

The Story of the Cleveland East Chapter

of the Johnny Appleseed District

The present-day Cleveland East Suburban Chapter is an amalgam of four chapters dating back to the late 1940's and early 50's located in the "urban fringe" area just east of Cleveland, starting in Euclid and proceeding southward through South Euclid/Lyndhurst (Hillcrest), Cleveland Heights, and Bedford (Southeast). Even an old Chagrin Falls Chapter was involved somewhat in this grouping.

Although these chapters each attempted to establish individual identities and locations, eventually their members were drawn into the strongest one, the Euclid Chapter, which had been chartered in 1952. Later, this chapter, to reflect more accurately its geographical basis, made its name Cleveland East Suburbanaires, but it has continued to meet in the same location in Euclid all these years since even before 1952, for probably 68 years, in Recher Hall, home of the Slovenian Society, earlier known as the Yugoslav Society.

The most impressive accomplishment of this chapter was its JAD championship in 1958. The Euclid chorus took international honors for its fun-loving and effervescent demeanor; they didn't win, but they all had a very good time. It's director was Tom Neal, who now makes his home in Boulder City, Nevada.

Another stellar product of this chapter was the Village Idiots quartet, in which Tom Neal sang baritone, but looked like he was the lead.

The primary emphasis of the Cleveland East chapter has always been quartet promotion, and many local quartets continue this tradition. Part of this emphasis has become youth outreach. The quartets of the chapter have kept in touch with local high schools and have been especially influential with the vocal music program at Cleveland Heights High School, sponsoring the Cleveland Heights Barbershoppers. This group just won the Presenter's Award at the San Antonio Midwinter Convention, effectively making them the top-ranked youth chorus in the nation. We especially must thank Tom Gentry for his help coaching the Cleveland Heights Barbershoppers over the past several years.

Certainly all of us "old timers" have to be committed to keeping barbershop harmony alive, and what better way to do this than with youth outreach and community involvement, our primary missions.

Submitted by Walt Beyer