

Happy Birthday!

— Suburbanaires Turn Fifteen!

By Bob Burrell

Ross Sutherland is a happy man. His brain child, the *Suburbanaires*, the multi-chapter senior barbershop chorus he dreamed up in 1990, is fifteen years old this fall, and still going strong. Although membership is down to about 65 right now from the high of over 80 three years ago, this is primarily due to illness and death, to be expected from a group of seniors of this age

Ross was moved in 1990 to form the *Suburbanaires*, with strong support from **Brian Whitehead, Hugh Hord** and **Bob Foster**. He saw a need for some place for seniors to keep on singing when they grew less active, or had an illness, or just wanted a second chorus as well as their chapter chorus in a more relaxed atmosphere.

He notes that the luckiest thing that happened to him, and to the *Suburbanaires*, was when barbershop legend **Roy Keys** agreed to come on board as the chorus director. For many years Roy led the group and provided arrangement after arrangement, to the delight and inspiration of all the members.

The current director is **Milt Rainey** of Oshawa, as Roy is now 88 and has moved to the Barrie area. However, many of Roy's arrangements are still in the repertoire. Roy is still director emeritus and a life member, and joins the group at many of their social functions.

The chorus has had hundreds of sing outs, delighted thousands of listeners, and helped raise thousands of dollars through their charity performances. Ross notes that the *Suburbanaires* have truly become a family, and members seldom miss the Wednesday noon practices.

Average attendance at practices and sing outs is still over fifty choristers. They entertain at Seniors Residences, festivals, town functions, (the Remembrance Day service is a special favorite with this group), and local schools, where they offer a bursary to promising music students. They sing for free and all money from honoraria is given to their charities, which include *Harmonize For Speech* and bursaries. As well, Ross is proud to state, they assist a child in Bolivia through their *Nolan Fund*, named for the late grandson of director Milt.

Ross believes that the *Suburbanaires* Chorus plays an ever more useful role in Ontario barbershop activities, offering a second chance to sing to seniors still active in their chapters, and a less strenuous routine for those who want to keep on singing but don't really enjoy standing on the risers for long periods.

In addition to the gang in the *Suburbanaires* that already sing in six chapter choruses, there are a lot of Frank Thorne types who have no other place to sing! As far as he knows, (and he's checked the Harmonet), there are no other districts in the Society with a comparable seniors chorus!

Any member of the Barbershop Harmony Society is welcome, Ross notes. Just come out at noon any Wednesday, September to June, to St. Pat's church at 5633



Doing Anything Wednesday Afternoons ?

If you're a senior barbershopper in the BHS, and you'd like to get in some more singing, come join a bunch of friends your age and sing with the

SUBURBANAIRES Barbershop Chorus.

We practice every Wednesday afternoon from 12:00 noon 'til 3:00 pm, in Markham. (Bring a lunch!)

We practice Sitting Down!
We have no Upper Age Limit!

We have singers from six chapters and Frank Thorne. Many of our members sing in their regular chapter choruses as well as the *Suburbanaires*. And you can keep on singing with us long after the thrill of competing and standing on the risers for three hours is gone!

A true hobby chorus for senior singers!

Want more info? Drop in any Wednesday, St. Patrick's Church Hall, 5633 Hwy 7, Markham, (park in the lot behind the church)
 Or phone Ross Sutherland, 905-294-1095 or Bob Burrell, 905-471-1018
 Email: [redacted]

Highway 7 East in Markham. Park in the back, and bring a lunch. There is a 30-minute lunch and social break. Practice ends at 3 p.m. sharp. And when you get there, ask for Ross. He's still the sparkplug that he was in 1990!

For more info, just give Ross a ring at 905-294-1095, or Bob Burrell at 905-471-1018, e-mail rbtbl@rogers.com. If you're a senior, the *Suburbanaires* may be just what you're looking for!

[ED NOTE: I am an honorary member of the Suburbanaires. Donna and I are regularly invited to their social events and have enjoyed every one we have been able to attend. They sure know how to make a guest welcome. If I lived closer, I certainly would be attending their practices. If you are looking for a chorus with warm, friendly people, check out the Suburbanaires.] ★