

Tim Hauser, Tommy West & the Criterions

By Charlie Horner and Pamela Horner

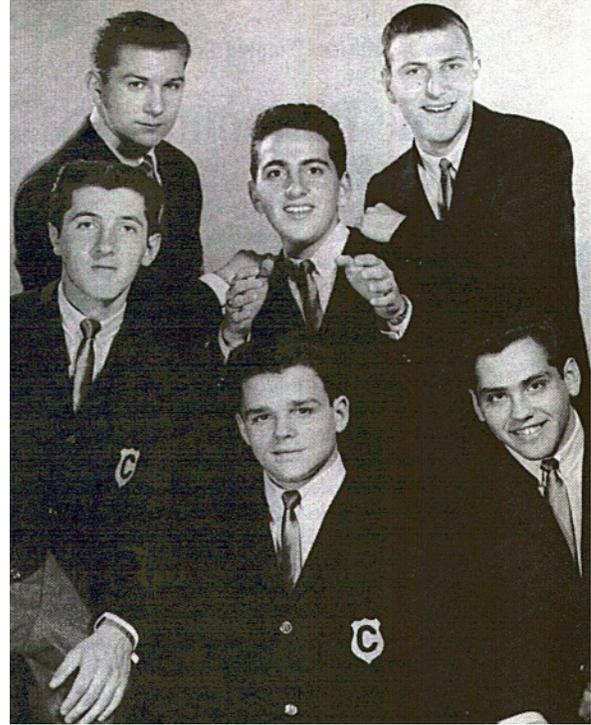
Excepted in part from the forthcoming book,
*Springwood Avenue Harmony: The Unique Musical Legacy
of Asbury Park's West Side, Volume 2, 1946 - 1980*

Long before Tim Hauser formed the internationally known group, Manhattan Transfer, and Tommy Picardo took the stage name Tommy West (of the renowned songwriting, performing and recording combination Cashman, Pistilli and West), the two were part of an endearing Jersey Shore doo wop group, the Criterions.

Timothy DuPron Hauser was born December 12, 1941 in Troy, New York. He moved with his parents and sister Fayette to the Jersey Shore area when he was 7 years old. Living in Wanamassa, Ocean Township, about 2 miles northwest of Asbury Park, Tim attended St. Rose High School in Belmar. In high school he sang in the glee club and played left field for the school's varsity baseball team.

Early on, Tim Hauser developed an interest in black music, specifically rhythm & blues. "He would go into Asbury Park because they had the better record stores there," Tim's sister Fayette told *Asbury Park Press* columnist Chris Jordan. "He'd bring the records home and my parents had a big console record player and it had big speakers. The first record he brought home was 'Bo Diddley sings Bo Diddley.' He put it on the record player and played it over and over for days. We laid on the carpet in front of the speakers and listened to that record."

Tim loved the R&B vocal groups like the Spaniels. Still, it took a chance meeting with Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers at Asbury Park's Convention Hall to make up his mind between a career in baseball or music. On the night of June 30, 1956, Tim attended a Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers concert at Convention Hall with some friends. As it turned out, the concert was shut down before it really got going. After crowding 2,700 youngsters onto the ballroom floor at 8 PM, fans of the Teenagers had to wait until nearly 11 PM for the act they came to see to go on. As Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers started their first



song, the anxious crowds surged forward to see the group. Feeling crushed, the fans in the front pushed back and fights broke out. At that point, the concert was stopped and order was restored. As the Teenagers started their second song, more fights broke out and the concert was stopped. Almost 3,000 youngsters who had waited all night to see Frankie Lymon sing were told to go home. A riot broke out as the young audience poured out onto the boardwalk and the street. [For an in depth account of the riot see "The City That Banned Rock & Roll," *Echoes of the Past* #129 (2019)]

"We heard the bottles break and everybody dispersed," Tim recalled. Separated from his friends, Tim crawled onto the stage to avoid the fighting. Tim knew his way around Convention Hall from previous visits there. He knew he could escape unharmed through the back of the stage. But in the wings, he met a confused Frankie Lymon.

