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Musician's beat goes on

by KEVIN WARD
staff writer

PIKETON — OU alumnus Raymond Connett is the 96-year-old music man of Southeastern Ohio whose beat goes on and on.

Connett, who founded the OU marching band in 1923, has hit many high notes in his life dedicated to teaching music and playing in bands.

The veteran band director — who has never missed an OU homecoming since his graduation in 1931 — was honored at this year's homecoming parade for his musical accomplishments.

A Piketon resident for the past 38 years, Connett grew up in Athens and lived on the "edge of campus," the corner of Park Place and University Terrace. He said an early friendship with a music teacher led him to piano and trumpet lessons.

CONNETT SAID he has played every musical instrument, except the harp, and specializes in the clarinet.

At the age of eight Connett said he played the cornet with the Ringling circus

show when it came to Athens.

"Every time a circus came to Athens I would go to the band headquarters to volunteer. I played in at least a half dozen circus bands," Connett said. "But my parents would never allow me to play (professionally) in a circus."

In 1908 Connett enrolled at OU, a university of about 300 students at the time. He received his degree 23 years later because he served in World War I.

After he returned to OU and switched his major from engineering to music, Connett further delayed his graduation as he concentrated on forming what is now the OU Marching 110.

"The university asked me if I would start a band at OU. I told them I would if I could have them marching, which was unusual. They liked the idea and so I did it," Connett said. The original band boasted a membership of 35.

He added that his band was not as flamboyant as the Marching 110 of today, but "we did special formations."

The Marching 110's style appeals to

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Connett still leads active life as band member

MUSIC MAN

from page one

Connett because he said their dance steps are unique. He said he prefers to develop bands through extraordinary marching routines.

UNTIL A few years ago, Connett always appeared with the

Since his retirement from teaching in 1970, the tall, slender band director continued his previous sideline of tuning pianos and opened a piano shop in Piketon where he repaired and rebuilt all types of pianos.

Connett said he recently sold his shop and now works on pianos in his home as a hobby.

Standing by his father's bedside at Columbia Presbyterian

Mikhail Gorbachev.

FOR THE past 17 years Connett has been a member and director of the Adelphi Band of Piketon. For his service to the band, he received the Statehood Achievement Award in 1980.

Connett said he has always taken every opportunity to direct or play with any organization.

"I belong to the Piano Technicians Guild and through their yearly conventions, I got acquainted with a lot of activities that gave me opportunities to direct a band at some festivals or fairs," he said.

Connett added, "I'll still play with the local bands if there is somebody to take me there."

"HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS" IS COMING TO THE