



Above, Robert Snyder as he appeared as a senior in the 1934 Easton High yearbook. At left, the high school band as it appeared in Snyder's senior year.

## Man's love of music has lasted a lifetime

By BRYAN HAY  
Of The Morning Call

Robert Snyder will always remember how a day during his junior year at Harvard was interrupted by an ominous invitation that brought him to the piano of one of the country's most cherished composers.

"Leroy Anderson wants to see you," the university band manager informed Snyder that day.

Yes, that Leroy Anderson, creator of such infectious tunes as "Bugler's Holiday," "The Typewriter" and "Syncopated Clock."

**Nerves a tremble**, the young trumpet player dutifully reported to the all-American composer known far and wide for his distinctive Boston Pops repertoire.

"There he was at the piano and he said 'conduct me,'" Snyder recalls.

Anderson conducted the Harvard University Band from 1931-35 and was searching for a successor because his commitments in New York City had become too great to continue.

After an impromptu audition, Anderson demurely told Snyder: "You'll do."

"I'm not a musician, that's the interesting part," says the self-effacing Snyder, remembering the trepidation of trying to conduct Anderson's collegiate medleys, a musical mine field of multiple meters and rhythms.

"A musician to me is a guy who can perform on his particular instrument at will, without music," he says. "It's

up here in your head. I have to read everything.

"I knew when something was wrong, but I wasn't sure how to correct it," he adds, recounting the responsibility of leading the band at every Harvard sporting event.

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But his passion for music endured, even though he will insist repeatedly that he is not a musician.

Today, Snyder is the oldest active member of the Easton Municipal Band, joining its ranks on the invitation of a friend in 1940. He will turn 80 next month.

**Despite being troubled** by failing eyesight, he continues to play in the French horn section and never misses a Monday night rehearsal.

After graduating from Harvard in 1938 with degrees in science, history, government and economics, Snyder

attended embalming school in Philadelphia to prepare for entry into the family mortuary business.

"It's just really good that Bob has stayed with it for such a long period of time," says band President Bob Schaller, unaware and instantly impressed with Snyder's early contact with pops icon Anderson.

"We're glad to have him there and hope he stays around for another 57 years."

Snyder, who has played under five conductors, began when the Easton Municipal Band was attached to the Brown and Lynch American Legion Post No. 9, a relationship that continued into the 1970s.

**After that**, the band practiced at the Easton Moose Lodge until the late 1980s and became known as the Easton Moose Band. A fire at the lodge in 1989 destroyed the band's uniforms, music and some instruments.

The band, which began informally more than 100 years ago in Easton, eventually reformed and changed its name to the Easton Municipal Band, solidifying its historic ties to the city.

Repertoire has changed over time, too, Snyder says.

In the old days, it centered on a heavy diet of concert overtures, "not show business tunes like we do today," he observes.

Although his father started him out on trumpet in grade school, a demand for French horn players convinced him to switch instruments.

"It always seemed the horn was more in demand. But the horn had all the backtime rhythms—boring."

Snyder smiles. "Today horn parts are well written and melodic. As of today I prefer the French horn."

He also played in an Easton-based woodwind quintet for 40 years.

"We had a tremendous library of stuff. We simply played for our own amazement. They were big fun evenings," Snyder says.

In addition to still practicing his profession, he does solo work at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Riegelsville, where his wife plays the organ, and sings tenor in the choir.

Musical camaraderie is what Snyder enjoys most, and that's what he finds in abundance during band rehearsals and concerts.

"We rehearse every Monday night, and I'm very rarely absent," he says proudly.

Band director Olwen Bougher credits Snyder's longevity as an important link to the past, especially for new members.

"He's a fine addition and he's always here when we need him," she says. "He helps out new members all the time. And he's a fine gentleman, too."

The Easton Municipal Band has a remaining concert this summer at 7 p.m. Aug. 24 at the Meuser Park bandshell, Wilson.

Membership in the 45-member band is open to anyone. To join, contact Schaller at 258-5311 during the day (e-mail, schaller@fast.net; home page: www.regiononline.com/eastonband/home.htm).