

Mark Freedkin joined the Society in 1977 after graduating from the University of Illinois with degrees in Industrial Engineering and Computer Science. Driving around town his first night in Evansville, Indiana the first night he arrived, he saw an electric sign with the message: "***Wanted – Men Who Like To Sing***". The local chapter was hosting a guest night and he was hooked. Nine months later, Mark transferred his membership to what was then the Santa Ana chapter, and quickly stepped up as Assistant Director of that chapter.

Mark sang in a variety of chapter quartets, with the most notable being "***Nickel Beer***" (with Neal Warren, Tony Crain and Ron Lerche). Mark commented, "We didn't sing very well, but we sure were entertaining." The Santa Ana chapter eventually moved to Westminster and became the "old" Westminster Chapter. Mark served as a front line Music Director there for just over three years. From 1993-96, he served as front-line Music Director for the Saddleback Valley chapter (now the Irvine chapter).

In early 1996, Mark joined the Masters of Harmony singing Baritone. He has been singing with the Masters since then and earned all six of their most recent gold medals. Mark has served the Masters of Harmony as Assistant Baritone Section Leader, Auditions Coordinator, Vocal Assessor, Merchandise Manager, and Truck & Trailer driver. He also directs the "welcome" song at MOH rehearsals.

Mark's greatest contribution to the society is in Youth Outreach. Starting in 1994, Mark chaired a committee of local barbershop chapters that helped raise and donate over \$42,000 to support choral music education in Orange County High Schools. In 1999, he organized a young men's chorus of almost 80 high school singers that performed at the 1999 International Convention in Anaheim. Through that event, Mark established an on-going relationship with the Southern California Vocal Association (SCVA) which is a professional organization for choral music teachers, and an affiliate of the California Music Educators Association and the American Choral Directors Association. Mark has served that organization as their volunteer webmaster since early 2000, and he has automated many of their administrative functions to improve the honor choir and festival registration process.

Since 2001 Mark has organized and chaired the Southern California Young Men's Harmony Festival, which has been adopted and endorsed by SCVA as their official young men's event. As a result of his efforts and contributions, the SCVA created a special position on their Executive Board for "**Vice President of Barbershop Harmony Festivals**" and named Mark to that position.

Mark said, "I was deeply honored by this appointment – it shows that Barbershop Harmony has been embraced as a legitimate musical art form by the music education community, and it reflects positively on all of the barbershoppers who have helped expose young men and young women to this wonderful style of music."

Mark has served the District and Society as a COTS Faculty Member for Youth In Harmony, has been a returning member of the music faculty for the NorCal Youth Harmony Camp, and has led the men's musical program for the Tucson Youth Harmony Festival for two years.

Mark just received his 36-year Society membership renewal last month. He and his wife Shellie have been married for over 21 years and live in Irvine, California with their 16-year old daughter Linda.

The Far Western District is fortunate to have Mark among its members and it is a pleasure to honor his contributions at the Fall 2012 Convention.