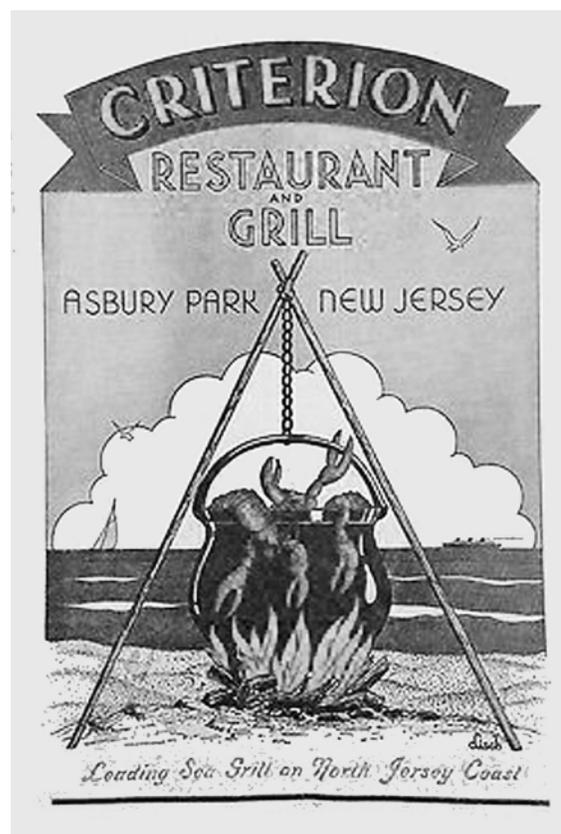
“This kid came over to me with makeup in his hand. It was Frankie Lymon,” recalled Tim Hauser. “He asked, ‘Do you know where the dressing rooms are?’ And I did.” Tim led Frankie Lymon to the dressing room where the other Teenagers had already retreated. Invited in, he sat mesmerized on the dressing room floor while the Teenagers rehearsed “I Promise To Remember,” acappella. “It was like a lightning bolt from God saying this is where you’re going,” said Tim. “It was like God’s way of saying, ‘Here’s your gig, son, and if you don’t get it, it’s not my fault.’” That brief encounter would lead Tim Hauser to a lifetime of singing.

From that moment on, Tim tried valiantly to assemble an R&B vocal group. He had a group in Wanamassa but they weren’t that into singing. Then in February of 1958, Tim met fellow St. Rose High School classmate, Tommy Picardo from nearby Neptune. It turned out Tommy could sing. “When I discovered rhythm and blues, Tommy was the first person that I met that had as much of a passion for it as I did,” Tim once said. “Lo and behold, he was a musician, he played the piano and played the guitar and he wrote arrangements, so it was ideal. We started a vocal group and we had this wonderful experience together.”

They soon added another St. Rose classmate, Steven Casagrande. A fourth member, Phil Miller didn’t last very long and was replaced by Joe Ernst of Point Pleasant Beach High School in Point Pleasant, New Jersey. One of the quartet’s first appearances was at a high school sponsored sock hop in the St. Rose school auditorium in late Spring. They were not scheduled to perform. They just got up and sang acappella to a warm reception. By then the singers had begun calling themselves the Criterions.

The name Criterions was taken from the well-known Criterion Restaurant on the Asbury Park Boardwalk. Famous for their salt water taffy and candies, the Criterion Restaurant had been a fixture on the boardwalk since 1929.

As the Criterions popularity grew they sang at other local parties and dances. In October, they sang in front of 100 people at the tenth anniversary of the Court St. Elizabeth Catholic Daughters of America in Avon, New Jersey.



