



NASSOONOTES

The Newsletter of the Princeton Nassoons Alumni Association
Volume 44, Fall 2011

DRAWN BY ALLEGIANCE...

By Doug Roberts '97

Almost 150 Nassoons and their spouses, partners, and families were "drawn by allegiance..." back to Princeton for the Nassoons 70th Reunion on April 1-2, 2011, where Song, Fun, and Cameraderie were enjoyed by all. The weekend actually began a little early for two groups of Nassoons—the *Rich McGlynn '60*—led 1954-1963 group, and a hearty bunch from the 1970s—who descended on Princeton a day early to enjoy a mini-reunion and sing the favorites from their era. The 1970's group (joined by "17th wheel," Yours Truly) actually wandered up to Blair Arch to sing for a bit, and ended up being the subject of a flashmob-like arch sing, where confused undergraduates stopped to view the spectacle of a group of guys ALMOST old enough to be their dads were singing under an arch on a Thursday night for no apparent reason.

Friday's events kicked off with a registration in which your Reunion committee, (comprised of SFC warriors *Pete Daneker '95*, *Kin Lo '96*, and yours truly) demonstrated why we did not and should not pursue careers in either event planning or retail sales. Yet somehow, everybody registered, most everyone ended up paying (you TJ's know who you are), and everybody ended up finding their way to their decade-group rehearsal rooms for the evening. The evening ended with an informal gathering for "Crust Choos" in the Nassoon Room, where we all had a chance to catch up, relive old times, find our "aways," marvel at our hair- and waist-lines in the OJTs, make sure that the Business Manager's chair was still properly supplied under the cushions, and, of course, "sing the old songs." Many of the undergraduates joined us as well.

Saturday was a full day, beginning with remarks from our fearless leader, *Sandy McAdoo '71*, some group singing, and a "teaser" set from the Undergraduates, followed by segments of video conversations—brilliantly facilitated by *Rich McGlynn* and directed/produced by our inimitable Archivist /

** DUES REQUEST **

Once again we are asking for your support to help fund the ongoing activities of the PNAA, including the newsletter you are reading now. Won't you please lend a hand? Please send your check (\$50 per year, \$30 for the classes of 2002–2011) to our Treasurer, **Bill Hammond '77**, at **34 Colt Drive, Summit, NJ 07901-3040**. Thanks very much for stepping up and helping us pay the bills.

Historian, *Stephen Garrett '92*—of *Bill Soons '44*, *Dave Cist '42*, *Wat Stewart '45*, and *Dick Armstrong '46* discussing the early years of the Nassoons, all of which provided a grand introduction for what was an unforgettable day of singing.

Whether it was the crisp harmonies of the 1954-1963 Nassoons' set under the direction of *Rich McGlynn*, the inaugural performance of *Kent Mullikin's 1960 Reunion Song* by the "Late 60s/Early 70s" group led by *Bill Kaspers '70*, the upbeat arrangements by the 1970's 'Soons, the integration of pop/rock influences with the 1980's group, the "Jamie Rankin years" of the 1990s group, or the youthful exuberance on display from the 2001-2010 Nassoons, great music filled the halls of Taplin Auditorium from start to finish. However, the clear highlight for all of us was the opportunity to hear the First Generation of Nassoons, representing classes from 1942-1953, and anchored by the sweet sounds of founding Nassoon, *Jack Huyler '42*, who sang what will go down in history as, hands down, the BEST solo on "Teasin'/Squeezin'" that will ever be sung. [*Hud Stoddard '42* and *Jim Affleck '44* also planned to join Jack at the reunion but sadly were stranded in New England due to a bad storm. They were missed! Ed.] The afternoon finished with a short remembrance of Nassoons who have left us since our 65th Reunion, and moving and somber singing of the 1905 Reunion song and Old Nassau.

