seven quartets (**Four By Fours** of Crescent City, **Postal Notes** of Roseburg, **City Knickers, Timber Tones, Mixed-Up Four**, and **Jasper Jills**, all of Eugene, and **Web Foot Four** of Portland).

By the end of 1953 the Evergreen District had 27 chapters, 766 members, and 44 registered quartets. Extension prospects were receiving attention in nearly every corner of the District. Discussion continued on the need for a District Chorus Contest, for methods of financing quartets competing at the International, and how best to serve the needs of the growing membership.

## 1954

The chartering of the Jerome, Idaho Chapter on February 19, 1954, marked the first time that the Evergreen District had at least one chapter in each of the states and provinces within its borders, and the first time the Society had a chapter in every state.

It was also in early 1954 that the District learned that with its continuing growth in membership it had achieved sufficient size to be eligible for a second quartet at the upcoming International Contest to be held in Washington, D.C. At the time quartet numbers were assigned to Districts depending on district size.

With two slots at stake, eleven of the Districts' quartets traveled to Tacoma for the May 1 Regional Preliminary. The **Varsitones** of Seattle and the **Evergreen Quartet** of Yakima qualified to be the representatives, with the **Sharp Four** of Eugene named as alternates. Also competing were the **Bremertones** of Bremerton, **Gaslighters** of Everett, **Medicine Men** and **Tac-O-Chords** of Tacoma, **Bellevue Squares** of Lake Washington, **Experimental Four** of Seattle, **Chord-inators** of Yakima, and **Surf Chords** of Kirkland.

The judging panel was once again all Evergreen, consisting of: Bud Leabo, Bennett Loftagaard, Mel Olene, Gene Brown, Bob Perkins, and Sec. Marvin Knutson. It was also announced that J.H. Leabo (Arrangement), and B.A. Loftsgaard (Harmony Accuracy) better known as "Bud and Benny", had been picked for the judging panel for the quartet contest at the International Contest in Washington, D.C.

Elected to lead the District for the coming year were: President, Dwight Caulkins (Spokane), Vice Presidents Elmer Burke (Seattle), W.G. Cousins (Vancouver B.C.), Dr. John Hickman (Astoria), and Charles Grayshell (Brookings), Secretary L.H. Stone (Klamath Falls) and Treasurer Marv Knutson (Eugene). The Chapter Achievement Award was won by the Yakima Chapter.

April 24, 1954, saw the first meeting of the Puget Sound Chord Benders Association" (PSCBA). This was an inter-chapter organization consisting originally of Bremerton, Everett, Lake Washington, Mt.

Rainier, Seattle, and Tacoma Chapters, the purpose was one of mutual assistance in solving problems, cooperative handling of various events, and mutual promotion of barbershopping interests. PSCBA was considered by its members and observers alike to be an outstanding and successful example of inter-chapter cooperation.

The Edmonton Chapter was chartered on May 28, 1954. With 74 men listed on the charter, it was the largest chapter at time of charter in the district. And before yearend it was close to 100 members.

The **Cascade Chorus** of Eugene once again represented Evergreen District at the 1954 International Chorus Contest, and with 27 men on stage made a good showing against the much larger choruses, finishing tenth. The chorus had arrived a day later than planned, due to mechanical problems with their chartered plane, and had had very little time to recover from the exhaustion of the trip before the competition. Good performances were also given by the **Evergreen Quartet** and **Varsitones**, finishing 27th and 30th. It is interesting to note that the **Varsitones** tied with the Confederates, who went on to become International Champions in 1956. The **Varsitones** actually finished one place higher by dint of a higher Harmony Accuracy score.

The Everett, WA chapter hosted the 1954 District Quartet Contest and Convention on the weekend of November 6. Thirteen quartets participated, with the **Sharp Four** of Eugene being crowned as the new District Champions. Tenor Bob Huffman, lead Ron Lodge, bari Jerry Holloway, and bass Wilson Barber (all in their senior year in high school) nosed out the **Fouregonians** of Portland and the **C-Farers** of Seattle, in a close contest.



### **The Sharp Four, Eugene**

1954 District Champions and three time International contestants.

From the left, Bob Huffman, t, Ron Lodge, l, Wilson Barber, bs, and Jerry Holloway, br.

