

**The
Federation of Slovenian National Homes
Man & Woman
of the
Year**

Awards Banquet

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Slovenian National Home

6417 St. Clair Ave

Cleveland, Ohio



Photos provided by Ron Kotar - Studio K Photography

Good News: Dick Russ Is Slovenian Man of the Year

Joe Valencic

Special to the Federation of Slovenian National Homes

Dick Russ is the leading Slovenian in Cleveland television today. For more than thirty-five years, the people of Northeast Ohio have invited Dick into their homes to learn vital news of the day and share insights into fascinating people and places. As an award-winning journalist, he has covered the area's most important and history-making events, from the tribulations of Cleveland's default to the tragedies on Imperial Avenue. His human interest stories have profiled big-time achievers and everyday heroes, quite often accented with an ethnic theme. Dick's Slovenian heritage is no secret to viewers. His respect for Cleveland's rich fabric of cultures has made him a favorite figure among the city's countless nationality groups.

"I care about this city. I know its history. I love the people," says Dick. "I care about what's happening. That's why I'm involved as a journalist. I want people to know and understand what affects their lives." His deep Cleveland roots may also account for his longevity on local television news.

Richard Russ Hlabse was raised on Myron Avenue, in the shadow of the twin towers of St. Francis Church. Like many Slovenian families, three generations shared a modest frame home in the St. Clair-Superior neighborhood. Dick's grandparents arrived in the United States from Cerknica, on Slovenia's hardscrabble Karst plateau, and Skrilje, in the hills above the Ljubljana Marshes. The first language in the Hlabse home was Slovenian.

"From my mother, Mary Russ Hlabse, I learned faithfulness and pride in my Slovenian heritage," explains Dick. "My father Henry inspired me with his hard work and perseverance in the face of health problems."

Dick Russ takes his professional moniker from Rus, a family surname on his mother's side, and in tribute to his brother Russell. He also has a younger sister, Marilynn. With a pair of grandparents, three children, pigeons, and rabbits, the Hlabse household was lively, to say the least.

"My grandfather had a distillery in the basement for beer and wine. It was his enjoyment long after his retirement." Simple routines remain in fond memory.

"In the 1950s I would walk with my grandmother all the way to the Slovenian National Home to pay our family's monthly lodge dues," recalls Dick with a smile. "On the way back we would stop at the Hecker Tavern. Grandma Rus ordered a short Dab, the German imported beer, and I got a ginger ale and a pretzels." Dick is still a member of AMLA Lodge 4 and KSKJ Lodge 226.

Dick graduated from St. Ignatius High School and entered Kent State University's renowned School of Communications. Classmates included future investigative reporter Carl Monday and Paul Warfield of the Cleveland Browns.

"I had always been fascinated by television and radio. As a kid I used to take notes during the news shows."

While at Kent State, Dick was the first student to enroll in the Slovenian studies program initiated by sociology professor Dr. Giles Edward Gobetz. His working knowledge of Slovenian helps him connect with relatives on frequent trips to Slovenia.



Dick worked at a number of TV and radio stations, including WAKR-TV, Channel 23 in Akron, before returning to Cleveland in 1979 to WJW-TV, Channel 8. He served as a newscaster and reporter there for 20 years. During that period, he teamed with Loree Vick to present the noon news. At 16 years together, the duo enjoyed the longest run of any co-anchors on local television.

"It was a remarkable broadcast then. Can you imagine an all Slovenian news team!" Dick and Loree were often joined by sportscaster John Telich and weather forecaster Jan Paulich Jones. All four are of solid Cleveland Slovenian stock.

In 1999 he joined WKYC-TV, Channel 3, the city's NBC affiliate. He currently holds the position of Managing Editor and News Reporter. Dick has received ten regional Emmy Awards and was honored twice by the Ohio Society of Professional Journalists as the state's outstanding TV documentarian. He has been inducted into the Ohio Broadcasters and Press Club Halls of Fame. The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences has recognized Dick with its Silver Circle Award for long-time service to the industry.

Two of his most memorable reports tied into his deeply-held Catholic faith. In 2005, while visiting his oldest son in Rome, Dick became one of the first TV journalists on the scene at the Vatican to announce the final sufferings and death of Pope John Paul II. Dick documented his brother's trip to the Shrine of Lourdes in France during a pilgrimage for people with disabilities. The 1981 program generated a tremendous amount of positive viewer response. Russell passed away in 2006.

"Steadfastness in faith has always been a comfort to me. It's the greatest thing I learned from being Slovenian. Faith is paramount; it makes living worthwhile."

