THE BEGINNINGS
1946-1949

Following the demise of the Seattle Star-KIRO chapter, no further record of barbershop activity in the Northwest has been verified until after the end of World War II.

The year 1946, however, saw four chapters chartered: Elks Naval Lodge at Port Angeles, WA on June 13, Portland, OR on July 14, Tacoma, WA on October 5 and Eugene, OR on November 16. The first half of 1947 saw them joined by Klamath Falls, OR on April 29 and Salem, OR on June 3. The Society had by now established districts, and these six chapters were, at the time, members of the Far Western District, whose boundary description included all of the West Coast.

No one seems to recall exactly how Port Angeles came to be sponsored by Reno and San Francisco, or Portland by Jackson, Michigan. However, the late Frank Graham of Eugene recalled that Bob Bronson, a Eugene lumberman, had a business contact named Harry Barnes who was the president of the Wichita, Kansas Chapter. Barnes suggested to Bronson that he put together a quartet, and from that suggestion came the **Hills Creek Four**, with Bob Bronson and fellow lumbermen Bud Leabo, Frank Graham, and E.C. "Murph" Murphy. These four so thoroughly enjoyed their new found hobby that they called an organizational meeting (16 men and 1 woman attended) and a short time later the Eugene Chapter was formed, with Wichita as their sponsor.

It seems likely that other chapters with sponsors in far-flung places would have similar stories to tell.

1947

In early 1947, Murph Murphy, Frank Graham, and Bob Adair traveled to Santa Monica, CA to attend a "parade of quartets" (by Frank's recollection there were 24 quartets on the Show). At this function they met and talked with Far Western District President Russ Stanton. One subject of discussion was the possibility of forming another district to help overcome the geographical problems posed by the distance between the chapters in the northwest and the rest of the Far Western District. The idea was pursued after their return, and on June 12 a letter of authorization was signed by International President Frank Thorne for the formation of a new District.

On July 30, 1947, an organizational meeting was held at the Portland Hotel in Portland, OR. In attendance were:

- E.C. Murphy, R.A. Bronson, and Tad Lucky, of Eugene.
- Dr. Gail White and H.B. Molchior, of Port Angeles.
- H. S. Saari and Leo Barton, of Tacoma.
- Glen Craven, C.E. Bennett, Chet Duncan, G.T.McDermott, Stanford Clark, Lee Deal, and H.B. Coon, of Portland.
- Ted Nelson and Paul Marsh of Salem.
- L. H. "Hub" Stone of Klamath Falls.

These seventeen men from the six chapters in the district-to-be then elected Murph Murphy to lead the new district. Also elected were G.T. McDermott as vice president, H.B. Molchior as secretary, and H.S. "Sam" Saari as treasurer. With this meeting the "PACIFIC NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF CHAPTERS, SPEBSQSA Inc." was officially off and running. A treasury was established (with $15.00 to be contributed by each chapter) and, setting early precedent, the District Secretary requested an early submission for clearance of any parade dates (chapter shows then were always parades of quartets).

One of the items of business at that first meeting was the appointment of an extension committee. It consisted of Frank Graham, chairman, Myles Gregory (then of Portland, but previously one of the members of the Seattle Star-KIRO Chapter), and Leo Barton (well known as the bass of the **Melody Men** quartet).

The area originally encompassed by the Pacific Northwest District appears to have included the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and western Montana. In the period from July 1947 till December 1948, eight new chapters were chartered. (see Appendix I)

Until 1960, the fiscal year was May 1 through April 30, so the first district officers served from their election in July of 1947 until the meeting of April 24, 1948. At that meeting, held in Klamath Falls, Sam Saari of Tacoma was elected president, Gus Wordinger of Ashland became vice president, Ted Nelson of Salem was elected treasurer, and L.H. "Hub" Stone of Klamath Falls became secretary, a position he held for the next 25 years, serving with 16 District Presidents.

A huge debt of gratitude is due Hub Stone. The majority of information from the early years of the district is the result of his efforts. From him we have the minutes of the meetings (which give us the nuts and bolts of the district evolution), the District Bulletin (which he edited from 1949 until October 1962 — giving us more of the flavor of what was happening), and the District Directories (which he prepared for most of the years he was district secretary).