The judging panel of J.H. Leabo, Mel Olene, Bennett Loftsgaard, Raleigh McVicker, and Bob Perkins (still all Evergreen), was joined by a practice panel of twenty-two applicants. The large number of Evergreen members becoming involved with the judging program was a testimonial to the recruiting efforts of the Judge Candidate Committee made up of Bud Leabo, Benny Loftsgaard, Bob Perkins, and Bud Concie. The hope then, as now, was to develop a large enough number of certified judges from within the district to avoid the necessity and expense of importing a large percentage of the panels from other districts. Special note was made of the fact that the judges score sheets came with a new feature — the sheets were fit with carbon paper so that copies were available immediately!

The newly crowned Champions, the **Sharp Four**, learned quickly that the role is not always easy. To appear on the Lethbridge, Alberta show on December 4, they left Eugene by plane at 2:00 p.m. Friday afternoon, arriving Great Falls at 10:00 p.m. There they were met by car for the drive to Lethbridge arriving at 3:00 a.m. Saturday. After the show they departed by car at 3:00 a.m., arriving at Great Falls at 10:00 a.m., and they were back in Eugene at 7:00 p.m. Sunday. Good thing they **were young**.

Considerable effort was being made to establish a District Chorus Contest at the fall District Convention. By 1954 Evergreen was the only District without such a contest.

### **1955**

The 27 chapters and 905 members in the District at the start of 1955 (1,029 before the end of '55) reflected an increase of 338% since 1948. Extension activity was high, with potential chapters being explored and/or developed in nearly all areas within the district.

The chartering of the Calgary Chapter on May 14, 1955, saw the welcome rebirth of a former chapter (see Appendix I) under the guidance of Secretary Al Fraser. Al went on to serve in many capacities including Judge, District Vice President and President (he was the first Canadian to hold the District post), and International Board Member and Vice President (the first Canadian Vice President), before multiple sclerosis forced his

retirement. Also in the chartering group was Chapter President Hugh Ingraham, who later spent 25 years on the International staff, including ten years as Executive Director.

The Regional Preliminary held May 7, 1955, was hosted by the Yakima Chapter, and was attended by International President Berney Simner and International Secretary Robert Hafer. At the District meeting, after much discussion, following months of consideration, a motion was approved to hold a district chorus contest in conjunction with the fall district quartet contest. The winning chorus was to be declared the District Champion, but it was understood that the harsh reality of financing a trip to the International contest in Minneapolis might result in a different chorus competing there.

Officers elected for the forthcoming year were President, Dwight Calkins, Vice Presidents, Elmer Burke, W. G. Cousins, Marvin Knutson and Warren (Bill) Burtness, Secretary, L. H. (Hub) Stone, Treasurer, W.F. Gable. The District Achievement Award was presented to the Cascade Chapter. It was on this occasion that the award was given the name "The Hub Stone Award."

Twelve quartets showed up for the contest. For the first time there was an elimination contest held on Saturday afternoon and the original dozen quartets was reduced to seven finalists. The panel of judges, using I.P. Berney Simner for Stage Presence and International Secretary Bob Hafer for Balance and Blend, and abetted by Evergreeners Ben Loftsgaard for Harmony Accuracy, Bud Leabo for Arrangement and Mel Olene for Voice Expression determined that the two Evergreen entrants for the International Contest in Miami to be the **Varsitones** (now with Paul Brown at bass in place of Jim McLees) of Seattle and the **Sharp Four** (now all seniors at Eugene High School). Earning the alternate spot was the **Foregonians of Portland**.

The two quartets did their best at International in Miami but were unable to make their way into the top 15. Recently elected District President Dwight Calkins was elected to the International Board.

Preparations for the fall convention included plans for a district chorus to perform two "district" songs: "I Love the Way You Roll Your Eyes" and "Southern Roses." Everyone was expected to learn his part and a chorus of 250 was anticipated. Also, in a move to encourage an "On to Minnie" movement to the 1956 International in Minneapolis, that city's own quartet, the highly renowned **Atomic Bums**, had been booked to participate in the Saturday night show. This move also made it possible to use the Bum's Luke Sletten as a Balance and Blend judge and a keynote speaker ---- several singing birds with one figurative stone.

