

# THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

## Of Virginia

### HIDES EXCELLENT HOME INSTALLATION

By Don Hall  
(with lots of help from Frank)

Photos by Jim Sparks

Settled quietly into the hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia is the comfortable Georgian house of Frank Netherland and his aunt, Gladys Campbell.

Lurking inside that house is a beautifully installed 3/9 Kimball organ (opus #7045) which Frank has owned since 1958. It was originally shipped as a 3 manual 7 rank instrument plus piano and usual Kimball traps and effects to the Richard Theatre, Ahsokie, North Carolina. The organ had switches wired for a celeste string which might be added later. The piano was equipped with the usual mandolin effect plus a "banjo" in which the hammer reiterated against the strings. With this particular model organ, Kimball usually supplied a 2 manual console. However, #7045 was connected to a three decker which resulted in the unusual naming of the manuals, bottom to top, Accompaniment, Solo, and Percussion. The Percussion manual played a few of the ranks and all the percussions and traps. Frank has plans in the distant future to do some rewiring and remove the traps and add more switches for pipes for the top keyboard to make it more useful.

In 1939, the Durham Life Insurance Company erected a magnificent office building in Raleigh, N.C., containing what is literally an N.B.C. radio production unit in miniature for the company's 50,000 watt station WPTF. Completely equipped by R.C.A., WPTF has four studios, all floating, according to the Johns Manville acoustical design and all operating under a master control center. The largest of these studios is an all-purpose room with a small stage at one end. In two chambers behind this stage was installed Kimball #7045 bought by the station from the theatre in Ahsokie. The console was placed on a dolly so that it could be located anywhere in the studio. In this new installation, the organ lost its piano (there were two grands in the studio) and gained a string celeste and a Wurlitzer Tuba Horn which was played from the former piano switches. The organ was used daily for almost eighteen years and kept in excellent repair. Many well-known theatre organists have presided at this console, the last and longest to stay was Kingham Scott, a veteran from the silent days who cued the pictures at Wurlitzer #1567, a style

B with a Tibia added, in the Capitol Theatre in Raleigh.

In 1956, WPTF discontinued regular use of the organ and advised Frank early in 1958 that it was for sale. Netherland bought the organ while still a student at the University of North Carolina at nearby Chapel Hill and spent the following summer moving and installing it in the Roxy Theatre in Martinsville, Virginia (Frank's hometown). This installation was in a movie house where Frank has spent his high school vacations and after school hours as projectionist, doorman and in college years as relief house manager. The organ was set up without shutters on the stage which had been rendered unusable by the CinemaScope screen. The console was at one side of the stage on a platform and Frank says it sounded fine in the 500 seat house, even without expression. He played for the show breaks and community sings and reports that the audience WOULD SING too, young and old alike. The theatre, in-

terestingly, was another Roxy to have for a short time anyway, a Kimball pipe organ. Like that other Roxy, this one, too, is now a memory of another era.

Frank then began plans for a new home for himself, his aunt, and #7045 on the family farm in Patrick County, Virginia. No trouble with neighbor's ears here! The Kimball is still heard "live" daily between Frank's farm chores and frequently by local civil and social groups which are fascinated by such an unusual musical instrument ("Just look at those drums!!"), occasionally on a local radio station, and most recently at a Piedmont ATOE chapter meeting.

The house has the organ installed on the second floor, over the dining room, it speaks into the living room through vertical grills. The living room has a pitched ceiling which starts at eight feet on the side opposite the organ and slopes up to the top of the grills on the

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Frank Netherland shows off for photographer Sparks. Note the sound buttons over the top manual.

