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From One Capitol to Another

By Kathy Kern

In one word, describe a typical day of yours.

Ask the same question to State Rep. Don Snyder (R-Emmaus), a Capitol Campus graduate, and you might find your answer is the same as his: busy!

In an interview with him at the Capitol Building, it was easy to see why a typical day of the representative is so busy. In fact, Mr. Snyder was voting on the House floor when the Sergeant-At-Arms got the representative's attention to meet for the interview.

After graduating from Capitol in 1973 with a degree in business administration, as well as involvement in several community groups, Mr. Snyder was appointed to a township planning commission.

The politician noted that he was the youngest person ever appointed to the commission. "From there, my interest in local government grew," he said.

He was first elected in 1977 for a four-year term as a township commissioner in South Whitehall, and was appointed president of the commission at the beginning of 1980. During this time, Mr. Snyder was serving a local township as well as a legislative district.

Feeling the pressures both offices can bring, Mr. Snyder resigned from his township position in January of 1981. "I felt there was a potential conflict of interest in serving a legislative district and a local township," he added, saying that he is now better able to concentrate on his legislative position.

In his legislative work, Mr. Snyder is a member of three House committees. He serves on the Professional License Committee, the Game and Fisheries Committee, and also the Committee on Local Government.

"I find that I can make quite a few contributions on many of the bills that come through the local government committee," Snyder said, noting that the

experience he gained from working in local government for seven years has helped him to make these contributions.

At Capitol, the representative was chairman of the Social Committee. He said this position-plus participation in other organizations and interest groups--gave him a solid background to work in politics.

Mr. Snyder also commented that his business background helps him in considering problems with taxes and budgets, and also aids him in judging bills and amendments. "In government, I think you need a varied background," he added, saying that his business skills and his interests in different organizations are a great help in his legislative work.

But what keeps this representative going when he gets tired of the complications of his job?

Mr. Snyder said his interest in the job and the problems which need to be solved are his motivators. "Government is really a 'people business,' and that's

what keeps it going," the young politician said. He also commented that the learning element of the job makes it interesting.

And to the theory that politicians don't do any work, Mr. Snyder has a simple reply: "Try it for one day!"

Mr. Snyder said that people do not see the real activity of the House of Representatives and, though the system may appear to be non-productive when on the House floor, things are happening behind the scenes. Debates may also appear to be non-productive, he said, but do have a purpose. During his studies at Capitol, Don Snyder never thought he would be in politics, least of all as a state representative. Yet, he feels that other young people should get involved in their government. "It's our future," he commented.

And, to Don Snyder, it's a future worth working for.

Signs of a True Fan

By Yvonne Harhigh

As the refs skate onto the ice, the sign goes up. The crowd reads the bold, black letters "THE THREE STOOGES" and snickers. The proud sign holder is a familiar face to American Hockey League fans, especially those in Hersey, Pennsylvania.

As Hershey Bear rightwinger Archie Henderson glides slowly to the penalty box, he notices some commotion in the seats. The Sign Man is standing on his chair again, this time wearing an imitation referee's jersey and yellow gardener's gloves. Leaning over the glass, he's angrily yelling, "Whatsa matter with you, Ref, are you blind? You stink!" With a disgusted look and exaggerated gestures, he points to the ref, then holds his nose. The fans encourage their mock official further and Archie gives them all

a toothless smile, wondering what grown man would have the guts to act like that in front of 4,000 people.

Although few of those fans know his name, Alan "Big Al" Boyton is the Hershey Bears' Sign Man. An ordinary-looking man of 26, this outspoken hockey lover is a dedicated fan -- in an out of the arena -- who shows his enthusiasm in some unusual ways.

His wife, Dee, remembers, for instance, how uniquely Al expressed his happiness when their daughter was born. "Al was at the Bears' game, as usual, the day after Jennifer was born and he even had a sign for that!" On the front of a two by three foot piece of paper, Al had neatly printed "IT'S A GIRL, 7 LBS. 3 OZS." -- on the back, "SEND MONEY."

And thanks to her dad, Jennifer is already the envy of most little boys in her neighborhood. At just 14 months old,

she has her own maroon and white Hershey Bears t-shirt, her own little New York Rangers jersey and even her own hockey stick, a shortened Koho that belonged to Nelson Burton, a former Hershey player.

Al's interest in hockey began when he was young, too, although he was more than 14 months. "Living in Carteret, N.J., just 18 miles south of New York, I've been a diehard Ranger fan as long as I can remember. In fact, as a senior in high school, a friend and I recorded every single Rangers' game that was on television or the radio," he recalls with a smile. "We even set our alarms and got up at 1 or 2 a.m. to catch a late away game. At the end of the season, we put the highlights together, and added our own commentating of course, and used it as our project for our communications class."

Soon after his attempt at broadcasting, Al switched to a more active role in hockey. As a husky freshman, he began playing goalie for the West Virginia University Hockey Club, which he and another friend started.

"We're proud of that," he boasts, displaying his navy blue and gold WVU HOCKEY jacket. "We started it in 1972, when there were only two ice rinks in the whole state. We all paid for the uniforms ourselves and we ended up practicing at two or three in the morning in Pittsburgh. It was two hours away, but it was the only place we could get ice time. Anyway, thanks to our beginning, WVU has now built its own arena."

By his last year at WVU, Al had given up goaltending and only coached the club. "Maybe it was the 19 goals I gave up that one game," he wonders in his typical joking manner.

After college, Al managed a Gordon's Jewelers store in Indiana, where he followed the minor league Indianapolis Racers. Then, the same year he and Dee moved to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the Racers folded; it seems surprising that a

team whose roster included a young center named Wayne Gretzky had problems attracting a crowd.

Once in Harrisburg, Al became a pharmaceutical representative -- a drug pusher, he says -- for an Ohio-based company. Now, he recalls, "It figures -- I got the job two years ago on April Fools' Day." Anyway, with coming to Harrisburg, he also heard about the Hershey Bears.

"At the first Bears' game I went to, the crowd was so blasé, I couldn't believe it," he complains with wide eyes. "Finally, I got tired of sitting by old ladies in mink coats whose excitement was clapping every once in a while, so I brought in a rubber chicken. When I shook it at the ref or an opposing player, the crowd cheered. That night, I went home and made five little cardboard signs that said things like 'GO BEARS GO' and 'SUPER SAVE.' At the next game, I held them occasionally and the fans loved it."

103 signs later, "Big Al" has spent countless hours and dollars on supplies, costumes and gimmicks -- some that went over well, some that flopped. Take, for example, the bright red fireman's hat with a real siren flashing light. "The box it came in said 'For Ages Four and Up.' I figured I was an 'up,' so I bought it. With white tape, I spelled 'Bears -- #1' on it and when I wore it at the game, the adults laughed and the kids near me wanted to play with it."

Then there's the Halloween mask with green hair, a wrinkled yellowish face and a wart on the nose. Sounding disappointed, he says, "I was originally gonna do this with gloves on and using 'THE HERSHEY HEX' sign. I even practiced in front of the mirror, wiggling my fingers, putting a spell on the opposing goalie. It just didn't work. But at least the crowd goes for the mask along with the ref's jersey."

Still, one of Al's earliest gags, the rubber chicken, is popular with fans. Time has brought sophistication to this

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The Sign Man flashes his poetic opinion as Hershey falls to Adirondack. READER Photo by Yvonne Harhigh