The convention was held on the first weekend in November in Portland. For the first time in the district, the contests were held in the afternoon and a show was put on in the evening featuring the top quartets and choruses and local talent. The Oriental Theater was sold out and the crowd enthusiastic. The **Model T Four** of Vancouver (Charlie Pullham, Earl Cousins, Don Franks and Gordon Cousins) won the quartet contest, and in a close finish, the **Cascade Chorus** won the first ever district chorus competition. The **Lake Washington** chorus was second. The **Atomic Bums** were every bit as good as their advance publicity promised and the district chorus performed, according to reports, at 250 strong.



**The Model T Four, Vancouver**

1955 District Champions and one time International contestant.

From the left, Charlie Pullham, t, Earl Cousins, l, Gordy Cousins, bs, and Don Franks, br.

In keeping with rules set before the contest the **Cascade Chorus** was given 30 days to decide if it wished to make the trip to International. Although the chorus would have to rely on its own finances to get to Minneapolis, the decision to go was made well within the noted grace period.

There is a note in the final bulletin of the year that the new director of the Salem chorus was R.L. McClintic. Dick would go on to make a name for himself as director, quartetter and judge.

## 1956

Just two weeks prior to the 1956 International Mid-Winter Convention to be held in Denver, Evergreen District's "Mr. Barbershop," Bud Leabo, was asked to fill in and conduct a craft session at the convention. According to witnesses, after a two-hour session he "had the place actually jumping with exclamatory praise for the best job ever done."

It is interesting to note that in a report of actions taken at the International Mid-Winter Board Meeting "a decision was not reached, as to continuing International chorus competition after this year."

A Barbershop Quartet Contest was held in January in conjunction with the "Dads Day Weekend" at the University of Oregon, with nine quartets from the campus competing in the preliminary round. Winners were the **Millrace Four**, representing the Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity. This group was known elsewhere as the **Sharp Four**, 1954 District Champions. It was reported that they, and the other quartets, were popular entertainers at functions on the campus.

At the District Executive Meeting held in Portland on March 17, a decision was reached to recommend to the House of Delegates to again hold a District Chorus Contest in conjunction with the District Convention and Quartet Contest scheduled for Vancouver, BC. The winner would represent the District at the 1957 International Contest in Los Angeles, if in fact a Chorus Contest was held then.

A chorus could not win as Evergreen District Champion in successive years at that time; so if the current champion had the highest score it would be the representative at the International Contest, and the next highest score would be new Champion. If a chorus other than the current champs had the highest score, it would wear both titles.

The 1956 International Preliminary Contest was held on May 5 and 6 at Roseburg, under the chairmanship of Paul Cacy. Chosen to represent the district at Minneapolis were the **Model T Four** of Vancouver and the **Sharp Four** of Eugene. Alternates, for the second time, were the **Foregonians** of Portland. Also competing were the **Sea Clefs**, Coos Bay, **Capitol Chordsmen**, Salem, **Emerald Aires**, Eugene, and **Four Bars** and **Cass Street Four** of Roseburg.

Judging the contest were: Arrangement, Bud Leabo, Voice Expression, Mel Olene, Harmony Accuracy, Jack Briggs, Balance and Blend, Gene Brown, Stage Presence, Bob Perkins, and Secretary, Marv Knutson, once again, all Evergreen.

The only other certified judge in the District at the time, Cmdr. R.H."Sev" Severance, was serving in the Navy in "distant places." In addition to these, there were 18 Candidate Judges and applicants in the District working toward certification.

Elected to lead the District were: Elmer Burke of Seattle, President, Marv Knutson of Eugene, Gordie Cousins of Vancouver, Bill Burtness of Portland, and J.G. Ramsey of Everett as Vice Presidents, Hub Stone of Klamath Falls, Secretary, and Bill Gable of Yakima, Treasurer. Continuing as International Board Member was Dwight Caulkins of Spokane.

At the House of Delegates Meeting Achievement Award Chairman Jack Briggs announced that the Hub Stone Chapter Achievement Award for 1955 had been won by the Vancouver Chapter. Dwight Caulkins praised Gus Witte of Medford who, in 1950 had constructed the Achievement Award plaque, and who, in 1953, had also made the gavel used by the District President.

On a motion by Warren Harding, seconded by Floyd Turner, it was voted to again hold a Chorus Contest at the Fall Convention.