Looking for a fuller sound, the Criterions added Jimmy Ruf from Red Bank Catholic High School. The group was now set with Tim Hauser and Tommy Picardo sharing leads and first tenor, Jimmy Ruf (second tenor), Steve Casagrande (baritone) and Joe Ernst (bass). They began practicing at Tommy’s house at 27 Albany Road in Neptune. Tommy was fortunate to have a Wollensak reel-to-reel tape recorder and the Criterions could play back their rehearsals of songs like “My Juanita” by the Crests and “So Why” by the Bop Chords.

One of the first big shows the Criterions sang at was in Plainfield, New Jersey, at a Polish-American Hall. There they opened for major stars, James Sheppard & the Heartbeats. Tommy accompanied the Heartbeats on piano, but the Criterions sang acappella renditions of “I’m So Happy” (Teenchords), “Zoom Zoom Zoom” (Collegians) and “My Juanita.”

Late in 1958, the Criterions decided to try their luck at getting a recording contract in New York City. They had one record company in mind and that was *End / Gone Records*, run by George Goldner and his right-hand A&R man, Richard Barrett.

Richard Barrett had discovered the talents of Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers and by 1958 was working to make huge stars of Little Anthony & the Imperials, the Chantels, the Dubs, the Flamingos, the Isley Brothers and scores of others. Barrett's (and Goldner's) offices were on the 14th floor of 1650 Broadway though they also used the CBS Building at 1697 Broadway for rehearsing acts. In the late fifties and early sixties, more music business transactions took place in 1650 Broadway, 1697 Broadway and the Brill Building (1619 Broadway) than almost anywhere else in the country. For instance, at 1650 Broadway you could write a song, hire the musicians, cut a demo, and take it around to record companies, publishers, managers, artists and promoters without ever leaving the building.

Entering the *End Records* reception room in the CBS Building, the Criterions found Little Anthony & the Imperials and the Chantels there waiting to rehearse. Richard Barrett was rehearsing the Isley Brothers in another room. Barrett listened to the Criterions but turned them down. In the elevator on the way down, the Criterions met bandleader and record company owner, Al Brown.

By the late 1950's Al Brown had already established himself as a respected record producer in the field rhythm & blues vocal harmony. His music



The Criterions, ca. 1958. Left to right, Top: Tom Picardo, Steve Casagrande, Joe Ernst, Jim Ruf, Tim Hauser



The Criterions, ca. 1958. Left to right, top: Tim Hauser, Tommy Picardo. Bottom, Jim Ruf, Steve Casagrande, Joe Ernst

arrangements and band backing had generated hits for the Heartbeats ("Your Way") and Starlights ("Missing You") and many others.

Al Browne worked for the City of New York during the day while moonlighting as a freelance music producer, arranger and bandleader. Earlier in his career he'd been a pianist for the Billy Dawn Quartette and had a distinct fondness for R&B vocal group harmony. In 1957, Al Browne began writing, arranging, producing and recording songs for the newly formed *Joyce* label, operated out of the back of a record store on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. From there he produced the first record for Johnny Maestro & the Crests, "My Juanita." By 1958, the *Joyce* label was gone but Brown continued producing records which he placed with other record labels. Al started holding open auditions for vocal groups and once word got out, he'd sometimes have as many as 10 or 15 groups lining up to audition. Al Browne invited the Criterions to audition for him at his Brooklyn studio, which they were thrilled to do. Al Browne liked what he heard and ushered the Criterions into Bell Sound Studio to record "My Juanita" (to which we already owned writer credits to along with Johnny Maestro) and "Don't Say Goodbye," a song written by Tommy Picardo. Tim Hauser handled the leads. It was Al Browne's

practice to split the cost for studio time 50:50 with the groups. After finishing their session early, the Criterions donated the rest of their studio time to one of Al's other groups who couldn't afford to pay for it. That group was Eddie & the Starlights who recorded "To Make A Long Story Short" that same day. Al Brown shopped around both recordings to different labels. The Eddie & the Starlights record was picked up by *Scepter Records* and became a local hit. Unfortunately Brown found no takers for the Criterions record.

