

Death claims 'Manny' Silvia

Manuel "Manny" Silvia, 73, of 12 Ashland St., director and agent of the Top Hatters Orchestra for 50 years, died at Morton Hospital Sunday night after a long illness. He was the husband of Katherine (Anderson) Silvia.

A musician since the age of nine, he had mastered all forms of saxophones as well as the flute and clarinet, with the alto sax his favorite instrument. He played in the old St. Anthony's Church Band as a youngster, remaining with the band for 15 years, and attended the New England Conservatory of Music.

During his youth, he was also a promising welter-weight boxer. His family erected a boxing ring on the Raynham farm for Manny and his late brother, Joseph, but music won out.

He had formed his first, short-lived band for a New Year's Eve dance at the Dighton Grange hall and went on to play in a variety of orchestras based in southeastern Massachusetts.

He formed his first Top Hatters orchestra in 1937 for a six year stand at Lake Pearl.

Trumpeter Al Hirt, based at the U.S. Army Camp Miles Standish during World War Two, played with the orchestra on a regular basis for a number of years.

By the time the war ended, the Top Hatters were playing in ballrooms along the east coast from Boston to Canada and Cape Cod. Also in the late 40's, Silvia established

the Junior Top Hatters for Taunton teenagers and staged dances at the former Eagles hall for city youths for three years until the hall was demolished.

From that time on, Manny's Top Hatters became a popular orchestra at any major event, playing popular music combined with vocals and sprinkled with humor.

Born in Taunton, he was the son of the late Manuel P. and Mary (Ponta) Silvia. The family moved to Raynham to farm, a business which he joined for many years. He returned to Taunton and was employed as a master electrician at Souza Electric Co., retiring several years ago.

He was a member of the Elks Lodge, 150; the Musicians Union, 231; Portuguese American Civic Club, Local Electrician's Union, and a life member of the St. Vincent dePaul Society. He was a communicant of St. Mary's Church, assisting as a church usher.

Survivors include his wife, a daughter, Mrs. William E. (Roberta Ann) Rodgers of Brandon, Fla.; two brothers, Selectman Leonard P. of Norton, John P. of Castro Valley, Calif.; three sisters, Mrs. Mary Teixeira of Clifton, N.J., Mrs. Mary Lopes of Taunton, Mrs. Joseph (Ida) Amaral of Raynham; five grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.



MANUEL 'MANNY' SILVIA
Leader of the Top Hatters