

Terrace resident keeps trombone close

By Michael Kelley Staff Writer



Bill Anderson, a resident at Scarborough Terrace Assisted Living Facility, has been playing the trombone for more than 80 years. (Courtesy photo)

Bill Anderson is not the type of man to toot his own horn, but he may just pull it out and play it.

Anderson, 93, has been playing the trombone for more than 80 years.

"I started playing the trombone early in the game and have continued to play the trombone all my life. I enjoy it," said Anderson.

A Tacoma, Wash. native, he has been living at Scarborough Terrace Assisted Living Community since June.

This life-long love of the trombone might not have ever occurred, had it not been for the state of the economy in 1930 when Anderson was in fourth grade.

"Those were the Depression years," Anderson said. "The man who operated the local music store came to our school with instruments. He had a slow day and was hoping to sell some."

Anderson said the man played each instrument and, as soon as Anderson heard the trombone, he wanted one.

"I had to have one," Anderson said. "My father was able to get me a trombone."

Anderson joined the school band. This, however would be just the start of a long career playing music.

"As I grew, I learned to play it and as I grew up, I played it more and more and more," Anderson said.

Others soon began to see the talent Anderson had with the brass instrument.

When he was 15 years old, Anderson was invited to join the Mickey Mouse Band, the house band at the Hamrich Theatre in Tacoma, Wash. that played before the movies on Saturday afternoons.

Anderson, who attended the University of Washington in Seattle, was asked by the leader of the Mickey Mouse Band to join the National Guard and play in its talent show.

After the National Guard, Anderson enlisted in the Navy and worked in the Pacific Theater on a mine sweeper during World War II.

After service in the military, Anderson continued to play, although he said he doesn't have a favorite song or genre of music to play.

"If it's music, I play it," Anderson said.

Anderson said now he plays the trombone when he feels like it. He has played for other residents of Scarborough Terrace, something Elizabeth Simonds, Scarborough Terrace's marketing director, said she hopes he continues doing.

"I just play when I feel in the mood. I take it out and play. It gets discouraging because I can't play the things I used to be able to play," Anderson said.

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Nevertheless, Simonds said it is always a joy to hear Anderson.

“It is invigorating to see you play,” she told him just before an impromptu trombone session Friday, Sept. 27. “Hearing you play is absolutely wonderful. I can hear the joy within you through your music.”

Now, more than 80 years after he first started playing, Anderson has had a chance to reflect on what music has meant in his life. Music, he said, has helped him live a rewarding life and hopes this generation of school children has an opportunity to see the powerful impact music can have on a person.

“It isn’t about just music. If kids have an urge to do something, they should be able to,” Anderson said. “Music is not necessarily in the mainstream of education, but (children) should be encouraged (to try it) and the education system should be prepared to offer it to them. If it is inventive, it should be encouraged and not discouraged.”

Anderson said once children find that one thing they like to do, they should stick with it.

“When you find something you love to do, you just can’t stop,” Anderson said.

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