Feeling that the group needed a stronger sound, the Criterions added L. John Mangiaracina (John Mangi), a friend of Joe Ernst's from Point Pleasant. John became the group's new lead singer and Tim moved to first tenor..

John Mangiaracina was a junior at Point Pleasant Beach High School when he joined the Criterions in February 1959. He'd already been singing solo at various area Lion's Clubs, Asbury Park High School and at the Bloomfield Sock Hop. John could also play the guitar and tenor sax. While he'd never taken formal music lessons, he was playing tenor sax on the all state band. After making a new audition demo of the six man group, the Criterions were offered a contract with *Arc Records* out of Elizabeth, New Jersey in March 1959. The group turned it down, either because they didn't like the contract or they felt the label lacked distribution.

Through a series of connections, the Criterions were introduced to Marty Foglia, a sound engineer with radio disc jockey Alan Freed. Marty co-owned and operated the *Cecilia* label and he signed the Criterions in April 1959. Their first recording session for Cecilia took place at ABC Studios, It resulted in the group recording "Crying The Blues Over Me," a John Mangi composition plus some other songs. The Criterions returned to the studio on April 11, 1959. At that session, the group recorded "I Remain Truly Yours" (written by Foglia's lawyer, Ben Neugeboren), "You Just You" and "Don't Say Goodnight." The latter two were written by Tom Picardo. The musicians on the session were top notch - Mickey Baker (guitar), Al Casey (bass), Belton "Sticks" Evans (drums) and Teddy Charles (vibes). "I Remain Truly Yours" backed with "You Just You" became the Criterions first record, released on the *Cecilia* label the last week of April.



The Criterions, ca. 1959. Left to right, Top: Tom Picardo, John Mangi, Tim Hauser, Bottom: Joe Ernst, Jim Ruf, Steve Casagrande

"I Remain Truly Yours" was distributed by *Laurie Records* who advertised it in *Billboard* magazine as being "currently on the charts." Actually the record never charted nationally but reportedly reached #30 among New York City distributors. Much of the success of the record in New York had to do with airplay from popular radio dee jay, Alan Freed. Marty Foglia's association with Freed pretty much guaranteed the record would get listened to but Freed must have liked it because he kept playing it.

Having a record out helped the Criterions greatly in getting gigs. One of their first public appearances after its release was a record promotion event at J. J. Newberry's department store on Cookman Avenue in downtown Asbury Park. On Wednesday evening, May 20, the Criterions autographed records and sang in the Record Department on the store's main floor. June 1959 marked a transition in the Criterions' music career as four of the six members graduated from high school. Tim Hauser, Tom Picardo and Steve Casagrande all graduated from St. Rose High. Tim and Tom were both accepted to Villanova University outside of Philadelphia where they would start classes together in the Fall. Joseph Ernst graduated from Point Pleasant Beach High School. Jim Ruf and John Mangi, a year younger were still in school.

That still gave the Criterions all summer to perform. And since Villanova was just a ninety minute drive to Asbury Park, there was still an opportunity to perform after that. By then the group was making radio and TV appearances including an appearance on Alan Freed's Big Beat television show.

On June 19, the Criterions sang at the first of a series of dances held by St. Catherine's CYO Canteen in Spring Lake, New Jersey. They followed that up with an appearance at a Hawaiian Luau in Dean, New Jersey, sponsored by the Asbury Park Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

One of the biggest shows the Criterions did was the Teen

See Them at NEWBERRYS
the Fabulous
CRITERIONS



SEE THEM!
HEAR THEM!
IN PERSON! **WED. MAY 20th**
from **7 to 9 P.M.**
(TOMORROW)

**FREE AUTOGRAPHS WITH
PURCHASE of the CRITERIONS
NEW HIT RECORD
"I REMAIN TRULY YOURS"**
RECORD DEPT.
MAIN FLOOR

NEWBERRY'S Downtown
Asbury Park



The Criterions first record, *Cecilia* # 1208. From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives

Age Jamboree concert and dance at Asbury Park's Convention Hall on August 15, 1959. There, they opened for *Swan* label recording artists Dicky Doo & the Don'ts and 17-year-old vocalist Mary Swan. The event was memorable for Tim Hauser as this was where he met Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers three summers before.

