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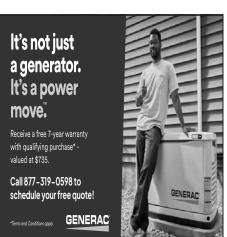






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The **Postscript**

By Carrie Classon



"Still Singing"

My dad turned 90 this weekend, and we were all set to drive up north to celebrate his birthday.

He's a hard one to buy a present for. My dad does not need more things. He likes using the things he has until they are completely worn out. He already has a line of slippers on his top shelf, queued up for when the pair he's wearing is threadbare. He wore his last pair of hiking boots until his socks showed through. Besides, he said "No presents!" in a very persistent way. So my sister and I decided to give him music. Barbershop music was her idea.

My sister and I went over to my parents' next-door neighbors to talk to Rod about barbershop quartets. "You won't find any," Rod told us. "Barbershop is dead."

Rod is a guy who would know. He's been involved in community groups of all kinds, and he keeps track of these things. We were trying to come up with some other kind of music when our party plans hit another snag.

My brother-in-law, Pepe, recently received a call to work as a pastor. Pepe entered the seminary at 60 years old, deciding—no matter how late it might be—this was the thing he was meant to do. The ordination was a celebration of his new life, and no one wanted to miss it. But it fell on the morning after my dad's birthday. Since both were once-in-a-lifetime events, we had to move the birthday party to my condo in the city so everyone could make it to the ordination the next morning.

"Maybe barbershop is not quite as dead in the city," I suggested to my sister, and I got online to see.

The first group I called would have loved to sing, but their bass was in for a cardiac procedure and was not supposed to exert himself for 24 hours. "It's nothing serious!" said the tenor who took my call. (But you'd expect a tenor to say that.)

The second group answered my call from Florida, where two of the members were, while the remaining members were in the Midwest. "Too bad!" the leader said, "but I've got another name for you!"

The third group said they would love to come and sing. And I was over the

When they arrived, I understood why barbershop music was on the decline. One member was four years older than my dad. But they drove through a snowstorm to make it to the party and, when they came in, my dad was very surprised.

They sang for about half an hour and, at the end, they invited my dad to come up and sing bass in "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." And he did. I watched my dad singing and was so happy we were able to do this—to celebrate with our dad on the day of his birthday, to hear barbershop music while there were folks still singing.

I escorted the quartet down to the elevator afterward and thanked them again for coming out on such a snowy night.

"I think we should do one more," the bass suggested.

And, right outside the elevator doors, they started singing the Frank Sinatra tune "Don't Blame Me." The setting might not have been the most romantic, but the acoustics were perfect. Those barbershop singers brought tears to my eyes.

I thought of how wonderful it was to spend this time with people we care about and to remember how fortunate we all are—at least for this day—to still be singing.

Till next time, Carrie

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