Men and women who find careers in the fields of environmental health share certain interests, problems, convictions and aspirations which place them in a professional situation that is decidedly their own. They dedicate their lives to the service of their fellow men. They are deeply committed to the belief that this world, this nation, this state, this district or town can, and must, be made a better, safer place in which to live. They are a realistic amalgam of exact science and boundless optimism, and their zeal is never dimmed.

Walter F. Snyder was one of these people. He learned from his colleagues...
and taught others what he learned. Almost everyone who encountered him in a classroom, meeting or conference knew they were in the presence of an evangelist of environmental health. Many who met him realized that this friendly yet outspoken man possessed remarkable powers of insight, organizational creativity and leadership. These gifts, combined with his desire to work with and through people, were ultimately to establish him as a leader among those who seek to attain environmental quality.

For 10 years, he directed the environmental health program for the City of Toledo, Ohio. Even as he worked to improve an urban environment he was extending his own frontiers with graduate work at the University of Toledo as well as the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Through his studies and first-hand observation of events, he was convinced that progress on countless vital problems of public health could best be resolved by bringing representatives of government, industry and user groups together on neutral ground where they could discuss their differences and reconcile their viewpoints.

In 1944, Walter Snyder resigned from his position in Toledo and returned to Ann Arbor. His belief that environmental quality could best be achieved through deliberation, harmony and accord attracted interest and support among highly placed members of the U of M faculty. As a result, the National Sanitation Foundation was established at the School of Public Health in that year. He served as its Executive Director until his death in 1965.

The new Foundation had marked success in providing a mechanism for bringing new standards of sanitation to industry, and in conducting supportive research. Today, the National Sanitation Foundation, an independent, non-profit organization with a large professional staff and testing laboratory of its own, is an ever-widening influence in the field of environmental quality. This influence is due today, as it was in the very beginning, to the principle of inter-group communication and cooperation pioneered by Walter F. Snyder.

The 1973
Walter F. Snyder Award presented to William A. Broadway

In more than three decades as a sanitarian, environmentalist and apostle of public health, Bill Broadway has used his own state, North Carolina, to demonstrate the value of his profession to the world. In the process he has made countless contributions to the quest of all responsible human beings for environmental quality.

In high school he was a national honor student. He earned his bachelor's degree with honors from Davidson College, and received graduate training in public health at the University of North Carolina.

Leaving the cloistered halls he began his career on a rugged and lonely frontier of public health. He began as the sole sanitarian in Bladen County, with a jurisdiction of 883 square miles. He often worked fifteen hours a day, six and seven days a week trying to keep up on his inspections, complaints, assistance requests, speaking engagements and other duties required of the only sanitarian in this large area. Regularly, he slept with a bedside alarm clock set at 15-minute intervals and a boiling kettle of water on the landlady's stove in order to keep his milk samples at the proper incubation temperature for the methylene blue test in a thermos jug. Butterfat tests were conducted with a secondhand crank centrifuge in the basement of the welfare department.
His next job was in smaller but more populous Stanly County—again as the lone sanitarian at a time when the general public was not as appreciative of a decent environment as it is today. An account of his experiences with irate knife, pistol and rifle wielding patrons would make chilling reading.

As an evangelist, Broadway was unimpressed by danger but deeply challenged by public indifference to environmental health. Whenever possible he gathered groups of food service workers in restaurants, schools and hospitals to instruct them in safe methods of food handling. In addition to teaching, he continued learning at sanitary workshops and seminars.

His devoted and effective services did not go unnoticed, however. As officials at the state board of health looked for talents to undertake a challenging assignment, they chose him to become district sanitarian in charge of western North Carolina.

He had hardly settled into his new and vastly greater duties at Asheville when he was called into military service. He started at Fort Bragg as a private and served throughout World War II with distinction. In the Pacific theater he served as air chemical and bacteriological warfare officer of the 20th Air Force, and reached the end of his active duty with the rank of Major.

In June, 1946 he returned to his job in Asheville. Changes during the war years had lowered the numbers, morale and zeal of his local sanitarians. Environmental conditions in some parts of the district were literally crawling.

Bill Broadway has made tremendous contributions to the progress of environmental health in North Carolina, in the Southeastern United States, the nation and the world. He has been a founder and prime member of many important environmental and community service organizations. His honors include the Carl V. Reynolds Award, highest award of the North Carolina Public Health Association. His role as a founder of the Interstate Environmental Health Seminar is one of his proudest accomplishments. Here, sanitarians from Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Washington, D.C. enjoy unparalleled opportunity to exchange ideas at a regional level.

Bill Broadway’s basic method through the years is the same today as it was in the pioneering days of Bladen and Stanly Counties: to preach, to teach, to guide and to lead. Still very active, his career has been a model and inspiration to environmentalists everywhere.
The Walter F. Snyder Award is presented annually by the National Environmental Health Association and the National Sanitation Foundation to a recipient who has achieved peer recognition for outstanding accomplishment in the field of environment . . . for notable contributions to public health and the quality of life, for demonstrated capacity to work with all interests in solving environmental problems, for knowledge and proficiency in utilizing voluntary standards to obtain environmental objectives, and for leadership in securing action on behalf of environmental goals.

Presented at the Thirty-Seventh Annual Education Conference of the National Environmental Health Association on June 27th, 1973.