

The King's Heralds

DAN SHULTZ

Dan Shultz, emeritus professor of music, Walla Walla University, has researched and written extensively about Seventh-day Adventist music history and musicians. His publications include *A Great Tradition*—a history of music at Walla Walla University, and the *Adventist Musicians Biographical Resource*—an encyclopedia with biographies of over 1100 Adventist musicians. He founded the International Adventist Musicians Association, serving as its president for ten years and editing its publications and website for over thirty years. Shultz and his wife, Carolyn (nee Stevens), live in College Place, Washington.

The King's Heralds, a male quartet initially associated with the Voice of Prophecy radio program for over thirty-five years, has been a popular part of Adventist musical identity since 1937. The forerunner of the quartet was the Lone Star Four formed in 1928 by three brothers, Waldo, Wesley, and Louis Crane, along with a friend, Ray Turner, at what is now Southwestern Adventist University. In 1936, California evangelist H.M.S. Richards invited them to assist him in evangelism and in a radio broadcast called Tabernacle of the Air. A year later, the program was renamed the Voice of Prophecy and the quartet became the King's Heralds.¹



King's Heralds 1962-1967: Jack Veazey, John Thurber, Jim McClintock, Bob Edwards (front center)

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

The Voice of Prophecy Years (1937-1982)

By the time of the Voice of Prophecy's first national broadcast in January 1942, changes in the quartet had led to George Casebeer and Bob Seamount joining Wesley Crane and Ray Turner. In 1943, the last of the Crane brothers left the quartet and was replaced by Wayne Hooper. While Turner remained in the group until 1947, there were several changes in the quartet during the 1940s, some brought about by church leaders in Washington, D.C. responding to pressure from trained musicians who wanted a more sophisticated level of music in the broadcast.

In 1943, the General Conference Radio Commission hired George Greer, a successful college choir director, to work with the quartet. When both Richards and the quartet resisted Greer's efforts, church leaders in Washington dismissed Hooper, Seamount, and Turner in early 1947 and attempted to replace Richards. By the

middle of that year, the situation became so untenable that Greer left and Lon Metcalfe, also a successful choir director, took his place. However, conflicts continued and, in 1949, Metcalfe also left.²

Wayne Hooper, one of the three dismissed in 1947, had in the meantime completed a music degree at Union College in Nebraska and was now invited back after Metcalfe's departure. Hooper agreed to do so with the understanding that he could form a new quartet and have control over what it sang. He brought back Seamount to sing second tenor, retained Bob Edwards as first tenor, moved Jerry Dill from baritone to bass, and placed himself as baritone. The new quartet, with its unique blend of voices, sang together for the next twelve years.³

Their choices in music, along with innovations in sound recording and reproduction, defined the King's Herald sound for millions of listeners. The advent of records and stereo enabled the quartet to release quality records that Adventists and Voice of Prophecy listeners eagerly purchased.

Hooper sang in the quartet until 1962 when he became musical director of the broadcast. During his years with the Voice of Prophecy, he became famous for his composing and arranging talents.⁴ Seamount, the first to leave the Hooper quartet, was replaced with John Thurber in 1961. The following year Hooper and Dill left, replaced by Jack Veazey, baritone, and Jim McClintock, bass. These new members, along with Edwards, sang together as a highly-regarded group for the next five years.⁵

The quartet traveled thousands of miles each year. During the summer camp meeting season alone it was not unusual for them to travel over 12,000 miles. It was a grueling schedule with long road trips, last minute arrivals when delays occurred along the way, constant performing, and extended visiting after the meetings.⁶

Independent Ministry (1982-present)

By the beginning of the 1980s, radio evangelism was relying on short two-, five-, or fifteen-minute programs that focused more on message and less on music. Also, during those years, musical tastes of the radio audience were changing to a preference for more contemporary music.⁷

These changes, as well as the salaries and travel expense associated with a music group, led to the release of the quartet and its accompanist, Jim Teel, in the summer of 1982. Teel and the quartet immediately formed an independent ministry called The Heralds' Ministries. The quartet, renamed the Heralds, began to function on its own, inviting Teel to assist as a keyboard artist and arranger.⁸ They performed extensively in the United States and internationally on Christian television, and in concerts at churches of many denominations.⁹