Dick also applies his beliefs in his business. With the support of his wife Christina Sywyj-Hlabse, an Eastern Rite Ukrainian-American and former TV production professional, he co-founded Eastern Christian Media, the first internet communications network for Byzantine and other Eastern Christian religious programming. The group is taking part in efforts for the beatification of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, whose uplifting weekly broadcasts made him television's first clergyman superstar. Dick has received the Gabriel Award, the highest honor for religious TV programming. The Religious Communicators Council presented him with a national award for television.

The three Hlabse sons follow their parents' spiritual lead. Stefan and Peter are both university theology students. Andrij is studying to be ordained a Jesuit priest with bi-ritual certification -- both Roman Catholic and Ukrainian-Byzantine Catholic. He is also an accomplished jazz saxophonist.

Dick also embraces Christina's ethnic heritage. The couple was married in Ukrainian national costumes and raised their boys in traditions from both Slovenia and the Ukraine. Dick is past president of the Ukrainian Cultural Arts Association. His dedication to the area's nationality communities is expressed through service as President of the International Community Council and as a board member of the International Services Center and the American Indian Education Center. Groups like the Rotary Club International and the Asian-Pacific American Federation have honored him for his leadership in nationality affairs.

Few know how to articulate the Slovenian experience like Dick Russ. When author Les Roberts came to WJW from Hollywood to produce the Ohio Lottery game show, he sought a character that would capture the essence of the city in a crime novel he was writing on the side. Dick told him of the many Slovenians who were involved in police work. Roberts asked Dick to describe such a man in depth. Within days, Dick returned with nine typed pages, single-spaced. From those descriptions Roberts created Milan Jacovich, a working-class, polka-dancing private eye who drinks Stroh's, hangs out at Vuk's Tavern on St. Clair, and reads the *Ameriska Domovina*.

Dick detailed every fact and foible of Slovenian manhood in America. An example: When a Slovenian man takes a girl on a date, she can pick anything she pleases on the restaurant menu. The Slovenian man, true to his inbred thriftiness, will always opt for the \$6.95 pasta special. Fourteen

novels later, Roberts still relies on Dick's first-hand observations.

Whenever Slovenia or Slovenians make news, Dick is quick to cover it on television. He is proudest of his reports tracking Slovenia's journey to democracy and independence in 1991. When the nationwide support organization United Americans for Slovenia (UAS) held its community celebration at the time of U. S. recognition, Dick arranged for a live broadcast from the Slovenian National Home to interview UAS Chairman Edmund Turk, then-Congressman Dennis Eckart and jubilant Cleveland Slovenians. Last year Dick hosted the Cleveland Slovenian Business and Professional Association at the WKYC studios.

"To be named as Slovenian Man of the Year caught me completely by surprise. It's the ultimate honor. I hope I'm worthy of it." Dick shares the spotlight with former news partner Loree Vick, Slovenian Woman of the Year. Both were chosen by members of the Federation of Slovenian National Homes.

"I live in America, but I'm essentially also 100% Slovenian," reflects Dick. "It means everything to me. This Slovenian ethos is a gift. It's more than a way of thinking -- it's a foundation for life."

Loree Vick Makes News as Slovenian Woman of the Year

by Joe Valencic

There was a time in Cleveland when you could turn on your television and get the news from an all-Slovenian team. Now the Federation of Slovenian National Homes reunites newscaster Loree Vick with her former broadcast partner, Dick Russ, as Slovenian Woman and Man of the Year.

"I was surprised and delighted to be named Woman of the Year. And humbled, too." says Loree. "I hope I'm living up to expectations. Being Slovenian has always been a source of pride in my life."

Loree enjoyed a sixteen-year career in news on WJW-TV. For much of her time at Channel 8, she co-anchored the noon news with Dick Russ. As a team, Loree and Dick had on-screen chemistry and credibility -- primary reasons for their popularity and longevity. The fact that both were Slovenian was a bonus. They were often joined by weather reporter Jan Paulich Jones and sportscaster John Telich for the country's only Slovenian-led news broadcast.

As a producer and solo host, Loree was best known for her "Around Town" vignettes of fascinating Cleveland people and places. She has received awards for her work in television.

Loree now serves as senior public relations and media advisor for University Hospitals (UH), where she is also the voice of UH and talent in hospital TV commercials. As a professional talent, she has appeared in numerous broadcast commercials, voice-overs, corporate training films and print ads. Her clients include General Electric, Progressive Insurance, McDonalds, Goodyear Tire, Kobe Steel, Sears, Applebee's, and Nabisco. She is frequently asked to emcee events for a wide variety of organizations.

As with many Slovenian immigrant families, Loree's grandparents settled in the old St. Clair neighborhood. Her father, born Joseph Vuk, was raised on East 60th and Lausche Avenue near St. Vitus Church. In his early years, Joe was a professional swimmer who performed with stars like Esther Williams and Johnny Weissmuller.