The International Chorus Contest in Minneapolis saw all 14 Districts represented, with the **Cascade Chorus** of Eugene finishing in second place behind the **Ambassadors of Harmony** of Michigan City, Indiana. The 42-man **Cascade Chorus**, under the direction of Bud Leabo, singing his arrangements of "Waiting For The Robert E. Lee" and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling", demonstrated that Evergreen District was a force to be reckoned with. The contest setting required the choruses to march on and off the stage in view of the audience, and the entrances and exits were judged as part of the Stage Presence score.

The **House Brothers** quartet, Dan, Dave, Tom, and Bill House, who had been mainstays of the Klamath Falls Chapter for many years, and who were a very popular quartet throughout the Evergreen District, made appearances on the Arthur Godfrey radio and television shows in June of 1956. They were accompanied on the trip to New York by Benny Loftsgaard, who had long served in various capacities in Evergreen District but had by then moved from Klamath Falls to Sacramento, and was directing the chorus there.

On October 6 over 150 enthusiasts attended a craft session held in Seattle. The event was conducted by Bud Leabo. He was assisted by fellow judges Jack Briggs, Mel Olene and Gene Brown. **The Gaslighters** quartet was there to demonstrate the theories put forth. It was one of many well-received barbershop craft programs to be held in various parts of the District.

The eighth annual District Quartet Contest (and second annual District Chorus Contest) was held at Vancouver on November 3, 1956, under the chairmanship of Chris Lapine. The contests were held back-to-back on Saturday afternoon, with the top three quartets and top two choruses joining with the **Mid-States Four** of Chicago for a show that evening. The appearance of the **Mid-States Four** was based on a theory that to get the maximum number of District members to attend the convention, it was necessary to have a "headliner." The theory was soon proven unnecessary as the quality of the District's quartets and choruses continued to improve.



**The School Masters, Seattle**  
1956 District Champions  
Walt Venema, Roderick Stubbs, Orv Nyland and Bill Sass.

The **School Masters** quartet, made up of four teachers from Seattle (Walt Venema, Roderick Stubbs, Orv Nyland and Bill Sass), won out over eleven other foursomes to become the 1956 District Champions. Finishing second were the very popular **Gaslighters** of Everett followed by the **Spokanesmen** of Spokane, **Capitol Chordsmen** of Salem, **Timbre Fellers** of Lake Washington, **Note Clippers** and **Four Cads** of Spokane, **Far Westers** of Tacoma, **Cascadians** of Yakima, **Quadra Chords** and **Debonaires** of Vancouver, and the **Mellow Bellow Four** of Portland.

The International was represented at the convention by Robert Hafer, International Secretary; and O.B. Falls, who was a Past Evergreen District President, but was by then living in New York and serving as an International vice president. Two of Evergreen's limited judging cadre, Bud Leabo and Gene Brown, were directing choruses, and certified Secretary Marv Knutson was singing in a competing chorus. So the chorus contest was judged by Jack Briggs, Mel Olene, Bob Perkins (all from Evergreen), O.B. Falls, Robert Hafer, and, as chairman, Marty Mendro, (member of the Mid-States Four and Past International C&J Chairman).

In a very close and somewhat controversial finish, the **Lake Washington Skippers**, under the direction of Gene Brown, was declared the 1956 District Chorus Champions and was named to represent the District at the 1957 International Contest to be held in Los Angeles.

The other competing choruses and directors were: **Cascade**, Bud Leabo; **Seattle**, Robert Frisbie; **Everett**, Floyd Turner, **Spokane**, Clancy Schierman, **Yakima**, Herschel Coleman, **Salem Senataires**, Dick McClintic, **Vancouver**, T.W. Brown, and **Portland**, Jerry Nyhan.



**The Lake Washington Skippers, directed by Gene Brown**  
District Champions in 1956 and 1958. Competed Internationally at Los Angeles in 1957 (to a second-place finish) and at Chicago in 1959 (to a ninth-place finish).

## 1957

In his report to the District after the 1957 International Mid-Winter Convention, District President Elmer Burke reported that the International Headquarters Building Committee had been offered a large and beautifully built mansion on the shore of Lake Michigan near Kenosha, WI. The building had been built in 1933 at a cost of over \$500,000 and was available to the Society for \$75,000. President Burke urged Evergreen members to respond to the Committee's request for a \$10 per member pledge (payable at \$2 per year) to help fund the purchase. Gene Haworth of Seattle was appointed District Building Fund Chairman.

