

First Barbershop Craft - 1952

The background of Harold W. "Bud" Arberg as a music educator led him to invent "Barbershop Craft," a term and concept unknown at the time. An inaugural member of the Barbershop Hall of Fame, Bud Arberg exerted great musical influence both in the Society and as a musician of national fame. Director, composer, arranger, teacher, and expert pianist, Bud's excellent craft-building sessions in the 1950s as the Alexandria Harmonizers' Musical Director became the foundation for the Society's music teaching programs and materials, a legacy that continues today.



Outside the Society, Bud Arberg was best known as a music professor who once headed the music area for the U.S. Army, where he made "The Army Goes Rolling Along" the service's official song, including his own introductory verse. A charter member of the Society's College of Arrangers, Bud's output of barbershop arrangements (done for the Harmonizers and the Armed Services Song Folios) reached the astounding total of nearly 300. From 1953 to 1962 all Harmonizer chorus contest numbers were Arberg arrangements.

In the first chorus contest sponsored by SPEBSQSA Inc. at Detroit, Mich, June 10-14, 1953, Musical Director Bud Arberg (1951-62) directed the Alexandria Harmonizers in "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie, Blues" and "The Railroad Song (I've Been Workin' on the Railroad. " The contest winner, the Great Lakes Chorus, was designated as the "International Convention Chorus Champion" and was the first and the last chorus to be so named. This unique title was chosen because the 16 participating choruses were not selected through district competition.

Although the judges ranked the Harmonizers next to last in 1953, the fact remains that Alexandria represented the Mid-Atlantic District at the first, albeit experimental, Society-wide chorus contest. They would not represent the district in an International Chorus Contest again until 1978, nearly a quarter of a century later.

The first official International Chorus Contest in 1954 at Washington, D.C., attracted a large audience and many additional convention registrations among the 23 competing choruses. The Society's first official winner was the 72-man Singing Capital Chorus of Washington, D.C., directed by Lew Sims.