"At one of his swimming events, his name was misspelled Vick and it stuck," explains Loree, "so Vick became his name and, hence, our family surname."

Grandmother Mary was known as Mary Wolf by her neighbors. Vuk is a form of the Slovenian word for wolf.

"My grandmother was old-school Slovenian," recalls Loree. "She was thrifty. She wore a babushka. She practically lived in her kitchen, making her own noodles and other traditional foods. I miss the smells of her kitchen. We loved her nut bread, as we called it. That was the potica she baked for special occasions."

Loree's mother Ruth, at 91 years, is intensely proud to be Irish.

"St. Patrick's Day was a big holiday for us," adds Loree. "I'm truly blessed to have rich backgrounds that are both Irish and Slovenian. It's a lively family."

One of seven children, Loree grew up in South Euclid and attended nearby Regina High School, the Catholic college preparatory school for girls. She spent a lot of time at St. Joseph High School for boys, where she appeared in numerous plays and musicals.

"She really stood out as the friendliest of all the girls in the shows and plays," recalls a St. Joe graduate. "Loree wasn't at all stuck on herself."



A career in theater appealed to Loree and she received her undergraduate degree and education certificate at Cleveland State University. She worked at the May Company Department Store to pay for her education. Loree continued on to Case Western Reserve University for a master of fine arts degree in theater. She has taught speech and communications at Wright State College of Chicago.

It was during an audition at WJW-TV8 for "PM Magazine," a news and entertainment program, that news director Virgil Dominic discovered Loree and offered her an internship in the news department. She was soon paired with Dick Russ to co-anchor the noon news. The partnership lasted sixteen years -- the longest-running news team in local broadcasting.

"Virgil believed in hiring Clevelanders for news programming," says Loree. "We knew the city and understood our audience. Viewers identified with us because we were locals."

Loree was also a reporter on the medical, consumer, family and food beats, first for CBS and then for Fox. She eventually produced, wrote, and hosted her own program, "Around Town with Loree Vick," a highly-viewed daily news segment that profiled everyday people live on air.

"I had license to go anywhere and visit different places. Being live, anything could happen. I have a library of anecdotes."

Many of her interviews featured an ethnic angle, from a sausage shop or a bakery making holiday paczki to St. Stanislaus Church or the Accordion Museum.

"People will still remind me of a report I did years ago. When people remember you like that, it means you're still somehow a part of their lives."

Loree was the first local female anchor to return to the news desk after motherhood. When her husband, John Varaljay, accepted a position in Chicago in 1999, Loree left Cleveland and her news career. She launched her own consulting business, Vick Communications, which trains executives and professionals in media, presentation and personal communication skills. The couple raised two children, Justin, now 24, and Malaney, 22, christened with the maiden name of Loree's mother.

When John passed away in 2005, Loree and her son and daughter returned to Cleveland. University Hospitals' media department was expanding and Loree was brought on board, first to run media relations and now in her public relations role. She is on the advisory committee for the UH Department of Psychiatry. Loree serves on the boards of Cornerstone of Hope, a center for grief support, and Suicide Prevention Education Alliance and is an honorary board member of the Arc of Greater Cleveland, an advocacy group for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"It truly is an honor to have Dick and Loree as Slovenian Man and Woman of the Year," says Steve Zalar, Vice President of the Cleveland Federation of Slovenian National Homes. "They are both such role models for the community."

"It's great to be teamed up with Dick Russ again," adds Loree. "Dick and I are as close as family. He's like a brother."

Last year, Loree and Dick were invited by the American Slovenian Polka Foundation to announce the Band and Musician of the Year before a crowd of 900 at the annual awards ceremony of the National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame and Museum. The event gave them an opportunity to trade quips about their difference in height, a fact largely unnoticed when they were seated behind a TV news desk. Loree is often described as statuesque while Dick's vertical profile is a bit more edited.

Since her return to Cleveland, Loree has been making the rounds within the city's Slovenian social circles. She was Dick's special guest at his WKYC - TV 3 open house for the Cleveland Slovenian Business and Professional Association last year.

"Everyone in the Slovenian community has opened their hearts to me," says Loree. "They're like people I've known forever. I enjoy exploring my Slovenian side and I have learned so much. The rituals and traditions mean a lot to me. It's important to celebrate your personal family history and appreciate the sacrifices which were made to build a new life for us in this country."

Frank Azman, St. Clair's Sausage King

Frank Azman was born on March 20, 1952 in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the son of Frank and Ann Azman and the brother of Edward and Laura. Frankie started school at East Madison School in Cleveland and then transferred to Lincoln Elementary in Euclid. He attended Shore Junior High School in Euclid and graduated from Euclid High School.

