

# Mt. Healthy musician pens his memoirs

By Heidi Fallon

hfallon@communitypress.com

Gene Hessler didn't intend to toot his own horn. He simply wanted to jot down a few of his favorite memories at the request of his friends and family.

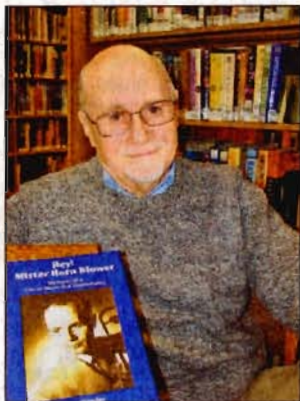
What evolved was "Hey! Mister Horn Blower," the life and times of the Mount Healthy musician and numismatist.

Growing up on Elizabeth Street next door to the family's tailor shop, Hessler's musical education started early. A door-to-door music teacher gave Hessler his first lessons when he was second-grader at Assumption School.

He began performing with a variety of bands while he was still a Mount Healthy High School student.

"I can remember falling asleep in class, but my teachers were very understanding," Hessler said of his frequent weekend gigs that took him to faraway places like Indianapolis.

He also remembers riding the bus downtown to the Albee Theater to see



HEIDI FALLON/STAFF

Mount Healthy native Gene Hessler made a recent visit to his hometown library and will be at the museum around the corner April 26 to sign copies of his new book, "Hey, Mr. Horn Blower."

Woody Herman's band.

"I would sit through two movies to see the band and hang around the stage entrance to get autographs," he said. "Ten years later I was playing with Woody."

Prior to packing up his trombone and leaving home, Hessler had his own dance band that played at Moonlight Gardens, Castle Farm and the Topper Club.

During his 1951-53 stint with the Army, Hessler per-

formed with Cannonball and Nat Adderley.

After crisscrossing the country with bands including Herman, Hessler moved to New York City to work as a freelance and recording musician.

He was a member of the orchestras for dozens of Broadway shows including "The Music Man," "Camelot" and "Annie" and was a member of the Radio City Music Hall orchestra.

He's performed with Doc Severinsen, Sammy Davis Jr., Diana Ross, Julie Andrews, Richard Burton, Barbra Streisand and Carol Burnett.

His talent also took him around the world with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and to Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and the Metropolitan Opera.

Along the way Hessler became interested in the history of money and has researched the designers and engravers of paper money from around the world.

"I would come home from traveling abroad with left over coins," he said. "I became really interested in



PROVIDED. SEND PHOTOS TO MEMRAL@COMMUNITYPRESS.COM

This is the bank note from the First National Bank of Mount Healthy that will be on display April 26 at the Mount Healthy Historical Society.

## Meet the author

Joking that "you can go home again," Gene Hessler will be at the Mount Healthy Museum from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, April 26, to sign copies of his memoirs "Hey! Mister Horn Blower."

He also will be the guest of the downtown library branch for a book signing Sunday, May 16.

Hessler's book is available by writing to P.O. Box 31144, Cincinnati 45231 or [engraversline@aol.com](mailto:engraversline@aol.com).

It's also available at area book stores including Joseph Beth.

As part of Hessler's appearance, the Mount Healthy Historical Society will display a 1930s bank note issued by the

First National Bank of Mount Healthy.

The note is only one of 15 known to be in existence. It is from the days when national banks had its name on the paper money they issued. Each note has a unique serial number and can be easily traced and documented. The Mount Healthy note bears the engraved signatures of cashier Walter R. Hartung — Hessler was a classmate of his daughter — and bank president Joseph Weber, both residents of Mount Healthy.

The First National Bank of Mount Healthy issued some large-size notes before the size of all Federal and national bank

notes were reduced to the size of today's notes.

The First National Bank of Mount Healthy was organized on Feb. 2, 1905, applied for and received charter 7661. Charter 1 was assigned to the First National Bank of Philadelphia. The last charter number, 14320, was assigned to the Liberty National Bank & Trust Co. in Louisville, Ky.

The Mount Healthy Historical Society is at 1546 McMakin. For society information go to [www.mthealthylhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.mthealthylhistoricalsociety.org) or call 513-521-8168 or 513-522-3939.

the designs and engravings."

He's written five award-winning books on the subject of money and more

than 350 magazine and journal articles.

Now that he's retired, moved closer to home and completed his memoirs,

Hessler plans on spending more time on his research of money and, occasionally dusting off his trombone.