The evening ended with a lovely dinner right on campus at Prospect House, where Nassoons and their spouses, partners, and families enjoyed great wine, great food, and great conversation. After *Sandy McAdoo* led us through some mandatory business, the Undergraduates blew the roof off of Prospect House with a stellar performance, showcasing their newer arrangements, which was a pleasure to hear after two days of "singing the old songs." The group was especially strong when considering the great loss they sustained with the departure of the Class of 2010, and their brilliant freshmen are more than pulling their weight—they sang solos and seem already to be a big part of the sound. But, once again, the evening was stolen by *Jack Huyler '42*, who traveled all the way from California—in his wheelchair, mind you—to give a presentation to the Nassoons and the Nassoon Alumni Association: a silver cigarette box given to him, at his wedding, by the other founding Nassoons some 65+ years ago.

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ANSWERING THE CALL:

Baseball Exec Turns Preacher — Ministers to A League of His Own

By Krystal Knapp, for The Times of Trenton

*(Thanks to George Bassett '67 for sending an article from The Times of Trenton about **Dick Armstrong '46**. Dick has written a memoir about his days as public relations manager for the then Philadelphia Athletics and later the Baltimore Orioles, and then his totally unexpected career switch to the ministry. Dick, as most Nassoons know, wrote "Tigertown Blues" and recently returned to Princeton to join us at our 70th Reunion.)*

Richard Armstrong's life in professional baseball is one full of firsts, though not the kind that make it into the baseball record books. The Princeton University graduate, Class of 1946, became the first full-time public relations manager for the Philadelphia Athletics and the Baltimore Orioles. He conducted the first formal poll of baseball fans in Baltimore after working as a Gallup pollster, and — something that isn't known by many in the baseball world — he created the first performing mascot almost a decade before any other major league team had one.

Then Armstrong's life took a turn that led to a first of another sort. As much as he loved working in professional baseball, he experienced an overwhelming call to become a minister and gave up his life with the Orioles to attend Princeton Theological Seminary, becoming the first (and thought to be the only) front office management employee in the major league to enter the ministry.

"I was the most unlikely candidate to receive such a call to ministry and thought God was making a terrible mistake," said

Armstrong, 87, from his home as he reflected on his move from the press box to the pulpit. "I was not what you would call a religious person," he said. "I attended various churches but was not an active member. I never attended Sunday School, and I'd never read the Bible."

Over the years, people often asked about Armstrong's baseball career and the decision to make a shift to the ministry. Wanting to preserve his story for family and friends, Armstrong, an emeritus professor of ministry and evangelism at Princeton Theological Seminary, decided to write a memoir, "A Sense of Being Called," just released by Wipf and Stock Publishers. Already, it has been placed in the archives of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

The book is a love story—about Armstrong's love for baseball, his love for God, and the love he and his wife, Margie, have shared over the years that helped the couple endure the death of a young child. Sports fans will enjoy reading his firsthand accounts about

baseball in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Armstrong, who works out at the gym at Windrows almost every day and plays tennis twice a week, is the lone surviving former top-tier executive of both the old Philadelphia Athletics and the 1953-55 Baltimore Orioles.

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RIDING IN STYLE: THE BIRTH OF "THE BEAST"

By Phil Walkley '67

(Inspired by Erich Everbach's ['58] recent tale of the Baritone Car, Phil Walkley '67 shares below the story of the birth of the ill-fated "Limo" that served, ever haltingly, as transportation for the 'Soons during the 1965-66 school year. Thanks, Flip.)

Few members of the Nassoon family have needed as much fixing up as did The Beast of Marstons Mills—a 1952 Cadillac limousine which rolled onto campus in the fall of 1965. During our practice week that summer, we realized that we were a car short for road trips. Since I had worked at a gas station in Hyannis that summer, I felt that, with my boss Sarge's help, I could find a suitable addition to the 'Soon fleet. Sure enough, Sarge said his retired cousin, Dutch, who owned *On and Off Cape Limousine* (aka "Off and On Limo" for its sketchy off season service) had a car for sale well suited to our needs.