In the 1920's, his father along with brothers Louie, Edward, and Bill started Azman Meats on the corner of Addison Road and St. Clair Avenue. Frank along with his brother and sister worked with their father from an early age learning the business. Frank continues as the sole owner and chief sausage maker at the store. He has worked there for over 40 years.

As a child, he would go with his family to Cleveland Municipal Stadium and watch baseball and football games. "When we went to the games we could have anything we wanted, Frankie said. You could drink 100 pops and hot dogs and anything they wanted." Frank played baseball with Perry Boys League at Grdina Playground and later with Perry Boys Senior division at Sowinski Park.

At his store, Frankie offers services and products that are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. In this age of mass production and mega supermarket convenience, Azman is an example of the old neighborhood family owned store.

His outside activities include being the lighting designer and technician at the St. Clair Slovenian National Home. He is also interested in radio and electronics. Whenever you go into his store, you can hear some type of music from polkas to classics.

Frankie has always been supportive of the St. Clair Slovenian National Home and serves as our watch dog when he is in his store during all hours making his famous sausages!

He is a member of the Friends of the Slovenian National Home, AMLA Lodge #9 Cleveland.

Congratulations Frankie for being our Man of the Year from St. Clair.



VOLUNTEER: Donna Baucher's Middle Name

Volunteerism is the key to success of all Slovenian Homes.

At the American Slovenian Club in Fairport, there is no volunteer more dedicated to making the Club a success than Donna Baucher. That is why the Board unanimously voted Donna as the Club's 2010 Woman of the Year.

She has been on the Board of the Club for four years and currently is vice president. She handles applications for membership and is in charge of shopping and preparing for most cooking events. In addition, she rounds up help to plant flowers in the Club's courtyard each spring, giving the entire place a touch of our roots in Slovenia.

Among the many other things she does are shopping for gifts for the children's Christmas party and baking goodie desserts for various events.

"I have been known to be in the kitchen cooking, cleaning, or shopping for the various events and giving everyone a hard time," she admits jokingly.

"There is no one in the Club more dedicated to making the Club's activities run smoothly, particularly in preparing for the Saturday end-of-the-month steak and chop dinners put on for overflow crowds," said Club President Steve Zalar in announcing her selection by the Board. "There are few events over the year that you can't find Donna in the thick of activity," he continued.

She has done all this as a cancer survivor and having two operations on her foot. In 2002 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. "It was during these hard times that my husband Stan introduced me to the Slovenian Club. It was there that I met some of the nicest people who, along with my family and my wonderful husband Stan, got me through those trying times," Donna said.

Stan, who is retired from Avery Products where he worked in maintenance, is co-manager of the Club. He was previously honored as our man of the year.

Donna was born in Cleveland to Dell and Elsie Michelbrink. Her mother was of Slovenian descent. Donna and Stan have visited relatives in Slovenia several times and still communicate by telephone regularly.

After moving to Painesville as a child, Donna attended St. Mary School where she met her husband-to-be. She graduated from Villa Maria in Pennsylvania and began working at Lake County National Bank in Painesville.

"It was during this time that I reunited with my grade school sweetheart," explains Donna. Married in 1966, the couple has three children: Stanley, Jr.; Sheryl, and Stephen. They have combined to make Donna a grandmother seven times. The grandchildren—Andrew, Cassandra, Dan, Courtney, Shawn, Grace and Grant—"are the love of my life," says Donna.

She keeps busy with her hobby of quilting and running her grandchildren around to their sports activities. Donna is also a member of a book club. She is a member of Grand River Valley Lodge 30 of the American Mutual Life Assn.

She plays in the balina league as does her son Stan. He also helps in making smoked sausages at the Club. A young man participating in the Slovenian Club is encouraging for the Club's future.

Volunteering her time and efforts is nothing new for Donna. While her children were at St. Mary School, she volunteered as a noon watch mother, homeroom guardian and a library aide. "All of which kept me quite busy," she adds. "Where ever you find activity at the Club, chances are you will find Donna in the middle of it all," Zalar says.



Lori Sierputowski Always Has Music in Her Heart

Born the fourth child of John and Mary Kaucic who emigrated from Slovenia in 1921, I was exposed to Slovenian culture at an early age as a student of the Slovenian language school, Slovenian children's chorus, drill team and SNPJ Circle 2.

As a youngster, I learned to polka and waltz and danced at many of the halls featuring polka bands. It was in 1953 that I met my future husband, Robert, at a dance at Slovene National Home. We married a few months later and settled in the St. Casimir's Polish neighborhood raising three children; Liane, Valerie and Robert. I now am the proud grandmother of ten.