At the Convention Hall concert, the Criterions met Larry Vecchio. Larry and some friends had formed a rock & roll instrumental band called the Fabulous Dominoes. Larry was also involved with the Keyport (NJ) First Aid Squad. They were looking to raise funds to pay for a recently ordered new ambulance through a benefit concert. Larry asked if Tim could get Alan Freed to emcee a benefit concert in Keyport. Tim asked Marty Foglia to ask Alan Freed and Freed agreed.

A "Showcase of the Stars" benefit concert was quickly arranged for Saturday night August 29, at the Keyport High School stadium. It was to be emceed by "The King of Rock & Roll" himself, Alan Freed. Scheduled to perform were a "surprise" major recording stars as well as the local artists, the Criterions, the Fabulous Dominoes band, Art Coffee and his Sugar Beats, the Crowns, the Bomarcs, Little Ray & the Monarchs, Johnny Kaye, (Asbury Park's) Juveniles, the Midnighters, the Tokays, Danny Carr and Mary Cook. Alan Freed started promoting the event heavily on his radio and TV program and the

Criteria's made a promotional appearance in Keyport, singing in front of Pete's Inc. Store.

In the week leading up to the concert, borough officials started expressing concern when they heard there would be 3000 to 4000 young rock & roll fans attending. Keyport only had 15 police officers but they expected state troopers would assist. The day before the concert they found out that the state troopers could only be dispatched if trouble started. Remembering the Asbury Park "riot" three years earlier, Keyport officials called off the concert 30 hours before it was to start.

This, of course, caused major problems for the Keyport First Aid Squad, who was out pocket expenses and lost potential concert revenue. With the ambulance already ordered, they considered mortgaging their headquarters to cover the shortfall. Alan Freed was furious that the concert was canceled. On his Friday afternoon nationally broadcast "The Big Beat" TV show, he told his listeners not to show up in Keyport the following evening. He also pledged to help the First Aid Squad with a donation of half the Friday night proceeds of his new show that would open at the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre. He also reminded the Keyport officials over the air that "the teenagers of today are the voters of tomorrow."

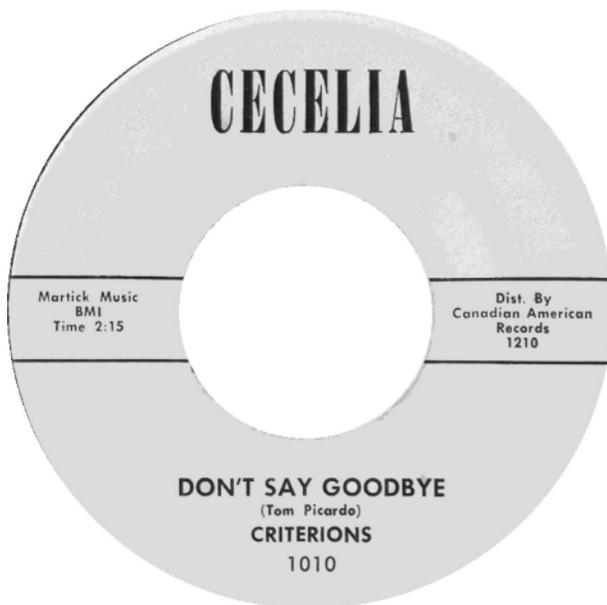
In the meantime, the Criteria's headlined a smaller rock & roll show a short distance from Keyport, opposite the Sayrewood Shopping Center in Old Bridge, New Jersey. The Crowns and Tokays from the aborted concert were there as well as the Marceys and Miss Geri Persi. Persi, a young local vocalist would record for *Cecilia Records* with background vocals by the Criteria's. We doubt the sides were ever released.

