

Joe Palmquist, An Icon of Perseverance

By Al Bell, Fullerton Chapter



Persevere is the leadership theme of our Society President, **Alan Lamson**. But what does this mean for individual Barbershoppers? Who can serve as an example for that quality? We don't have to look far. Our convention honoree is a master of persevering.

2012 marks Joe's 56th year in our Society. It's time for us to honor his contributions to Barbershopping—and we are. His is a rich story involving service at many different levels, from riser construction to judging, from chapter leadership to quartet member, from motivator to entertainer—often concurrently. He has inspired innumerable Barbershoppers to register their own Society accomplishments.

After joining Chicago's **South Town Chorus** in 1956, Joe soon moved to California. He was with the legendary **Downey Revelaires** when they won two Society bronze medals. Joe held about every chapter office, garnering his first Barbershopper of the Year award. His second, with the **Masters of Harmony** in the late 1980s, further testified to his Barbershop commitment.

One of Joe's secrets for staying the course is his wife, **Jackie**, an ardent Barbershop supporter with remarkable credentials in her own right.

Joe's concept of entertainment reflects a sense of humor just won't be contained; he's a man of a thousand jokes. That probably accounts for his MC role at many Barbershop events, including the 1988 50th anniversary Society convention in San Antonio.

He does have a serious side, though. Those who attended Harmony College in 1987 witnessed *The World's Greatest Barbershop Baritone*, a play in which Joe portrayed **O.C. Cash**, Society co-founder. Joe's powerful performance and singular personal commitment revealed a deep-down grasp of O.C.'s vision of Barbershopping—much of which has come true (like chorus competitions and week-long songfests)! Written by **Dr. Val Hicks**, produced by **Gary Stamm** and acted by Joe, the show provided a memorable window on our Barbershop roots—and evidence of the close bond shared by these three.

While Joe's major focus has been on his chapters and the performance stage, he still made room for two decades as a certified stage presence judge and a stint on the Harmony College staff. But we can't speak only of Joe's specific Barbershop accomplishments. Many Barbershoppers know Joe as friend, mentor—and even hero.

In the late 1980s **Greg Lyne** played a major role in reinventing the Masters of Harmony. He had a lot of help from Joe, who was instrumental in obtaining their prime Santa Fe Springs meeting space. As if that weren't enough, Joe constructed the Masters' first set of wooden risers in his workshop. The uniform racks he made are still in use! Greg, **Dave Briner**, **Doug Maddox**, and **Joe D'Amore** all attest to his pivotal role in launching this stellar chorus. Greg describes Joe as "The best of the best."

Joe could always be counted on to deliver an effective song or performer introduction—including a joke, of course. He would always woodshed—and share jokes with—any three others. That way of enthusiastically sharing our music is a Palmquist trademark.

Joe has been prominent in the performance quartet world for decades. Among his eleven quartet bonafides are the **Far West Four**, **The Pacesetters** (12th place International in 1966), and **ETCetera**—an especially popular quartet.

For those of us who haven't been around as long as he has, Joe is most identified with *Variety*, a particularly enduring and entertaining quartet. *Variety* (with ten different members over its lifetime) performed on hundreds of chapter shows. They never won a contest, but never lost an audience!

Perseverance? **Bob Clark** shared his first organized quartet (the **Chord Addicts** in the late 1950s) and Joe's last, *Variety*, 40 years later with our honoree. Ten years ago Joe had to quit for health reasons. He perseveres anyway, still organizing pick-up quartets for special performances.

Joe demonstrates what it means to persevere in our avocation in ways both large and small. This award is our way of honoring his leadership and inspiration.

For Joe Palmquist, perseverance has been a way of life. It still is.