March 2nd, 1957, saw the **Salem Chapter** hosting another of the very popular Barbershop Craft sessions being conducted around the District by the tireless Bud Leabo, assisted in this instance by Gene Brown, Mel Olene, and the **Capitol Chordsmen** quartet.

On April 5, Bud presented a demonstration for the Northwest Division of the M.E.N.C. at Boise, Idaho. Assisting in the demonstration were the 32 voice **Cascade Chorus** and the **Sharp Four, Scrap Iron Four, and Night Howls quartets**.

Following the M.E.N.C. appearance, the chorus and quartets joined forces with the Jerome, Idaho Chapter Chorus and quartets from Nampa, Boise, and Jerome, to present a Friday night show at the Mountain Home Air Force Base. After an overnight stay at the base, they traveled on to Jerome to present a highly successful Saturday night show.

May 4 saw 200 members from 22 of the District's 27 chapters gather in Salem for the International Preliminary Contest under the Chairmanship of Dick Roth. Seventeen quartets took part in a very close contest. With only five points between the top two, and four points between fourth and sixth, a combination of youth and experience won out. The **Sharp Four** of Eugene, and **Four Do Matics** of Seattle, finished victorious and would represent the District at the International Contest in Los Angeles. None of the eight qualifying members was much if any above college age, but seven had previous International Contest experience.

Del Green, who had joined Jim Iddings, Clayton Lacey, and Merv Clements of the **Varsitones** to become the **Four Do Matics**, had competed against them at the previous International Contest as a member of the **Travelaires** from Far Western District.

Elected to lead the District for the coming year were: Elmer Burke, President, W.A. Burtness, W.G. Cousins, Don Robison, and H.S. Samson Vice Presidents, L.H. Stone, Secretary, and Paul Cacy, Treasurer.

When the dust settled after the International Chorus Contest at Los Angeles in July 1957, the chorus representing the Evergreen District had, for the second time in as many years, finished in second place. The Lake Washington Skippers, under the direction of Gene Brown and singing "Row, Row, Row" and "Roll Them Roly Poly Eyes," had wowed both the audience and the judges, but couldn't quite catch the Californians of Berkeley under the direction of Dave Stevens.

Members of the International Board of Directors were still being elected by the other members of that group, and Bud Leabo was elected to serve a three-year term in that capacity.

The mystery was where Bud got the time and energy to do all things he was doing. He was cranking out arrangements while very successfully directing a top-quality chorus. He was an Arrangement judge. He sang tenor in a very active quartet. He was coaching quartets at the drop of a hat and heading up various committees including C&J and Barbershop Craft. The latter had him conducting classes in all corners of the district. In addition, he had to somehow squeeze in enough time to earn a living heading up his specialty lumber products business.

The District Contest held in Seattle on November 2nd, under the Chairmanship of Ray Pekie, saw the **Cascade Chorus** of Eugene once again victorious. As 1957 District Champions they were on their way to their fourth International Chorus Contest, this time in Columbus, Ohio. The **Salem Senateaires**, under the direction of Dick McClintic, finished second.

The Quartet Contest was won by the **Four Do Matics** of Seattle, with the **Timbre Fellers** of Lake Washington, and the **Four Cads** of Spokane finishing second and third respectively. Others in the contest were the **Capitol Chordsmen** of Salem, **Rain-Aires** of Lake Washington; and **Web Foot Four** and **Mellow Bellow Four** of Portland.



The Four Do Matics, Seattle, WA (photo 1958 Intl)

1957 District Champions and nine time International contestants – their best finish was a sixth place in 1962.  
From the left, Jim Iddings, l, Clayton Lacey, t, Merv Clements, br and Del Green, bs.



Some new faces were seen in the judge's pit, with Evergreens' Abe Semrau judging Stage Presence for both contests, and Jack Hicks taking over for Jack Briggs on Harmony Accuracy for the quartet contest. Val Hicks was imported from Pasadena for the Arrangement category, due to Bud Leabo being busy directing his chorus in the contest.

Sixteen delegates representing Longview, Portland, Mt Hood, Salem, and Cascade Chapters, met at the home of Bill Rotramel in Portland on November 13th. Purpose of the gathering was to officially form the Columbia Chord Benders Association (CCBA), in the image of the highly successful Puget Sound Chord Benders Association which had been operating in the greater Seattle area for some time. Purpose of both was to coordinate and promote inter-chapter activities.

