

Ancient Harmonious Society of Woodshedders, Inc.
6-minute Mini-Show Script:
“WOODSHEDDING — HOW IT ALL BEGAN!”

(revision of 6/24/00)

[23 sec.] **MC:** “The date was 1938. The place, Tulsa, Oklahoma. O.C. Cash and Rupert Hall had a hankerin’ for some of the old-time harmony that had faded from the from the popular music scene. On a whim, they invited friends and business associates to join them in an evening of song. Much to their surprise, 25 men took their invitation seriously and, that evening, the first modern Barbershop Lead sang:”

[5 sec.] **Lead sings:** “Down Mobile, down Mobile; how I love that little gal of mine; how I love that little gal of mine.”

[30 sec.] **MC:** “‘Down Mobile’... hardly a song to stir your heart, today. But, in 1938, it brought back fond memories of Vaudeville quartets, and families singing around the parlor piano. O.C. and the boys had two things in mind: Preserving the good old melodies from the turn of the century to 1925, and Propagating the close-harmony style of Barbershop quartets. They had no written arrangements, no choruses and no directors. They didn’t even sell tickets — they sang purely for their own joy. Someone would sing ‘melody,’ and another man would feel a Tenor part:

[5 sec.] **Lead-Tenor duet for 6 chords, per Example #1:** “Down Mo-bile, Down Mo-bile. “

[2 sec.] **MC:** “And someone would put in a Bass line”:

[5 sec.] **Lead-Tenor-Bass trio, 6 chords, per Example #1:** “Down Mo-bile, Down Mo-bile.”

[3 sec.] **MC:** “And someone would fill in the missing notes — Baritone.”

[12 sec.] **Quartet sings abbreviated “Down Mobile” — Example #1.**

[30 sec.] **MC:** “Does that sound OK? Good! In 1938, it thrilled everyone who heard it. Soon, radios and newspapers throughout America were raving about this wonderful ‘new’ music, and Barbershopping was a hit again.

“But ‘ear-singing’ wasn’t intended for spectators. It was — and is — an exciting, living experiment with music — a chance for four singers to feel the natural harmonies implied by a melody and discover which chords they liked best. **(Point to the demo quartet)** Let’s see what happens when the Bass wants to try something different:

[5 sec.] **(Quartet sings Example #2)**

[6 sec.] **MC:** “What does that make the other parts do? Let’s hear the Bass sing this new way while the Bari sings what he sang the *first* time — just those two voices:

[5 sec.] **(Bass-Bari duet, first three notes.)**

[6 sec.] **MC:** “Oops! Two guys on the same note! Who has to move? [. . .] That’s right — the Bari! Let’s hear what the Bari had to do to create a four-part chord:

[5 sec.] **(Bari solo, then Quartet sings example #2 again.)**

[8 sec.] **MC:** “So it’s the Bari’s responsibility to make sure that every chord has four different notes in it! See what you can learn from woodshedding?

“Let’s hear what happens when the Bass wants to get *really* fancy — just the Bass and melody.”
(Point to Quartet.)

[5 sec.] **(Bass duets with Lead on Example #3.)**

[5 sec.] **MC:** “What do you think the other parts have to do? Let’s listen:”

[5 sec.] **(Quartet sings Example #3.)**

[145 sec.] **MC:** “Which of our three examples did you like the best? [. . .] Did each of them work? Yes. Was each of them OK? Yes. In fact...they were *all* OK!

“Question: O.C. and the gang probably didn’t know as much about ‘music’ as most of you do. So, how could they create three completely acceptable harmonies? Folks, they *simply used their EARS*. They *experimented and tested* until they liked what they heard.

“They didn’t have to finish songs, or memorize, or perform. They got together to listen to new melodies and find ways to fit Barbershop chords around them. It was the *discovery process* that was so much fun for them — and, it still is, for *us*! We call it ‘Woodshedding,’ and it may be something that *you* can do, too! It’s *fun*. It’s challenging... and, it makes you a much better singer.

(Quartet very softly sings entire “Down Mobile” as background to MC’s close.)

“So who is in AHSOW? You may have heard that we have many gold medalists, like Terry Clarke, John Devine, Kenny Hatton... even entire quartets, like Bank Street and The Tulsa Tradition. That’s true. We also have Society executives like Darryl Flinn and Greg Lyne..., top arrangers like Ed Waesche and Jack Baird, and judges, and musical directors. **(Pause)** But, there are more than a thousand ‘Just Plain Barbershoppers’ ...like *you*.

“Sure, AHSOW *is* ‘a place where the elite meet’ — but, in this case, everybody is equal! No one cares if you own a gold medal. You’re judged by your ability to create harmonies by ear, not by your accomplishments on the Contest stage.

“So how do you become a member of AHSOW? If you’ve been a Barbershopper for two consecutive years and can show us that you can sing good ‘ear’ harmony, one of these guys will step out of the quartet and *you* can step into the exciting world of the Ancient Harmonious Society of Woodshedders.

“Thanks for watching our little show. Please tell the world how Barbershopping got started... and let ‘em know that we’re the guys preserving the art. Come sing with us when we’re finished here, and try some authentic woodshedding.” **(Quartet turns up the volume and finishes ‘Down Mobile.’)**

[Total: 310 sec. = 5+ min. Add burbles during performance, MC stammering and audience response, and this is a crisp 8-minute show.]

***** The DEC should refer to the videotape of the Mini-Show, recorded by Tom Millot during the 2000 Mid-Winter convention in Tucson in front of the District Presidents. Those involved in the demonstration were: Toban Dvoretzky, MC; Bob Walker (T), Jack Jemison (L), Bud Hillier (Br), Ken Wheeler (Bs).**

Feel free to play the tape for chapters and at conventions and schools! ***