

California Crossroads Breaks Top Ten Without Injury

Senior quartet places eighth in a field of 25

By Buddy Yarnell, Tenor (adaptation)

It was supposed to be a fun trip to the Midwinter Convention in San Antonio, to compete in our first Seniors International. But (with apologies to **Bill Rosica**) it turned into quite a bit more!



We – **California Crossroads** quartet, comprising me (and my wife **Nina**), **Les Weiser** (and his wife **Kathy**), **Larry Thorpe** and **Pete Hensley** – made the airport by 6:30am for an 8:30 flight. We went through the usual security check (yes, I did have to dump my infamous half-gallon water bottle). No big deal, right? We looked out our window as the French-made, 50-passenger, twin-jet rose to the skies (20 minutes late) and our pilot announced a routine 3-hour flight to San Antonio – 40 degrees and raining. Altitude 37,000 feet, speed 475 mph, bopping along. Then the fun began.

“We have a slight problem with our hydraulic system,” the pilot said, so he was diverting to Tucson. Hey, we paid extra for a non-stop flight!

We touched down safely and began taxiing to the gate. Oops! Three crash trucks, two foam trucks, three ambulances and six airport police cars were there to greet us. It seems the pilot had declared an emergency due to low hydraulic pressure, which affects minor things like the landing gear and brakes!

The pilot had skillfully brought us down with hydraulic system No. 2 and no brakes, using “reverse thrust” and 95% of the extra long Tucson runway to do so. Most of the passengers had shades down and weren’t even aware of the problem!

“Get off the plane if you want, while the mechanics fix this minor problem.” Well, there were no mechanics and the problem wasn’t minor. So while we waited five hours for the next flight, the ladies shopped, we had a free airline lunch and calmed our nerves by rehearsing our contest set for the other disgruntled passengers (from the delay, not our singing). I forgot my quartet suit bag on board, our plane had been towed away and I spent anxious moments looking at the huge pool of hydraulic fluid where the plane had been and wondering if I was going to have to perform in “civilian” clothes. But it was retrieved (with a ladder). They gave us \$100 vouchers for another flight, but we thought, this airline must do without us in the future. The Man Upstairs was definitely with us last Thursday, as we slunk into cold, wet San Antonio.

The good news? It was a great convention with very tough competition. California Crossroads was lucky enough to come in 8th out of 25. [*“Luck” had nothing to do with it. –Ed.*] The Society had the very first Youth Harmony Festival in which six great high school and college choruses competed, one from New Zealand. It was outstanding!

We heard the new senior champs, **Eureka**, with **Brian Beck** on bass. They were head and shoulders above everyone else, including us! We were also treated to the great sounds of our current top five quartets and the reigning collegiate champions – **Road Trip**, with **Sam Papageorge**. **Max Q** was even better than their winning performance in Denver last July! **OC Times** was fabulous, and well supported by their guest bass, **Tom Metzger** of **Realtime**.

California Crossroads was delighted to compete in this contest and honored to represent Fullerton, Brea, La Jolla, Santa Fe Springs, Frank Thorne AND the FWD! Thanks so much for your encouragement. Midwinter is in Pasadena next year. You have GOT to go!