The piano was my passion as a youth. I was called upon to accompany music classes, as well as a junior high operetta, and served as choral accompanist at East High School from which I graduated.

Although I enrolled as a music major at Case Western Reserve University, I determined that it was not my ambition to become a music teacher or professional musician. The study of business accounting became my goal.

My sincere love of music and Slovenian culture led me to become a member of Glasbena Matica Singing Society, where I have enjoyed participating in numerous concerts and a concert tour of Slovenia in 1978. Visiting my mother and father's homeland was extremely gratifying and a dream come true.

As a member of Glasbena Matica, I accepted several offices; including the presidency from 2001 - 2003 and currently serve as the vice president.

Not being career-minded, I chose part-time employment as a Richmond Heights school bus driver. For 25 years, I transported all student grades, drove teams to athletic events and class field trips - a most interesting occupation.

After retirement, I became a member of the Slovene Pensioners of Euclid to socialize with other retirees. Initially I served in the kitchen preparing refreshments at meetings. Later, I served as secretary, and in 2004, was elected to the office of president, a position I still hold.

The privilege of working the Polka Hall of Fame Museum has been a very rewarding experience. Since I earnestly love polka music, it is a distinct pleasure assisting customers in their purchases, knowing that the existence of the museum preserves not only our culture, but sustains the music.

Truly, my Slovenian Heritage has never been more important than at the present time, and it will continue to be in my remaining years.



Frank Spetich

Teaching Button Box a Ritual for Frankie Spetich

Teaching people how to play the button box has been a ritual for Frankie Spetich, the 2010 Barberton Slovenian Independent Society Home man of the year.

He has been teaching from his storefront home for the past 57 years.

A native Barbertonian, Frankie helped organize the Barberton Magic City Button Box Players, which is made up of some 15 players, all of whom he has instructed.

“We play at any number of venues,” he says, “including rest homes and Slovenian events in Barberton and Cleveland.”

Frank came by his musical talent when he was just nine years old. “The first instrument I learned to play was the E flat clarinet,” he says, “but I couldn’t read a note, and it wasn’t until I was in the service that I learned how.”

One of his most important achievements was the development, in cooperation with Mark Trenta, of a computerized color scheme for learning how to play the accordion. The development was patented and has been distributed worldwide.

The National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame has awarded Frankie its “Life-time Achievement Award.”

Frankie and his late brother, John, who played the saxophone, both served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

Frankie was stationed with an anti-aircraft battery in England where he suffered serious eye and ear wounds.

He began his teaching career as an assistant band director at Akron St. Vincent High School where he taught trumpet, saxophone and clarinet.

His contributions to the Barberton home are many and began in 1946 shortly after he returned from the war. Over the years, he has been the president, vice president, trustee, recording secretary and secretary-treasurer.

He also managed the bowling operation and served as business manager from 1969 to 1982.

Frankie was a key organizer for construction of a gazebo at Lake Anna in downtown Barberton. It has become a favorite spot for weddings and summer concerts, featuring popular bands such as Glenn Miller and, of course, the Magic City Button Box Players!

In 2009, Barberton Mayor Robert Genet proclaimed Frankie “Barberton’s Polka King.”

Frankie is well known in Europe and has performed in Austria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and The Netherlands where he recorded a popular disc with the Klančnik & Friends Band.

Frankie and his wife Betty were married in 1997.



FRED NEVAR

SWH 2010 MAN OF THE YEAR

Fred was born Sept. 13, 1924, on E.70th and St. Clair to Russian/Polish immigrants, William & Katherine (Wawrenuk). The family moved to Euclid a few years later, and Fred has lived there ever since. His only sibling is Art.

Fred attended Noble Grade School and Euclid Shore High School. During his teens, he caddied at Lost Nation Golf Course during his summer vacations. The Lausche brothers would always request Fred to be their caddie. After graduating from Shore in 1942, he went on to Case Western Reserve University. While attending college, WWII was going on and because all of his friends had enlisted, he also did so against his parents' wishes, as he had a deferment since he was a college student.

Fred was in the Intelligence Unit of the Army. He studied the Russian language at Indiana University to be a translator and has many fond memories of the time spent there. One of his Russian teachers was the first president of the Russian Siberian Division after the communists took over the area. The class spoke nothing but Russian 24 hours a day.

Fred was then shipped to the Philippines. His assignment was to be on the USS Missouri with General MacArthur for the signing of the Peace Treaty. At the last minute his orders were changed, and he was sent to Tokyo to work with the military records at MacArthur's Intelligence Unit.

While there he would attend shows at the Emperor's Palace, and it was there that he rode a horse for the first time. He's never forgotten the pain he was in for several days after that three-hour ride.

