

Bert Volker – Eulogy by Ken Schroer

Irene, Ann and MarSue, thank you for allowing me to be standing here tonight and to have the honor of speaking on behalf of the Ambassadors of Harmony.

As an organization, anyone that has been with us for any significant amount of time can attest to the fact that we have always thought of ourselves as a family and we really live that. I think too that we have found maybe even a stronger statement. And to us even a better word is simply; Friends.

For many of us we have been friends for 5 years, 10 years, for some 15 – 20, while others 25 – 30 and then again for still others 30 and even 40 years. We know each other rather well,Sometimes too well maybe But! Friends and Family never the less. We care for each other; we try to comfort each other in times like this. We usually do it through song, as we will certainly do here tonight, because that is who we are.

Bert is a native born Missourian, born in Tarkio, Missouri April 18th 1922. He and his sister Betty thoroughly enjoyed their school and “growing-up” years in smalltown Tarkio. Bert discovered music while in high school and played in the marching band. He attended college for a couple of years and then decided to enter a pilot training program. Bert wanted to fly, but! Bert, at that time though had a severe impediment to completing such a program....yep! he had air sickness. So, temporarily putting that dream aside, he found his aviation career fulfillment as a mechanic..the rest is history , as they say. He went on to repair, maintain, build, inspect and certify and..yes even to to fly airplanes throughout the rest of his life. He managed airports, and was an instructor pilot.

Bert and Irene had met in the fall of 1941 and had their first real date on that infamous Sunday, December 7th 1941..... and then as the way life works..... Bert was called to active duty and proudly served with the United States navy. He and Irene were married a year and a half later. Then, after the war, following aviation job opportunities Bert and Irene...and family moved to picturesque places as Maryville, MO, Pella Iowa, Wichita, KS (Where he found BarberShop Harmony) and really picturesque Fargo North Dakota and the Chapter there.. Two winters were more than enough in Fargo and they headed south winding up in St. Charles and there he joined our “Mother-Chapter” Florissant Valley.

One of Bert’s flying stories....

While flying his family, Irene, Anne and MarSue back from a trip, the weather forced delays and an unscheduled landing about 30 miles short of home.... and.....after landing..... the airplane ran out of gas while taxing. Andthen only to discover that Irene’s last shopping binge left them cashless. They had to call collect for someone to come and pick-them-up. Irene says that that

story was always on the tip of Bert's tongue ready to be retold over and over and over again.

Our friend Bert bears the title as The Founding Father of the St. Charles Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. In 1962 Bert had been singing baritone with an unregistered quartet called the Gay Blades he was convinced that St. Charles needed and could easily support a chapter of its very own. So, on a cold winter snowy night he had called a meeting. Thirty-eight men learned what BarberShop Harmony was all about and there, that night, our chapter was born. Bert was elected our first president. He also served as the Assistant Director to our very first music director and here with us today, Gordon Manion. Also in that Charter group and with us today was our friend Doc Keough and Gerry Coen.

Bert served in nearly every chapter office over the ensuing years. He sang in many, quartets.....notably....and sure I'm missing many;: The Gay Blades, The Mutual Funns, Chord On Blue and the renowned Gas Light Squires.

He enjoyed what we at one-time called hobby harmony. But then, as Dr. Henry so masterfully observed this past summer at Harmony College, ...it turned into a real "calling", actually a Ministry and became a way-of-life. When he came to chapter meeting after "one of those days" at an aircraft crash site, he just wanted to sing, cause that's what we do. He wanted to talk about family, he wanted to hear about your family and how were they doing. He'd tell his golf stories or about another of his great avocations.....his championship NRA marksmanship competitions.

Oh sure, he complained about the days work, and the bureaucracy but ! only briefly and then he let it wash away by getting back to our music.

Bert easily fell into the mode of helping the chorus grow and prosper. He.....and Irene, were there when and for whatever reason the growing Daniel Boone Chorus needed. Bert was an easy going kind of guy, He was sort of our Great Guy Model... the kind of guy that our chorus consistently sought for membership. We always sought great guys that we could teach to sing, since you just can't teach singers to be great guys.

Bert had to be more than just a model member...he had to actually be a model model for all of Irene's costume creations. Oh...the many, many costume creations. Through the growing years and into our Daniel Boone Chorus morphing into what became the Ambassadors of Harmony, through the thick and thin of growing and regressing membership cycles, Bert's Angelic Tenor notes, and sometime the only tenor in attendance, could be heard.

***** RON *****

Over the course of Bert's illness he rarely missed a chorus rehearsal. After major surgeries or especially critical hospital stays. He would almost miraculously come strolling into Memorial Hall and asking how YOU were doing and what is going on in YOUR life. Again, that's who Bert was. Bert's riser spot has now been willed to a

different chorus member and it will be passed along as the years go on, whoever is there will just have to remember that Bert is there with you, that's really his riser position, but do him proud while you are using it.

I gotta believe that his work down here was done. He had loved his family, loved his friends and loved his barbershop ministry. After you've done those things in life what more can you do.

At these times, I always think of our good friend Gene Johnson, Gene had a clock collection. He must have had nearly a hundred of them. Wall, ceiling, table tops, cabinet shelf clocks, clocks every where. Gene really knew the meaning of Tempest Fugit, Memento Mori ; Tempest Fugit Time Flies, he knew every minute of every day through his joys and through his sorrows, through his many good days and through his many, many days of pain. Memento Mori, remember death, He, like Bert over the past months, knew what was in front of him and he knew he was going to take that God given musical talent back home to his Maker, and he knew it wasn't going to be that long.

He is at peace now and we his friends are thankful for that. We would have wanted it to be different though. We would want him to be here, with us. But that was not to be, that was not the plan. That angelic chorus must have been shopping around for another Tenor.

Goodbye Bert, God speed.

Let us bow our heads in prayer.

WE ARE GATHERED HERE [THIS EVENING] TO PAY OUR LAST RESPECTS TO OUR DEPARTED BROTHER [Bert] WHO NOW LEAVES OUR EARTHLY CHORUS.

MAY HE HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF JOINING ETERNALLY IN THE HEAVENLY CHORUS OF THE AGES.

THE SPIRIT OF BARBERSHOPPING AS SHOWN BY OUR DEPARTED BROTHER WILL REMAIN WITH US AS A REMINDER TO EVER DO OUR BEST IN THE SPIRIT OF SONG.

THE ENTIRE [ST. CHARLES] CHAPTER IS SADDENED AND WE WILL TREASURE WITHIN OUR HEARTS THE MEMORY OF OUR FRIEND AND BROTHER BARBERSHOPPER.

GRACIOUS AND ALMIGHTY GOD, LET US ALWAYS REALIZE THAT THE SPIRIT OF SONG IS BOTH A JOYFUL EXPRESSION OF WELL-BEING AND AN EXPRESSION OF CONSOLATION IN TIME OF SORROW, LET THE INTEREST OF OUR BROTHER GENE IN SONG, CONTINUE IN OUR LIVES TO BRING JOY TO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MANY.

BE WITH THE LOVED ONES OF OUR BROTHER AND GUIDE THEIR MINDS AND HEARTS TO PEACE AND COMFORT THAT THEY MAY HAVE IN THEE.

[AMEN]