

Towne Singers' Story

I had been singing with the William Hall Chorale based in Pasadena when I got the idea that our La Cañada residents needed a place to sing in town besides churches and bars! On April 1, 1987, April Fool's Day, a few friends gathered in La Canada to form a grassroots, community chorus. Since we were all local residents at that time, we named it, The Towne Singers.

It was to be a self-sustaining, independent organization run by volunteers from the choir. A board of directors elected by the membership would make policy decisions approved by the singers.

We wanted to sing all styles of choral music: folk, pop, patriotic standards, show tunes, and classical favorites. The choir was open to anyone who loved to sing, and "shower" singers were welcomed. Our first concert was a "recital" in a private home with twenty-three singers and one hundred and fifty guests who had promised not to throw anything!

As our choir grew in size and reputation, we sang for many local events over the years and we loved entertaining our hometown audiences. In addition to giving two concerts each year, we've travelled as a group to New York City four times to sing at both Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and to the British Isles for a ten-day concert tour, performing in London, York, Edinburgh and Dublin.

One "memorable" performance in the early days was for an Easter Sunrise Service at Forest Lawn Cemetery. When the sun didn't rise on cue, we found ourselves completely in the dark and unable to read our music!

Today our members come to us from all over the Los Angeles area and we have had to find venues with bigger stages in nearby cities to accommodate our growing membership. We've found new audiences at the Alex Theater in Glendale, the Arcadia Performing Arts Center, and the Pasadena First United Methodist Church.

I credit the survival and growth of the Towne Singers over the past thirty-two+ years to the flexibility and dedication of its members. We've survived by taking little steps and by "trial and error". If something didn't work, we changed it.

From the very beginning, it was the music that brought us together, but it was the friendships that kept us going. We hung together through it all and we made it work. We have remained to this day.....a "family" of singers.

Phyllis Winnaman, Founder of the Towne Singers

(As told to Merrily Hake)