Going to the Russian Embassy to play volleyball against the Russians is also memorable. A highlight of those games was having a picture of him spiking a ball published in the "Stars & Stripes" (the military news- paper distributed to the military all over the world). After completing the two years in the Army, he returned to Case to earn his Mechanical Engineering degree in 1948.

Fred is proud of his family. He has two sons, Don & Fred, a stepdaughter, Pam, and three grandchildren: Dennis, Derek and Dayna. Fred and Pat will celebrate their 26th wedding anniversary next week.

After working for Zagar Corporation for 45 years, he retired at the age of 72. He enjoyed his engineering profession and likes to tell his friends about the jobs he engineered and/or sold to customers all over the U.S., Canada and Europe as he was the sales manager or district sales engineer most of the 45 years. The customers required drilling equipment for items that needed holes drilled into ceiling tiles, airplane engines, pianos, cameras, wheels, chairs, irons, etc.

Fred is a professional volunteer and joined the Euclid Veterans Club in the 1940's where he was very involved in the club. He was the chairman of the first blue babies benefit, and the club was able to make a large donation for the cause.

Another memorable event he was in charge of was the Miss Euclid contest. He still boasts that more prizes were given to the Miss Euclid than to the Miss Ohio.

Most people in the Cleveland area remember the huge Euclid Vets Festivals which were first held in the parking lot of the Slovenian Society Home "Recher" and then moved to E. 260th between St. Clair and Euclid Avenues.

The Euclid Vets Steak Roasts that were held annually at the SNPJ Farm were always enjoyed by over 600 people each year, and Fred was always the Chairman of the event. Throughout the years, the Euclid Vets have been known to donate to many worthy causes including the Slovenian Home for



the Aged and the Slovenian homes. Fred was always involved with the fund raising events that enabled the club to make the donations. In 1958 he received the most prestigious award presented to members, "Mr. Euclid Vet," and in 1964 was presented the Lifetime Membership Award for all of his volunteerism. The other military clubs that he belongs to are the American Legion Post #343, and he is a charter member of the VFW #4358.

Fred always enjoyed dancing the Slovenian polkas and waltzes. In fact, he met his wife at a dance at the SNPJ "campsite," where they danced all evening. He's been a member of SNPJ Lodge #158 Loyalites for over 40 years, where he is always available to help in some way. Attending SNPJ out-of-town bowling and balina tournaments was always an enjoyable fraternal time.

Fred belongs to the Euclid Lions Club and was recently named their "Unsung Hero" for all he does for the club, which enables the club to make the many donations each year to help the sight and hearing impaired.

Slovenian Workmen's Home accepted non-Slovenians to purchase shares of stock, unlike other homes at the time. Fred's friends convinced him to purchase a share which made him eligible to be elected to the Board of Directors.

In 1992 Fred was elected to the Board and served several terms. Although his friends are gone and he no longer serves as a director and is limited in what he can do because of a back problem, Fred can always be counted on to help in some way with the hall events. He usually works behind the scenes these days by cutting onions, peeling potatoes, shopping, sealing envelopes, applying stickers, etc. and can always be counted on to help sell tickets at the Slovenian Workmen's Home events.

Fred enjoyed being a member of the Jadran Singing Society, singing bass, until it disbanded several years ago. He is still known as "Slon" because of a part he played in one of the productions. Traveling around Slovenia and performing in several of the cities was a highlight of being a member of Jadran.

Being a member of the Waterloo Pensioners Club was also very enjoyable until it also dissolved because of aging and declining membership. By being married to a Pennsylvanian, he enjoys being a member of the Keystone Social Club and attending the monthly meetings.

Traveling the world has always been something Fred has enjoyed. He has traveled to 20 countries and all of the U.S.A. except Alaska. Some of the memorable trips were to Russia, Poland, the many trips to Mexico, the 30-day China trip and, of course, the trips to Slovenia.

Over the years by living in Slovenian neighborhoods and being involved in the Slovenian organizations, Fred has done much to preserve the Slovenian heritage and enjoyed doing so. For a man like Fred, 85 years condensed into 400 words was a difficult task.

The Slovenian Workmen's Home is happy to have Fred Nevar as their well-deserved 2010 Man of the Year. Congratulations Fred!

ELAINE PESKAR

Slovenian National Home
3563 East 80th
2010 Slovenian Woman of the Year

Elaine Peskar is honored and humbled to be Newburgh's Woman of the Year (NASH). She is always eager and happy to help with whatever job is asked and enjoys working along side the many friends she has made along the way.

Elaine grew up in Garfield Heights with her parents, Marion (Magalski) and Walter Michalik. She is the eldest of four children including her sister, Linda (Weber) of Parma, Ohio and two brothers, Craig and Ken who both live in Michigan.