September saw *Cecilia Records* issuing the second record by the Criteria's. "Don't Say Goodbye" was a ballad written by Tom Picardo and led by Joe Mangi, recorded at the March 11 recording session. It was backed by the Joe Mangi composition, "Crying The Blues Over Me." "Crying..." had been recorded even earlier at ABC Studios in New York. Oddly, the first pressings of the record had the label name misspelled as "*Cecelia*." It was corrected in subsequent pressings.



In early September, the Criteria's were back in the studio to do some more recording. Marty Foglia wanted to get some more songs in the can before Tim and Tom left for college. In spite of the relative success of "I Remain Truly Yours," Foglia was short on funds for studio time so he offered the Criteria's a deal. He'd pay for the studio if the Criteria's brought their own band. The Criteria's contacted Larry Vecchio and the Fabulous Dominoes who agreed to back the Criteria's gratis if they could cut a few songs themselves. The Criteria's recorded "That's The Way It Goes," "Over The Rainbow," "Remember When" and "Where Did My Little Girl Go."

The Fabulous Dominoes, Larry Vecchio (keyboards), brothers Bobby Spievak (guitar) and Joe Spievak (bass), Carl Smith (drums) and Harry Haller (tenor sax) recorded a few instrumental sides. Tim Hauser's father was at the recording session and suggested the Fabulous Dominoes record the old standard, "Harlem Nocturne." Tim helped produce the song. While none of the Criteria's songs were ever released, Marty Foglia peddled "Harlem Nocturne" to Larry Udall at *Madison Records*. The Fabulous Dominoes changed their name to the Viscounts and within four months their "Harlem Nocturne" was a hit. The Viscounts appeared on Alan Freed's "Big Beat" show as well as The Dick Clark Show as "Harlem Nocturne" climbed the charts.



First pressing of “Don’t Say Goodbye,” blue label spelled “Cecelia” courtesy of Philip Schwartz. Second pressing, orange label correctly spelled “Cecilia” from the Classic Urban Harmony Archives.

After the Alan Freed concert fiasco, Larry Vecchio vowed to hold another show, just not one as big, in the near future. He offered to give the Keyport First Aid Squad first shot at sponsoring it. Vecchio would have his rock & roll concert in Keyport on September 22. The Keyport First Aid Squad, was apparently reluctant to get involved this time. Vecchio emceed the concert which featured his own band along with a trio called Lenny & the Meteors with Miss Geri Persi on vocals. Proceeds went to the local Kiwanis Club but only 60 people attended.

In September 1959, Tim Hauser and Tom Picardo started college at Villanova University. Both were very involved in music there, joining the staff of Villanova’s student radio station, WWVU. Thumbing through the radio station’s library, Tim Hauser found a 45 by the black gospel group, the Friendly Brothers singing a song called “Operator.” The song would resurface years later as a huge hit for Tim with Manhattan Transfer.

The summer after their freshman year, they returned to the Asbury Park area and occasionally continued singing as the Criterions. They appeared at the Annual Players Dance of the Ocean Township Babe Ruth League at the Elks Home, 8th and Park Avenues in Asbury Park on August 31, 1960. There they were backed by the Eldorados band.

Back in Villanova for their sophomore year, Tommy Picardo and Tim Hauser continued their involvement in music. By then Jim Ruff had enrolled close by at University of Pennsylvania so Tommy, Tim and Jim were able to keep singing as the Criterions, now a trio. They even found time to return to Asbury Park to again perform at Convention Hall. This time it was for benefit of the Monmouth County Heart Association Queen of Hearts Ball on February 11, 1961. For old times sake, the Criterions made a guest singing appearance at the St. Rose High School sophomore dance in May.

