

# Clarinet player has done circuit

By DEBBIE MAY  
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He's the music man and he packs a reed in his clarinet case whenever he can.

Richard Norton, 70, has played the circuit from Winston-Salem, N.C., to Baton Rouge, La., to St. Louis, Mo., to Sacramento, Calif.

"I've played with the best, the oldest and the most official," said the Water Street resident, softening up a reed for his wooden clarinet, a 1926 model brought over from Paris, France.

He deems the best to be the marching band of his alma mater, the University of Illinois. The oldest, of course, the Aldelphi Band, which is more than 100 years old. And the most official, at least in this state, is the Great Seal of Ohio Band.

Norton's love of the clarinet started innocently enough. They offered lessons at his elementary school in Decatur, Ill. But Norton didn't stop there and kept playing right through college, where he studied commerce.

In the late '30s, he was working in St. Louis near a defense plant which was building "Flying Boxes" or C-46s, as the troop-carrying airplanes were sometimes called. For enjoyment there, he joined a musical group — the Curtiss Wright Band.

"We played for luncheons every noon. We kept the morale up for the service people," he said.

In the 1940s, Norton was sent to serve his country. The United States Army took him despite the fact he was only months short of his 38th birthday.

## Know your neighbor

"I was shipped out of San Pedro, Calif. and stationed at Fort Mason. You can bet I took my clarinet with me to the service," Norton said, rubbing his hands over the silver-plated mouth piece. "This clarinet and case has been on five of the seven seas."

When he got out of the service, Norton was given a big chance. The GI bill allowed him to advance his education. This time he did it at the St. Louis Institute of Music.

"I studied under Mike Zotterilli, the principal clarinetist (at that time) in the St. Louis Symphony," Norton said.

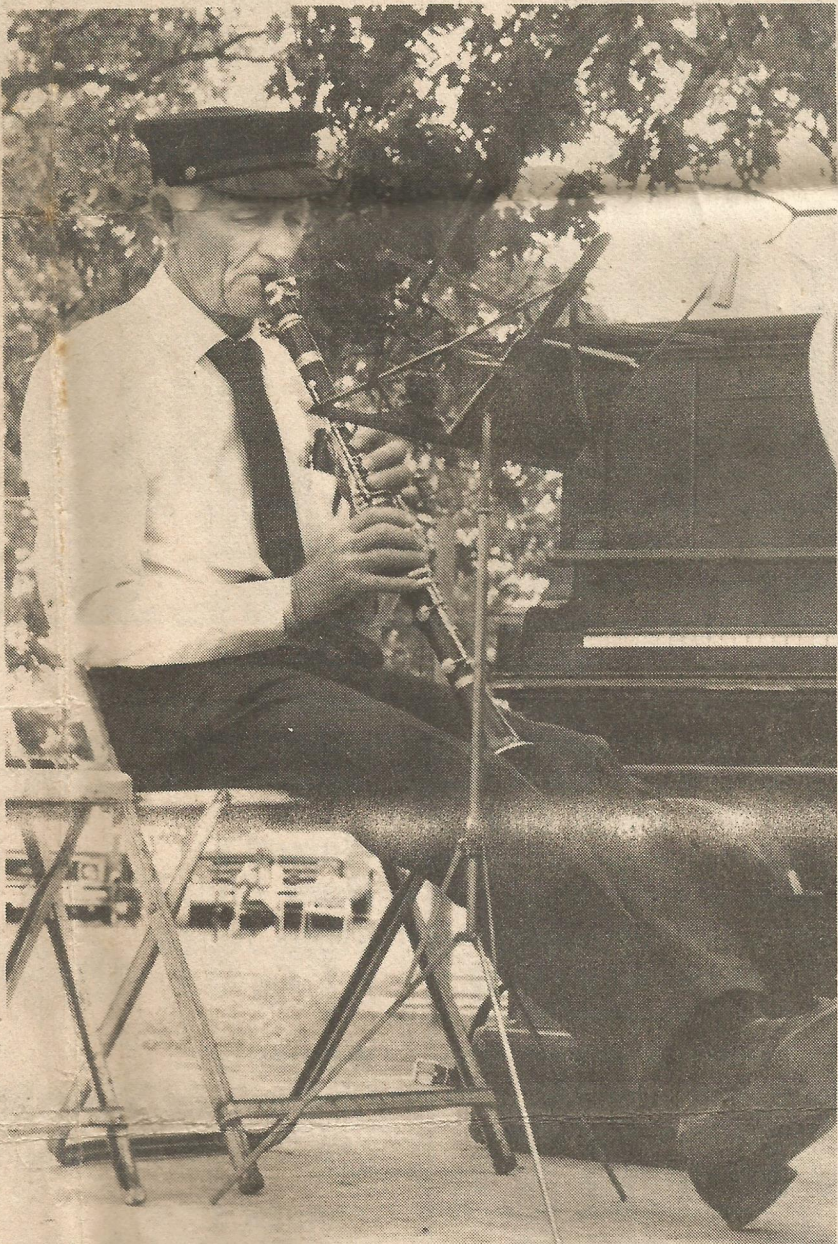
Although his grandmother was born in neighboring Pickaway County it wasn't until the 1950s that Norton moved into this area. After the service, he was working for M.W. Kellough, a private construction company involved in the building of diffusion plants.

"That's what brought me to the Portsmouth plant. It's identical to the one in Paducah, Ky.," he said.

Norton has settled in Chillicothe now but not without seeing the world first. He also has played his clarinet with the Moravian Band in Winston Salem, N.C. He's tooted a bit in Baton Rouge, La. There he taught woodwinds in county schools. Just for fun, he once went down to play a Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

Still very active in his college's chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, a music honorary, Norton said, "My credo is advancing the cause of music in America."

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(Gazette photo)

Trilling along, that's Richard Norton. The 70-year-old Chillicothe resident has been playing the clarinet since he was a boy. And he's played it around the world.