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Four Flats Correspondence

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These write-ups from our album will help you to become more familiar with the quartet.

THE QUARTET

In 1946 four George Fox College students got together to run through some male quartet selections. They sounded pretty good. They tried their talents in public and soon captivated their audiences with mellow harmony and appropriate antics to accompany their lively songs.

A year later they entered the first Northwest Barbershop Ballad Contest at Forest Grove, Oregon. They won first place. They entered again the following year and again captured the top prize for quartets in the Northwest.

That was the beginning of one of the most famous vocal groups ever produced in Oregon—The Four Flats quartet, later called the World Vision Quartet.

As The Four Flats, the four men sang together until 1952 in a variety of church, concert, rally, evangelistic, school, banquet, and entertainment settings, receiving tempting offers to enter full time into an entertainment career. Instead they chose to devote their voices and talents to the Lord, and in 1956 they became a full-time part of World Vision, a missionary service organization in Pasadena, California.

As the World Vision Quartet the members sang before hundreds of thousands in person across the United States, Canada, and the Far East, and to millions on a weekly Sunday morning World Vision broadcast on the ABC radio network. The group recorded three albums during its career.

What are they doing in 1973? Baritone Harlow Ankeny is general manager/editor of Barclay Press, a printing and publishing arm of the Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends Church. He's been in that position since 1962.

Since 1962 Dick Cadd, bass, has been a missionary in the Philippines, teaching at Faith Academy in Manila, actively directing several musical groups, and working in radio and television. During 1972-73 he is on a year's furlough in Newberg, which made possible this and other "reunion" concerts.

Second Tenor Ronald Crecelius is chaplain at George Fox College. He's been at GFC since 1967, coming from the post of chaplain at Azusa Pacific College in California, and Christian Education positions in the Los Angeles area.

First Tenor Norval Hadley is currently superintendent of Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends Church with over 7,000 members in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. He became head executive of the church organization in July, 1971, after 11 years with World Vision as assistant to the president and head of its relief arm.

—Barry Hubbell, January 1973

THE CONCERT

Well before the time the concert was to begin on that beautiful fall evening—Saturday, November 11, 1972—people jammed the entry-way waiting for the doors to open. The elderly, the young, parents and children, college students—feeling nostalgic, curious, expectant—pressed forward to get in.

The famous Four Flats, whose paths crossed again in Newberg after 25 years of various Christian services across the world, were giving a benefit concert for the Scholarship Fund of George Fox College, their alma mater.

It began months earlier when the Optimist and Kiwanis Clubs of Newberg, Oregon, decided to present the quartet in concert as cosponsors.

Club members arranged the McGrath Sports Complex gymnasium at Newberg High School for 1,500 to 2,000, but seeing the crowds as they arrived, were apprehensive. By the time the lights went down, 2,300 people were packed in with many standing—the largest indoor crowd in Newberg's history.

Kirby Brumfield, TV personality from Portland's KATU, Channel 2, stepped to the microphone to introduce the quartet. Fans from all over the Pacific Northwest leaned forward to catch the first distinctive harmony they had heard from The Four Flats for many years. Adding to the anticipation was the announcement that the evening was being taped live. Experienced professionals had carefully arranged recording equipment and microphones to insure a replay of the evening's experience.

From the first notes of "Coney Island Baby" to "My Tribute (To God Be the Glory)" it was evident that the inimitable style of The Four Flats was intact after a quarter of a century—serious one moment, lighthearted the next. The audience loved it. Gospel songs and spirituals from the former repertoire touched the hearts of old acquaintances again. Newcomers and old friends alike were delighted with the quality of harmony, foot-tapping rhythm, comic relief, and showmanship.

Perhaps the greatest impact of the evening was the testimony of these four fellows, who had committed their lives to Christ at George Fox College, who had been used in His service through the years, and who stood before that large audience witnessing that the message of the Gospel was more real to them now than ever.

It was a memorable evening. And, fortunately, it can be relived through this album!

—A friend of The Flats