It was not an easy transition. Jerry Patton, whose fifteen years with the Voice of Prophecy-based King's Heralds plus another twenty-two years with the new group made him the longest serving member in the quartet's history, found his faith tested by the challenges the group encountered as they established themselves as an independent entity. The experience strengthened his faith even as the reach of the Herald's ministry broadened. Including venues outside the Adventist circle of churches and institutions was one of the major challenges of

those first few years, according to Jim Ayars, another quartet member who sang during the transition.¹⁰

For fourteen years, from 1983 until 1997, the quartet, which included Patton, Ayers, and Veazy, who had each been part of the King's Heralds, along with Don Scroggs who joined them in 1983, sang together without a change in membership. This stability continued for the next two decades with only five members leaving and being replaced.¹¹

During these years, the quartet also expanded its repertoire to include a mix of contemporary favorites, traditional hymns, spirituals, and songs for children. They began to win Angel Awards for the excellence of their recordings and their fifteen-minute radio broadcast, Sounds of Praise, a program created for use by local pastors, written and produced by Teel. Eventually, the quartet would earn a total of twenty-three Silver Angel Awards for Excellence in Media, including six for Best Male Vocal Group, and fourteen for Best Album. The group received a Gold Angel Award in 1992 for being the oldest continuous gospel quartet in America, tracing their roots back to beginning of The Lone Star Four.¹²

In 1985, the Heralds traveled to China as part of a cultural exchange program with the United States, the first Christian group to do so. The quartet has engaged in evangelism throughout Africa, South America, and Central America. In the Republic of Cuba, the quartet presented concerts in nineteen cities in conjunction with the evangelistic ministry of La Voz de la Esperanza radio broadcast.¹³

As an independent ministry, the Heralds have had numerous opportunities to perform for other Christian groups, including the Christian Booksellers Association, the National Association of Religious Broadcasters, the Protestant Health and Welfare Association, the Greater Pittsburgh Charismatic Conference, and the Baptist World Alliance. They also continue to perform for meetings scheduled by the Adventist Church. The quartet has appeared frequently on television programs such as "Praise the Lord" on the Trinity Broadcasting Network and the Adventist program "It Is Written." Additionally, they continue to sing for patients and their families in hospitals and witness to inmates with their prison ministry.¹⁴

In 2003, the group reclaimed the King's Heralds name when the Voice of Prophecy failed to renew its trademark in a timely way. It was a controversial move, yet one that prevailed despite a challenge from the Voice of Prophecy.¹⁵

Contribution

Including the Voice of Prophecy King's Heralds years, thirty-one men have sung in the quartet since its founding in 1937. They have recorded over 100 albums in thirty languages in a variety of musical styles, making them a favorite with audiences of all ages and social strata.¹⁶

The King's Heralds traditional blend, harmony, and balance created a distinctive sound and singing style that has been retained since 1949. It has been enjoyed by millions of people in the United States and over fifty countries,

including the islands of the Caribbean, Latin America, the South Pacific, Australia, Asia, and Africa. They have sung for heads of state, governors, ambassadors, and other dignitaries, as well as for those in the humblest levels of society.

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NOTES

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3. Edwards, *H.M.S. Richards*, 228.
4. Edwards, "Singing as I Go..." 45; Edwards, *H.M.S. Richards*, 284.
5. Edwards, *H.M.S. Richards*, 283-284.
6. Wayne Hooper, interviews by author, February 10 and 14, 2005; Del Delker, interview by author, February 17, 2005; Edwards, *Hello America!* (Voice of Prophecy, 1961), 40.
7. James Hannum, interview by author, February 3, 2005; email to author, February 8, 2005.

8. "Present King's Heralds Quartet to Begin Independent Ministry," *Southwestern Union Record*, May 27, 1982, 2-3.
9. "Our Story," Official Website of the King's Heralds, accessed August 6, 2019, <https://khqofficial.org/bio>.
10. Jerry Patton interview by author, 2005; Jerry Patton email to author, April 3, 2007; James Ayars interview by author, February 2005.
11. "King's Herald's >Members," listing of quartet members appearing at the top Google search results for "King's Heralds members," accessed August 6, 2019, https://www.google.com/search?q=king%27s+heralds+members&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwim77mWke_jAhWrnuAKHZ0eCosQ1QIoAHoECAkQAQ&biw=1366&bih=.
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