Elaine attended Garfield Heights High School and Cuyahoga Community College. As a Class of '66 GHS graduate, she remains very close to many of her classmates. They still get together monthly for dinner and friendship.

Elaine and her husband, Tony (Newburgh's Slovenian Man of the Year 2007), have been married 37 years. They are honored to share their anniversary date of April 29th with Bishop A. Edward Pevec, who officiated their wedding and continues to be their close friend. Elaine met Tony at a National City Bank softball game, where they were both employed. He was playing softball and she was cheering on the team. She isn't sure if it was love at first sight, but after their first date, she remembers going home, calling her girlfriend and telling her that she knew that one day he was going to ask her to marry him. It wasn't long after that he proposed to her at the Laurentian Athletic Club Hangover Dance, while the Vadnals were playing "Pork Chops." The rest is history.

Elaine and Tony have lived in Strongsville for over 33 years and have raised three wonderful daughters, Mary, Elizabeth and Donna. They have two great sons-in-law, Chad Michaud and Don Cox, and hopefully, Kris Jones will one day soon be joining their family. They are very fortunate to have their family living in the area and are able to do many things together. Mary and Don will be blessing them with their first grandchild in May. Elaine is very excited to soon be adding Grandma to her list of endearing names.

While the girls were growing up, Elaine was very active in PTA while the girls were in school, and held many offices. She was honored with the Ohio PTA Lifetime Achievement Award for this work and dedication.

Elaine was employed with Southwest General Hospital for 20 years. She loved her job there and started working the night shift when the girls were very young. She was able to be a stay-at-home mom and still have time to volunteer at school, the NASH and anywhere else she was needed. Elaine left the hospital when Tony retired in 1999.

Since their retirement, Elaine and Tony have spent most of their winters in Cape Coral, Florida on the gulf coast. They enjoy being snowbirds, basking in the sunshine, visiting with family and friends, attending spring training baseball games and leaving the snow back home. Anyone that knows Elaine well, knows how much she enjoys sitting on the dock fishing. This is her quiet time, especially night fishing under the stars. Elaine loves shelling on the beach and has a watchful eye for critters in the water. She cherishes the beautiful memories of their Florida time together.

Elaine and Tony are parishioners of St. Lawrence Church. She is active with the many committees and activities at the church. Elaine was instrumental in helping revive the St. Lawrence School



Reunion mass and dinner dance. Elaine was the alternate for the Vibrant Parish Life Cluster Planning Committee and is a member of the Altar Society. Elaine and Tony love St. Lawrence Parish and say going to mass lets you truly feel and embrace that love.

Elaine is currently the Recording Secretary for KSKJ St. Anne's Lodge #150. She previously held the position of Auditor. She enjoys participating in their many fun and charitable activities. Elaine is a member of AMLA, Newburgh-Maple Hts. Pensioners, Strongsville Athletic Boosters, Slovenian National Home (East 80th) Board of Directors and the American Cancer Society Relay for Life Team. Each year she works along side Tony at the Strongsville City Club Rib-Burnoff and the Breakfast on the Covered Bridge.

Elaine has been a member of the Red Hat Society for over 7 years. She is Co-Founder of the Scarlet Orchids Chapter and is currently reigning as their Queen Mother. Elaine loves her "sisters" and feels that since she has already raised her children, it is her and Tony's time to kick up their heels, have fun and enjoy life.

Her family always comes first, but in her spare time, Elaine loves to cook and eat. Her favorite dish is pork roast, sauerkraut, apple sauce and her homemade potato dumplings. She enjoys polkas, camping, watching her soap operas, snacking on diet Pepsi and chips, going to the theater and sporting events. She is a great cheerleader and fan of the Strongsville Mustangs teams, especially football, where on Friday nights she can be found screaming and ringing the bell in excitement.

Elaine says she is the woman behind one good man, Tony. He will be the first to tell you that he gets all the credit for getting things done, but everyone knows that they are a team and get things done together.

When Elaine was nominated to receive the Woman of the Year award, she thought about it long and hard before accepting this honor. She accepted it proudly, not because of the things she has done recently on East 80th, but for 38 years she has helped there since meeting Tony and becoming involved with the Slovenian National Home. She can fondly remember the days when she was young and pregnant and happily working the Friday night fish fry dances. How times flies when you are having fun at the NASH!

John Kovelan

Janez na St. Clairu. President, Holmes Ave. Pensioners

(Recycled Teenagers)

John was born and raised in the St. Clair Avenue community and is of Polish and Slovenian descent. He is the son of John and Mary (Urbas) Jaskoe (deceased), stepson of Paul Kovelan (deceased) and brother of Paulette Kovelan. He was married 57 years ago to Betty Sittinger. They have seven children, eight grandchildren and reside in Euclid.

