

Alexandria Harmonizers 70th Anniversary Throwback Thursdays

No. 2 – Chapter Founders

The chance meeting of the Snyders and Barnwells on a rainy evening on the George Washington Parkway in November 1947 that led to our founding was not unlike the rain and fog in Kansas City in March 1938 that led O. C. Cash and Rupert Hall to found our Society. Gene Barnwell, then Director of Alexandria's Recreation Department and the Harmonizers' first Chorus Director, and Dean Snyder, President of the DC Chapter who, several years later, was to transfer his barbershop allegiance to Alexandria, were Co-Founders of our chapter.

Sponsored by the District of Columbia Chapter, the Alexandria Chapter has gone on to sponsor five other chapters: Richmond (reactivation) 1952, Fairfax 1953, Fredericksburg 1963, Centreville 1996, and James River 2005. It was Dean's enthusiasm and drive that were essential to establishing the Alexandria Chapter in 1948 and urging us on to greater heights for 50 years.

In addition, excepting his lifelong friend and fellow Harmonizer Wilbur Sparks, perhaps no other man had as great and long an influence on the leadership of the Society as Dean Snyder, "advisor to the presidents" through his six decades in the Society. Dean first became an International Board Member in 1951 and was instrumental in implementing the first long-range planning for the Society when in 1952 he was named chairman of a newly formed committee and given the charge to create 5-10 year goals. In 1962, he was named International Historian. Because of his added passion in the area of preserving the history of the organization, he was a founding father of the Heritage Hall Museum of barbershop harmony and was named Historian Emeritus of the Society. He was inducted into the Society Hall of Fame in the 2004 Inaugural Class.

Finally, Dean's most enviable achievement may be that he was still going strong when he celebrated his ninety-fifth birthday and our chapter's 50th anniversary in 1998. In fond memory of Dean Snyder (1903-1999), let's celebrate "The Complete History of the Alexandria Harmonizers, The Musical."