In addition it should be noted that for all those years he was also Klamath Falls chapter secretary until his death in 1973. Truly a man who dedicated a major part of his life to the service of barbershopping, and every inch a gentleman in the bargain.

1948

The fledgling district was not yet ready to field its own contest, but an invitation was received from the Far Western District for quartets from Pacific Northwest District to participate in their International Preliminary contest. Three quartets answered that call. On May 1, 1948, at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, the **Eagle Four** of Klamath Falls, the **Harmony Vendors** of Tacoma, and the **Mountain-Aires** of the Mt. Rainier Chapter were judged along with 17 Far Western District quartets. With the top score from the three, the **Mountain-Aires** represented the Pacific Northwest District at the International Contest held in Oklahoma City in 1948. They were often referred to as the "District Champions" even though no Pacific Northwest District Contest was held in 1948.

A total of 23 District Officers and Chapter Delegates were in attendance at a special meeting called for October 6, 1948, at the Multnomah Hotel in Portland, to meet with International Secretary Carrol P. Adams (delegates were present from all but one chapter). "I am astounded,"

Mr. Adams stated, "at the loyalty shown by the attendance at this meeting. I had not expected over five or six officers to be on hand. I find a high caliber of men on the West Coast." Adams also described conditions in the parent organization which by this time was already ten years old and a healthy stripling compared to the two year old infant district he was encouraging.

At that meeting, District President Sam Saari announced that it would be necessary for him to resign the position. Tom Hansen of the Mt. Rainier Chapter was elected to fill out the term as president. Also at that meeting, a decision was made not to hold a District Contest, but plans were under way for the district's first official Regional Preliminary Contest to be held the following spring.

1949

Fifteen quartets entered that contest which was held April 30, 1949 at Benson High School in Portland. When the judging panel, made up of International President Charles Merrill, Ralph Adams, Brent Abbot, and Dayton Colville (all members of the Bonanza Four quartet from Reno, Nevada) and Russ Stanton (Far Western District President) was finished, the **Mountain-Aires** were once again named to represent the District in International competition in Buffalo, New York.

Chosen to lead the District for the coming year were: Tom Hansen, President, Roy Clark (Newberg), Vice President, Hub Stone, Secretary, and H.B. Molchior (Port Angeles), Treasurer. The minutes of the April 30 meeting note "general sentiment expressed in favor of issuing a district bulletin. Secretary instructed to correspond with British Columbia and Alaska and with the Detroit office (then International headquarters) regarding inclusion in the Pacific Northwest District". Also "Resolution adopted that the District Officers look into the matter of having a representative on the International Board."

The Mountain-Aires, Enumclaw, 1949 District Champions and twice Internatinoal competitors. From the left, Eddie Hotten, t, Mel Olene, l, Tom Hanson, br, and Alan Cornwell, bs.

A District Charter revision dated June 9, 1949 added "the Territory of Alaska, and Province of Alberta, Canada", and during the calendar year 1949 ten new chapters were chartered (see Appendix I). However, five were lost, making an adjusted total of eighteen chapters at the end of 1949.

The Lake Washington Chapter hosted the first District Contest held at Overlake Elementary School in Bellevue, WA on November 18. The finals were held at Kirkland Civic Center on November 19, 1949. Thirteen quartets took part (chorus contests were still several years away), and the judges' score sheet shows that the **Mountain-Aires** were winners by a margin of 305 points (1504/1199) over the second place **Melody Men**. The **Mountain-Aires** thus secured their place in history as the first quartet to represent the District at an International Contest, as well as becoming the first District Champions. Members of that historic quartet were: Eddie Hotten, tenor, Alan Cornwell, bass, Tom Hansen (1949 District President), bari, and Mel Olene (who went on to serve for many years in the judging program), lead.

International Representative Bob Hafer joined the district officers for a November 19 business meeting at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Seattle. Discussion was held on the distance problems in the Pacific Northwest District, extension sites, funding of quartets to International contests, inter-chapter relations and other topics that still confront the district today. Mr. Hafer suggested there should be more than one vice president in the District, recommended that extension was an answer to the distances between chapters and urged the district to utilize material and resources available in Detroit (headquarters). On a more somber note, Roy Jenson of Port Angeles was elected to fill the office of Treasurer, left open by the death of Herb Molchior.