

Phoenix April 2009, BQPA Quartet Festival

Hey guys and gals,

The Spring, 2009 ,BQPA Quartet Festival is history. It was a rousing success with 150 attendees in total. Arrivals of the early birds began on Wednesday, April 1, with about a dozen singers. The Grace Inn Resort, in Phoenix AZ, where the Festival was held served our activities well. There was scheduled golfing on both Thursday and Friday morning which was enjoyed by several, with singing on every tee.

By Thursday evening the place was ringing with chords. I would guess about 50 singers were sharing fellowship and gathering in fours. By Friday afternoon the singing room and lobby area was awash in singers sharing friendship and engaging in quarteting.

The draw for the Friday evening contest was made around 3:00 PM and those participating were scampering around trying to find their quartet members and get in a bit of practice before the scheduled contest at 7:00 PM. The contest was made up of 72 singers in 18 competing quartets. a judging staff of 4 people had been assembled (Joe Salz, Terry Aramian, Jack Martin and Joe's wife served as the chairman of judges) with some brief judging criteria and the best performing quartet, won the contest. The entertainment was really good, especially the quartet Gerry Carroll sang in. Gerry was a riot!

Our performance venue was a very large poolside canopy/tent with an excellent sound system provided by the Paradise Valley, AZ chapter and operated by member Stu Willcox. The audience was at full capacity and there were 18 pick-up quartets that performed in the contest, while the Arizona mini-tornado winds tested the canopy's framework. There were times when we wondered if the canopy was going to survive. In spite of all the wind and noise, we did end up with a champion quartet.

This fun filled event was capped by an appearance of the 2009 Senior Quartet Champions, "Audacity." They captivated the audience with their performance. They again performed a limited number of songs at the afterglow in the Lobby of the Hotel. A bit later Later many of us enjoyed the presence of Teddy Bradshaw, Paul Graham (of the Western Continentals) John Erickson, (of Chords Unlimited fame) and the gentle giant, Bill Meyers who sang with the "Citations" quartet and later won gold with "Revival!" There were other earlier SPEBSQSA quartet members in attendance, but their names escape me. I have a good memory, but it is short!

Saturday morning found about 75 folks attending the semi-annual general meeting of BQPA members. Every one expressed their satisfaction with the new BQPA logo lapel pin that had been developed and provided by Board of Directors. (thanks Jim Gallagher) The pin is about an inch and a half tall, and three quartets inch wide in the image of the BQPA Logo. Members were encouraged to wear this pin at all Barbershop functions. Several other forward looking programs were discussed for the future. Enthusiasm was high!

By Saturday afternoon the singing room, which was the hotel bar and lounge, was filled with wall to wall singers and other supporters of the BQPA. (The lounge was quite large and accommodating)

Saturday evening was enjoyed by all with a planned, parade of quartets, show. Paul Ludwig, from the Tuscon area put together a splendid presentation of 8 organized quartets from the surrounding area. They come from Tuscon, Las Vegas, Southern California and various communities in the Phoenix area. One of the quartets, I believe their name was the "OK Corral" was dressed in western attire, playing guitars and singing authentic western music. It was a refreshing change-up from the traditional Barbershop music we all love. The final quartet performing was "Oasis" who had done quite well in the recent FWD/RMD BHS prelims. Their great singing will linger in my memory for some time. The Arizona winds of Friday night had subsided which added a welcome flair to the festivities.

The remainder of the evening was enjoyed by all attendees and guests, hanging out in the hotel bar and lounge (singing room) engaging in all kinds of quarteting and bonding of friendships . Besides the various singing activities, the colorful dress of the quartets provided a pleasant visual atmosphere. There was such a crowd that the quarteting activities spilled over into the hotel lobby and surrounding hallways and corners, somewhat reminiscent of the lobbies of the headquarters hotel of earlier SPEBSQSA conventions.

I might add that the BQPA has experienced a substantial growth in membership since our September, 2008 gathering in Chicago. It appears that we must be doing something right.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the great buffet style, hot breakfast that came as complimentary with renting of a room. I have to say it was as good as they come with very little to be desired beyond what was provided. The prepared meals from the menu served for lunch and dinner was very tasty and reasonable in cost. Also the early April weather in Phoenix was wonderful. Sunny and warm in the daylight hours, with a moderate cooling breeze in the evenings, with a couple hours on Friday night being the exception.

Sunday morning found many of the festival attendees grabbing the hotel/airport shuttle, to make their flights to home. There were quite a few folks that had driven from Orange County and other southern California cities as well as the southern Nevada area. Actually, there were attendees from most every district in the BHS which says volumes for the fun and fellowship that exists in the BQPA activities.

I think one of the strong drawing points of the BQPA activities is that, we do not need to be entertained by outsiders. By and large, we provide our own entertainment by quarteting with one another. We are definitely a participating bunch as opposed to being spectators.

Negotiations are underway with the Grace Inn Resort in Phoenix for the Spring of 2010. The second weekend of April has been reserved, pending the completion of a contract. Plan now to be with us.

The next gathering of the BQPA will be another exciting Quartet Festival to be held September 10-12, 2009, in Chicago. Information can be found on the BQPA website, www.bqpa.com

Hope you will all consider joining us in Chicago.

In Harmony
The BQPA Board of Directors
Jack Martin, President
Barbershop Quartet Preservation Association