As time went by, Tommy Picardo became public relations director for Villanova’s radio station where he was hosting two music programs. He also became student conductor of the school’s glee club, the Villanova Singers. Then he formed a sub-group of the Singers called the Villanova Spires, a twelve-voice group that performed folk songs with guitar accompaniment. Tim Hauser joined that group as did fellow student Jim Croce. Picardo, Hauser and Ruf changed their groups’ name from the Criterions to the Troubadours Three and began singing folk songs in night clubs and East Coast colleges. After graduation they would continue as the Shore Troubadours as part of the American Hootenanny Festival. That led them to perform in New England and Canada as well as locally. The traveling Hootenanny show would bring them back to Asbury Park’s

Convention Hall on November 29, 1963 where they would share the stage with folk singers Josh White Jr. and their friend Jim Croce with his Coventry Lads. Tommy Picardo would become music director for radio station WRLB in Long Branch, New Jersey. In 1965, there was a resurgence, of sorts, for Criterions records. *Relic Records* in Hackensack of New Jersey, one of the leading independent labels for doo wop music acquired the tapes of the Criterions earlier recordings for Al Browne and issued "Don't Say Goodbye" (with Tim Hauser on lead) and "Juanita" on a 45 as by the "Kents." Coincidentally, Marty Foglia managed to get *Laurie Records* to pick up and reissue "I Remain Truly Your" backed with "You Just You."

An unlabeled metal acetate in the possession of the Classic Urban Harmony Archives has a recording from a radio appearance where the Criterions announce an upcoming appearance at the Ocean Township Fireman's Ball at Wanamassa Gardens on Saturday September 11. The members give their names as Tim Hauser, Joe Ernst, Jim Ruff, Tom Picardo and Steve Casagrande while "You Just You" plays in the background. The only time September fell on a Saturday was 1965. If the date is correct, the Criterions reunited briefly in 1965, minus John Mangi. The flip side of the recording is an acappella rendition of a song called "Summer Is Over," presumably by the Criterions.

In 1966, Tommy Picardo record "The Drifters Medley" with a group called The Clique for Marty Foglia. It would also come out on the *Laurie* label. Tommy would go on to assume the stage name Tommy West and join *ABC Records* in New York City. There he teamed with Terry Cashman and Gene Pistilli to form the successful songwriting and performing combination of Cashman, Pistilli and West. He'd also find success producing his friend from Villanova, Jim Croce, among others.

John Mangiaracina would graduate from North Texas State University with a bachelor degree in music and music education. After serving four years in the Air Force he moved to Texas. He would make further recordings under the name of Sonny Nichols.

Tim Hauser gave up a marketing executive job to form a harmony vocal quartet that could authentically embrace varied musical styles, and still



Tim Hauser & Charlie Horner

create something wholly unique in the field of American popular song. He formed the first incarnation of Manhattan Transfer in 1969. That group recorded for *Capitol Records* but lasted only until the early 1970's. He assembled the second Manhattan Transfer group in 1972. That group would go on to release 28 albums, win 8 Grammys and host their own television variety show. Most important, they did it with a unique mix of doo wop, acappella, vocalese, swing, standards, Brazilian jazz, rhythm and blues, and pop music. Manhattan Transfer's first successful single was the gospel song Tim found at Villanova University, "Operator." Through it all, Tim Hauser never lost his love of black vocal harmony, recording R&B and doo wop songs like "That's The Way It Goes," "Guided Missiles," "Trickle Trickle," "The Boy From New York City," Morse Code Of Love," "Hearts Desire" and many others. Tim Hauser died October 16, 2014 at the age of 72.

Special thanks to Phil Schwartz. For info on Springwood Avenue Harmony email us at CUH@att.net or visit ClassicUrbanHarmony.net

Criterions Discography

Cecilia #1208	I Remain Truly Yours You Just You
Cecelia #1010	Don't Say Goodbye Crying The Blues Over Me
Cecilia #1010	Don't Say Goodbye Crying The Blues Over Me
Laurie #3305	Don't Say Goodbye Crying The Blues Over Me
As The Kents	
Relic #1013	Don't Say Goodbye My Juanita