Arriving at Dutch's small fruit and vegetable farm in Marstons Mills, I found The Beast up on blocks by the side of the road decorated with baskets of produce and potted geraniums. Dutch assured me that the vehicle still ran and but that, while you could hear the radio over the muffler noise, heat and air conditioning were fond memories. He also allowed that the 40,000 or so miles showing on the odometer was probably at least the second time around. In short order a deal was struck, and for \$200 Dutch agreed to clean out the spiders and field mouse residue and let me take the rims to Sarge's Mobil to shoe The Beast.



"AND SO, IT'S OVER ..."

The vocal world lost two of its icons this year with the passing of Bob Flanigan and Ross Barbour, founding members of The Four Freshmen.

Bob Flanigan, passed on May 15, 2011, at his home in Las Vegas. He was 84. Bob, the group's top tenor with the distinctive lead voice, was the spiritual leader of every Four Freshmen combination up until his retirement from performing with the group in 1992. He then became the group's manager, and later, having turned the management reins over to International Ventures, Inc., remained actively involved in promoting the group.

Ross Barbour, the last of the founding members of The Four Freshmen and a prolific arranger for the group, passed away on August 20, 2011 after a long battle with cancer. He was 82.

The Four Freshmen were one of the top vocal groups of the 1950s, and formed the bridge between 1940s ensembles like the Mel-Tones and harmony-based rock & roll bands such as the Beach Boys. Founded by two brothers, Ross and Don Barbour, the group's roots go back to the late 1940s and the Arthur Jordan Conservatory of Music at Butler University in Indiana.



Bob Flanigan

In their 63-year history, the Four Freshmen released over 50 recordings, achieved 70 top-selling singles, and earned six Grammy nominations. Their first hit single was "It's a Blue World," released in 1952, and they enjoyed further success with "Day By Day" (1955) and "Graduation Day" (1956). The Four Freshmen are the longest lasting vocal harmony group still performing world-wide, and the legacy of Bob Flanigan and Ross Barbour live on through the vocal harmonies of the very talented current group. As the Wall Street Journal exclaimed, "Long live The Four Freshmen... May they never graduate."

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE FOUR FRESHMEN

The Four Freshmen were not the first successful vocal group. They were just the most innovative and had a profound influence on other groups of their era and thereafter, an influence still being felt today. Before the Freshmen, most vocal groups were part of a band. Tommy Dorsey had the Pied Pipers, Woody Herman had the Mel Tones (with Mel Torme), Glen Miller had the Modernaires. Then there was the Stan Kenton Band, which played progressive jazz. The Four Freshmen developed their sound by structuring their chords (with their hard-to-sing dissonants) and using their voices (punching every note of a moving line) to sound like the trombone section of the Kenton band.

Top tenor Bob Flanigan had such a high voice with a huge range, so the Freshmen departed from another tradition of all other vocal groups: they sang with the tenor on melody and with open chords spread over as much as two octaves, often leaving out the tonic. Most vocal groups are used to hearing the tonic of the chord in the bass section. The Freshmen did not even sing the tonic in most of their arrangements, making the bass part difficult to sing for the traditionally trained bass singer. This is difficult for the other singers as well—since there is no reference point in the chord and they must "hear" the tonic in their minds. What this does for the sound however is allow it to "ring"—to allow overtones to be heard.

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Sarge was retired from the army and was, in his own mind, a self-made mini-mogul of great ambition and guile. A ruthless seller of largely unnecessary parts and repairs, he preyed on overwrought women ferrying cartloads of boisterous kids to and from the beach. His fondest memory was that of convincing a Kennedy clan summer girl that she needed a new radiator cap for her VW bus. With all this in mind, I should have been more cautious about buying tires from him. We were on a tight budget, though, and when Sarge offered four white sidewall tires that would fit the rims (but with a "wee bit" narrower tread than the originals), I bit. The tires were probably meant for a Nash Rambler, and the visual effect was that of an elephant wearing ballet slippers. (Today, The Beast would probably be more aptly named The Black Swan.) The handling characteristics were uncertain in dry conditions and downright scary in wet.

