

## Alexandria Harmonizers 70th Anniversary Throwback Thursdays

### No. 29 - 1996 Born In A Trunk

#### Alexandria Chapter Package Shows

In addition to several annual shows, the **Alexandria Chapter** has found that “package shows” can form a significant portion of yearly chorus programming. Package shows are generally staged out-of-town and usually garner additional revenues and new Harmonizer fans in the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond.

One of our favorite package show venues was the historic, 6,500-seat **Great Auditorium** (1894) of the Methodists’ **Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association**. The Harmonizers performed together with International medalist quartets in the *Festival of Barbershop Champions* at Ocean Grove, N. J., on seven different occasions (1984, 1987, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001).



In this 1996 photograph, the Harmonizers appear to be performing “Little Darlin’,” with the requisite sunglasses. The “Stars and Stripes” and world-famous Hope-Jones pipe organ behind them seem poised for brilliance, with the generational echoes of the greatest artists, personages, and U.S. Presidents of the 20th Century that have appeared in the Great Auditorium.

In 1996, the high point of the year would be performing the outgoing champion's swan song package at the International Convention in Salt Lake City, featuring the chapter's 93-year old founder, **Dean Snyder**, carrying a cane and wearing a straw hat, introducing the "Cohan Medley." In addition to several local shows of significance, the chorus had an unprecedented number of out-of-town shows, most of them at a substantial distance from Alexandria. These "away shows" typically require an hour-long, elaborate performance and the challenging logistics of moving men and material by communal buses and Harmo-van.

The first out-of-town show was a 523 mile trip to Cincinnati, Ohio, in March for a home-and-home exchange with the **Southern Gateway Chorus**; in April, we journeyed to Hackensack, N.J., (252 miles) for the **Ramapo Valley Sweet Adelines** show; one week later to Lancaster, Pa. (130 miles) for a joint show with the **Red Rose Chorus**.; and, lastly, a show for the **American Cancer Society** in Shamokin, Pa. (191 miles). In the last half of the year, the chorus staged three shows: Ocean Grove, N.J. (234 miles); with **Coastal Chordsmen**, Bridgeport Conn. (305 miles); and with **Roof Garden Chorus**, Somerset Pa. (173 miles). On the next weekend we presented our annual Fall Show, aptly named "Home At Last," for it had been a hectic and tiring year.

By year's end the chorus had appeared on 35 shows, singing 351 songs for an estimated 60,000 people. However, the members felt a weary satisfaction with their accomplishments that had included not only the out-of-town shows, but also an unusual number of local shows, and our busy week in Salt Lake City. The total roundtrip road distance for the 1996 out-of-town shows was 3,616 miles.

Harmonious Tagline:

For the success of the Harmonizer package shows, Chapter President **Bob Wells** and Musical Director **Scott Werner** depended on a great team, including: **Mike Wallen** (Associate Director), **Geri Geis** (Artistic Director), **Jack Stevens** (Music VP), **Gary Smith/Ken Fess** (Package Show Producers), **Royall Geis** (Package Show Marketing), **Bob Hirsh** (Package Show Manager).