

## ***Second don't hardly count for nuttin'!***

by **Tom Wheatley**, woodshed lead

At the Danny Cuthbert Woodshed Weekend Convention, I had the opportunity to partake in the quartet contest. This event is hosted annually by the Dundalk Chapter as part of its ongoing effort to preserve the ancient and honorable art of harmonizing on the spot. In the early days of barbershopping, woodshedding was the normal mode, since written arrangements were scarce as hen's teeth.

In one form or another, there were a total of 62 quartets competing. However, don't confuse these quartets with the ones you might see on the Wildwood stage this fall. Those are "organized" quartets. I hesitate to say that the ones at the woodshed are "disorganized." A better description would be as randomized quartets. Here's how it works.

A bunch of tenors, leads, baritones and basses place their names into four separate buckets. Our quartet assignment specialist, **Bud Lauman**, grabs one card from each bucket, and lo and behold, we have our first quartet. With seven more drawings, we have eight quartets assembled. Now the fun begins.

Each lead of the first two quartets selects a song, without advice from the harmony parts. Then the quartets get to harmonize on the spot, or to "woodshed." One of the objectives is to not use an arranged version of a song. A panel of judges votes on which quartet did the best job of woodshedding. The winning quartet advances to round 2, and the losing quartet is out. This process is repeated three more times, thus reducing the eight quartets to four.



*Left to Right, Bill Fogle, Tom Wheatley, Leon Bernard and Bob Fogle harmonize on "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," as they compete for the WW19 Danny Cuthbert Woodshed Weekend Convention championship. The event was held February 17-18 at the Holiday Inn Select in Timonium, Md. They came in second, but who cares?*

Now more fun begins. Our honorable quartet assignment specialist is never satisfied to let a good thing continue, so he shuffles the members of the quartets, and four new quartets are formed. These four compete against each other, and the two surviving quartets are reshuffled, compete and we are left with one quartet that has won the right to "go to the finals."

All together, we have four such rounds, yielding members of four quartets that have qualified to sing in the finals. These 16 singers have won the right to wear the "Final 4" cap. Now it's time for **Bud Laumann** to do his thing. The 16 singers are shuffled to form four new quartets, and the process proceeds once more.



Bud Laumann,  
quartet shuffler

Four quartets sing, five judges judge, and we are left with two quartets, which are shuffled for the last time. Each of these last two quartets gets to sing two songs, and the quartet with the highest number of votes from the panel of judges is declared the Woodshed Weekend champion quartet. They are decorated with medals, get their pictures taken, and are generally acclaimed as heroes.

However, the quartet they competed against is doomed to oblivion, except for getting to wear a cap. No olive wreaths, no ticker tape parades, no going to Disney World.

These runner-up guys sang just as many songs as the winners, got shuffled all around just like the "big" guys and worked hard, too. Second place don't hardly count for nuttin' in this world, does it?

And so it is that I take this opportunity to laud and honor our second place Woodshed Weekend quartet, and to give them recognition befitting their efforts. This year's almost-winners were **Bill Fogle**, tenor; **Tom Wheatley**, lead; **Bob Fogle**, bari; and **Leon Bernard** completing the foursome as bass.

Actually, the glory, fun, and fellowship is provided in ample measure in the process of taking part in the Woodshed Weekend program. Of that, we had a goodly supply. Before the contest, during breaks, and at any available time, quartets can be found pulling a few old chestnuts out of the fire, and roasting them over the warmth of woodshedding. If you haven't taken part in one of these events, put the third weekend in February, 2007 on your social calendar. You'll be all the happier for it.