

Keeping the dream alive

by Tom Wheatley, editor, Dundalk Charivari

The scene wasn't on the Roof Garden at the Tulsa Club, Tulsa Oklahoma, and the date wasn't April 11, 1938. No, indeed. That was the location and date of the first meeting of the like minded quartet singing individuals who came to the original meeting of what was to become SPEBSQSA. However, the meeting at the Crown Plaza hotel in Timonium, Md. on February 6-7, 2009 provided a lot of similar enthusiasm as 62 quartets competed in the 22nd annual Danny Cuthbert Woodshed Weekend Convention. It was an event to behold.

What we had in common with O.C. Cash's first meeting was a lot of enthusiasm and singing without arrangements, outside of the shuffling arrangements that kept Quartet Rotation Chairman Bud Laumann busy throughout the weekend shifting the personnel all around to form the various foursomes as the weekend progressed.

Now, why would he do that, you may ask. Go ahead, ask! Well, the 'contest' is a thing to behold of itself. Alright, you have to realize that this set of 62 quartets came from only 42 singers, which caused the juggling and shuffling to make for some mix-and-match artistry. There were four flights, in each of which eight combinations of quartets competed, with the judging being a one-on-one win-lose decision for pairs of quartets. With four quartets worth of singers surviving their respective flights in the first round, Bud then shuffled those personnel to create four entirely new quartets. These four competed, leaving two, which were again shuffled and competed to determine a flight winner.

When the four flights were over, there remained 16 barbershoppers who advanced to the 'Round of the Final Four.' Shuffling and competing continued until a single quartet was declared to be the winner.

But that was only a part of the quartetting that went on. Before, in between, and after these various sessions, impromptu foursomes could be heard all around the meeting room and hallways, keeping the dream of O. C. Cash and Rupert Hall alive. OK, I'll confess. They weren't singing to keep the dream alive. They were singing for the same reason Cash and Hall sang, and that was to have fun. And a ton of fun there was, especially for the participants. As Freddie King once said, "Woodshedding isn't the greatest thing to listen to, but it's a lot of fun to do."

If you want to be part of this program to maintain the dreams of our founders, or you just want to have a lot of fun quartetting as it was originally done, come to the 23rd annual Danny Cuthbert Woodshed Weekend Convention to be held in the Baltimore, Md. area early in February, 2010. Come prepared to sing at the drop of a hat. Heck, who needs a hat?

The exact location and date has yet to be determined, but details will be posted to the www.dundalk.org web site as the year progresses. Photos and detailed results of this year's gathering will also be posted there shortly.



Leon Bernard, Glen Schilberg, John Russo, Uri Carpenter
Winners: Danny Cuthbert Memorial Woodshed Weekend
Quartet Contest, February 6-7, 2009