Anyway, with luck and equal quantities of gas, oil and water, The Beast made it from the Cape to Princeton, limping onto campus to begin its storied, if somewhat brief, career in the service of the Princeton Nassoons. And limp it did, for one brief academic school year, costing us a small fortune but paying us back with its frayed elegance...and extraordinary legroom.

Little did we know what a rarity we had—only 800 1952 Caddy limos were made. Probably would be worth a fortune today!

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There was nary a dry eye in the room as Jack made his presentation and talked movingly about what it meant to him to have the Nassoons at his wedding, as those of us who are married thought about our own weddings and the roles that Nassoons played in them.

The entire weekend was a time to reflect upon how privileged we are to belong to this marvelous tradition: the great harmonies, the brilliant arrangements, and the ability to come together and continue to make music even as our breath support and vocal chords deteriorate are a great gift. But the great friendships—with Nassoon classmates/ brothers, with those who used to pile us with those we used to pile, and now, with those who inhabited 100 1901 Hall many years before or after us—are the most important gift the Nassoons have given us. The 70th Reunion was a great reminder of all that is great in life. Thank you to all who made the journey to Princeton to join us, and we're all looking forward to an even greater 75th.

(Thanks Doug—and Pete & Kin!—for a terrific article and for your extraordinary efforts in organizing our 70th Reunion.)

Answering the Call, *continued...*

A Baltimore native, he grew up in a baseball family, played ball at Princeton, was a minor league pitcher, and then served as the business manager of a minor league team in Ohio before becoming a manager at Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics and later the Orioles. He organized the first public relations departments for both.

Well into a successful career that had Armstrong dreaming of becoming the general manager of a major league team some day, he experienced a spiritual revelation he calls his "Damascus Road," a reference to the epiphany of the Apostle Paul, who changed his ways after a meeting with the resurrected spirit of Jesus. One night while driving with his wife in Florida for spring training, Armstrong was suddenly seized by an overpowering feeling that God was telling him he must become a minister. He pulled over on the side of the road to process what he was experiencing. His book describes in detail how he left baseball to become a Presbyterian minister, a job in which he still finds joy, serving as the minister of worship for the Pennswood Village Interdenominational Congregation in Newtown, Pa.

Four Freshmen, *continued...*

The Four Freshmen sang very complex chords, including their trademark "peg chord" with the 5th is in the top voice, the 9th in the second voice, the major 7th in the third voice and the 3rd in the bass. When the two middle parts go down a whole step, you have an inverted 6th, another Freshmen trademark. The open chords, with the long drawn out lead note held while the middle parts are moving with staccato-accented precision, was one of the more distinctive features of Four Freshmen arrangements.

The Freshmen set up certain chord structures with unison singing. Unison singing is very difficult because of vibrato. It is hard to blend when one person has more vibrato than the rest. Brothers Don and Ross sang the unison things. They used one microphone and each sang into the side of the same mic, with their heads very close together, listening closely to each other as they sang. They used a soft, breathy sound, letting air escape as they sang. This made for a perfect unison sound.

Another unique aspect of the Four Freshmen sound was that they really did not attempt to blend. What they had is an incredible *balance* to their chords. If you hear four trombones playing a chord, you will hear all four notes of the chord. This is balance. *Blend* is several voices sounding as one. The Four Freshmen are masters of blend in their unison singing, but in their group parts they want every note—every voice—to be heard.

Finally, there was an *urgency*, a *passion* to their sound. They seldom sang softly but, if it was a love song, it was always sung with tenderness. It was intense. It was passionate. It was wonderful!

(Your editor sheepishly admits that, while he saved this article years ago, he neglected to note its source. He believes it came from a newsletter published by the Four Freshmen Society.)

Armstrong hopes that, by sharing the story of his own journey, others will find inspiration for their own lives. "I hope readers will think about how God is at work in our lives and take seriously that everyone has a value that God has need of and there is a use for everyone," he said. "My calling is an example of how God works in people's lives, in any field."