## 1958

At the International Mid-Winter Convention held in Ashville, NC, Evergreen District President Elmer Burke attended the first-ever District Presidents Meeting.

One of the decisions reached by the International Board at that Mid-Winter was that choruses competing at the International Contests would thereafter form behind curtains, instead of marching on, as had been previously done.

At the meeting of the District Executive Board held in "Elmer's Woodshed," in the basement of Elmer's home, on February 22, the decision was made to separate the district into four parts, with a District Vice President to be elected from each. The four "Areas" were:

- Area 1. Chapters in the Province of British Columbia and Anacortes in the State of Washington.
- Area 2. Chapters in the State of Washington, with the exception of Anacortes.
- Area 3. Chapters in the Province of Alberta and State of Montana.
- Area 4. Chapters in the States of Oregon and Idaho, and Crescent City in Northern California.

At the Regional Preliminary contest, held in Calgary under the chairmanship of Al Fraser, the sell-out crowd of 2,700 at the new Jubilee Auditorium saw the **Timbre Fellers** from Lake Washington (Paul Helton, Jack Rendle, Bob Rychard and Larry Adolfson) and the **Four Do Matics** chosen to represent the District at the upcoming International. The **Model T Four** was named alternate. A total of eleven quartets were judged by a panel consisting of Mel Olene, J.H. Leabo, Jack Briggs, Gene Brown, and A.B. Semrau, with Art Murphy of Spokane as Secretary.

Bud Leabo, who was still serving as International Board Member, was elected District President for the first time, Vice Presidents were selected from specific areas. These new VP's were Ralph Fuller of Vancouver, Area 1, John Chellin of Seattle, Area 2, Al Fraser of Calgary, Area 3, and Don Robison of Eugene, Area 4. Hub Stone and Paul Cacy were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer.

At the International Contest in Columbus, the **Four Do Matics** finished in 21st place, and the **Timbre Fellers** in 24th. The Eugene **Cascade Chorus** finished 7th in the chorus contest. Hub Stone reported that the **Four Do Matics** as the only quartet at the contest of whom the audience demanded an encore.

At the Evergreen District Contest, held in Portland under the chairmanship of Arnold Arnston, the Quartet Champions were the **Timbre Fellers** of the Lake Washington chapter. The chorus contest was won by the **Lake Washington Skippers Chorus**. There were 15 quartets and eight choruses entered in the contests. Notable by their presence alone were the **Four Flushers** from Red Deer and the **Northernaires** from Camrose as well as the 50-man chorus from Calgary. The trip for all involved an almost 2,000-mile round trip but those groups were ready for it and performed in an outstanding fashion at the contests. One abiding memory of that weekend was the warm farewell given the Calgary group as it left the afterglow early on Sunday morning to board the bus for the long trip back to Calgary. One could feel the love of the whole district in that one moment. Overcoming the great distances and initial small numbers, the district, Pacific Northwest and Evergreen had, in ten years grown to respectable mid-youth. The future looked warmly bright.



**The Timbre Fellers, Lake Washington, 1958**

District Champions and three time International contestants.

From the left, Paul Helton, t, Jack Rendle, l, Bob Rychard, br, and Larry Adolphson, bs,

One of the highlights of the chorus contest was the appearance, as the last "competitor," of the Coos Bay chapter chorus. Having less than the then minimum number of singers, they, by previous arrangement with Bud Leabo, were announced last, and appeared from various parts of the auditorium in full pirate costume. Running to the judge's pit, shooting off blanks from pirate pistols, they "captured" the judges, who were unaware of what was going on, and took them on stage, where they were forced to sing a song with the Coos Bay group. By the time the chorus was finished, the scores from the contest had been tallied, and the winners were announced without the usual delay. The judges, in addition to Bud Leabo on Arrangement included Mel Olene on Voice Expression, Jack Briggs on Harmony Accuracy, Everett Ball on Balance and Blend, Bob Perkins on Stage Presence and Marv Knutson as Secretary.

On November 19, KVAL-TV, in Eugene, began running the Cascade Chorus, singing Bud Leabo's arrangement of "The Lord's Prayer" to close each broadcast day.