He started his working career as a shoeshine boy, set pins in three different bowling alleys and drove for the Joseph Konys Funeral Home. John graduated from Cathedral Latin and Ohio University. After joining the US Air Force, in 1956 he accepted a position as missile analyst with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He prepared reports on Soviet missiles and received specialized training in missile and nuclear technology, photography and the Russian Language, later teaching Russian to CIA employees.



In 1962 John left the CIA for Goodyear Aerospace Corp to participate in a USAF funded intelligence study of the Soviet Space and Lunar Landing Program. In 1972 he was hired by Cooper Bessemer in Mt. Vernon OH, to supervise the first license agreement signed between the Soviet Union and the United States for long distance pumping of natural gas. He was then appointed to be the first American to open a US commercial office in Communist Poland. John lived in Poland for two years with his wife and children. While in Poland, John and Betty entertained visiting dignitaries with Slovenian songs and Betty would prepare strudel for them. Two sons of the Ecuadorian Ambassador returned with them to the United States and attended Euclid High, where one later married a local Slovenian girl. Their oldest daughter remained in Krakow for further studies.

Traveling extensively he had the opportunity to meet privately with Mother Theresa at an airport in Italy. Joining Diamond Shamrock as International Business Manager of government contracts and electrode technology, John later accepted a position with Morrison Knudsen Company and was sent to Ukraine for 2 1/2 years to participate in the destruction and salvaging of 54 intercontinental ballistics missiles in underground silos.

John attributes his success in the international business world to his mother and Slovenian grandmother, Mary Urbas. He is currently the President of the Holmes Avenue Pensioners, has been a Eucharistic minister for 40 years at Holy Family, Stow and St. Felicitas, Euclid and the past president of the Holy Name and Nocturnal Adorations Societies.

John would like to thank the Board of Directors of Holmes Avenue for selecting him Man of the Year and the Kozlevchar and Zabukovec families for transferring important and detailed computer membership data regarding the Pensioners Club. This data helped make a smooth transition of club operations after the sudden death of former president, John Kozlevchar. Zelo sem vam hvalezen in zelim vam vse najbolsje. Also, congratulations to all honorees.

Cleveland City Councilman Martin J. Sweeney

is honored to be a 2010 Man of the Year for the West Park Slovenian Home

Martin, aka "Marty", the son of Gerald and Bride Sweeney, was born and raised in the community he loves, the Bellaire-Puritas/West Park neighborhood of Cleveland. Martin attended St. Vincent de Paul grade school, St. Mel's, St. Ignatius High School, and graduated from Cleveland State University with a bachelor's degree in Political Science. While at CSU, Marty was a member of the 1986 Cleveland State basketball team that reached the "Sweet 16" in the NCAA tournament.

Prior to serving on Council, Martin was a member of Local 310 while holding a job removing asbestos. From there, he served as a Cuyahoga County probation officer for 6 years and also served at the Cuyahoga County Clerk of Courts. In 1997, then-Ward 20 Councilman Dale Miller appointed Martin to Ward 20 Councilman and Martin went on to win the election in 1998 for a four-year term. He has won 3 subsequent elections, most recently this past November's 2009 municipal election. In 2005, Martin was elected to the council Presidency by his peers and was unanimously elected to that same post this past November 2009. He also serves as Chair of the Finance Committee.



Councilman Sweeney's top priority is to maintain and grow the stable residential and business areas of Ward 20. He is also focused on improving the City of Cleveland as City Council President. He continues to fight to improve neighborhoods with safer streets, increased police visibility, enhanced housing stock and a more responsive city government to its constituents. In the 13 years Councilman Sweeney has served on Council, more than \$350 million worth of economic development has occurred in Ward 20, creating than 1500 jobs. Martin feels it is important to respond to constituents directly. With the help of the Bellaire Puritas Development Corporation, Councilman Sweeney is proud to handle issues that directly affect the residents of Ward 20.

Martin graduated from the Leadership Cleveland Class of 2004. This organization gathers community leaders from a variety of fields to improve the overall quality of life in this region. He has also been recognized as Democrat of the year in 2006 by the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party and has received numerous endorsements over the past 13 years, including the Cleveland Plain Dealer. He serves on Great Lakes Science Center Board of Directors and has worked with numerous charitable organizations throughout the years. In 1989, Martin married Kate (Dempsey) and together they have four daughters, Molly (20), Bride (17), Samantha (13), and Margaret (5). Martin is the proud brother to 5 sisters (Mary, Kathy, Patricia, Maureen, and Bride) and 1 brother (Michael). Martin and Kate taught pre cana at St. Vincent de Paul for 10 years and in his free time, enjoys playing basketball and spending time with his family.