

The 2013 FWD Spring Convention is Dedicated to Bruce Sellnow

If you were to ask this convention's dedicatee, Bruce Sellnow, to define his career in barbershop, he would describe himself as a helper, not a hero, with a preference to work behind the scenes rather than in the spotlight. Born into a very musical family, Bruce plays trumpet and flugelhorn, his parents and brother all play musical instruments, and his kids, Chris, Amber, and Katie all played in band. All of them have great voices and also sing.

Bruce discovered barbershop in 1994, joining the Oakdale Chiefs of Harmony. Soon thereafter, he attended Harmony College West led by the talented Dr. Greg Lyne. It was an amazing 48 hours, and his first exposure to anything beyond the local chapter. Bruce brought this newfound enthusiasm from HCW back to the chorus and they made a strong showing at the 1995 District contest. Bruce was selected as Barbershopper of the Year (BOTY) and started singing in a quartet on chapter shows. For Bruce, entertaining audiences was the key!

Bruce was instrumental in reuniting the Oakdale and Modesto Chapters (to include the Merced Chapter) and forming The Golden Valley Chorus (GVC) in January 1997. Under the directorship of Jim Turnmire, the GVC won the Division title and placed sixth at District that very first year. Bruce was awarded his second BOTY in 1998 and continued to help the GVC serving as Program VP, Music VP, and Chapter President over the next several years.

During this time, Bruce auditioned for and joined his first registered quartet, Classic Rendition. In 2000, he joined his second quartet as the baritone of TopCats, who regularly reach the top ten at FWD contests, perform on chapter shows throughout Northern California, and also hosted the Sacramento Area Quartet Workshop. TopCats shared a vision for a new large chorus in the Sacramento area that would attract singers from all over. They even had the name picked out — The American River Chorus (ARC), but life's "priorities" would put this dream on hold for the next 10 years.

At the time TopCats formed, Bruce had been helping Ed Bejarana with the FWD Youth Harmony Camp, so TopCats joined right in. He was also assisting Lloyd Steinkamp with the High School Quartet Contest, where he continues his work today. In fact, the High School Quartets you will hear this weekend mark the 23rd Annual Contest.

In 2002, Bruce's life changed forever when he reunited with Nancy, his high school sweetheart. They both had kids from their first marriages, so when they got married in 2003, Bruce decided to take a break from barbershop for a bit and focus on his new family life. He accepted a position as Deacon with his church, started singing on the Praise Team, and running media production for their Sunday morning live broadcasts. This would later lead to a role on the church Governing Board, all of which kept him very busy. Even though he was not actively singing barbershop during this time, he continued running the

FWD High School Quartet Contest and serving at the Youth Harmony Camp. Bruce's break was short lived as the opportunity of a lifetime was about to unfold.

When it happened, it was a dream come true. It was Nancy who encouraged him to return. "This is your DREAM, honey. You are not going to pass this up!" The dream was the new guy in town — Dr. Greg Lyne to be specific — and a new chorus, Voices In Harmony (VIH), that was being formed. Bruce would spend the next four years making the weekly 150-mile round trip to rehearsals. Any guy who's ever done that won't be surprised. Bruce served as a member of the Music Team, led the Show Production Team, and was selected BOTY of his third chapter in 2008. The highlight however, was standing in the center section of the risers on the fourth row every week, singing for Dr. Lyne.

The following year, 2009, once again brought change to Bruce's barbershop life. An aligning of the planets would make the new Sacramento chorus dream a reality when a talented young director, Gabe Caretto, moved to Sacramento and maestro extraordinaire Ron Black relocated from Texas. Bruce was part of "Team Noah" that started building the ARC (American River Chorus). The chorus launched, quite successfully, in January of 2010. The second dream had come true!

Bruce had planned on singing in both ARC and VIH, but some additional changes were happening. The director of the GVC was moving, and Bruce was now being invited to direct, but that meant leaving VIH and Dr. Greg at the end of 2009. He describes that stepping off the VIH risers the last time was one of the toughest moments of his life.

Throughout 2010, Bruce stayed busy helping ARC in Sacramento on Thursdays, and even busier as front-line director for the GVC on Tuesdays. In addition, the GVC had just taken on the role of hosting the NorCal Novice Contest, where Bruce would again put his organizational skills to work, and continues to run this contest still today. The 2010 Spring Convention was a busy one, with Bruce directing a chorus for the first time and running the HS Contest. He was excited to learn that the GVC had qualified for District and overwhelmed on Saturday evening when Bob Lally presented him with the President's Award for 2009. It was quite a shock and an amazing honor! In 2011, the GVC presented Bruce with the BOTY once again and in 2012, Bruce would step into the administrative role one more time. He is now serving as the Music & Performance VP for the newly-named Voices of California. The chorus has qualified for International and is headed to Toronto in July!

Now, if he could just get in a quartet that could compete at International!

...Don't ever stop dreamin', Bruce.

