



George Wright quit his Sunday job playing services at St. Timothy's Catholic church in Los Angeles, reportedly because the expected new organ was not forthcoming. By the time this reaches print George will undoubtedly be ensconced behind another church console. He hadn't been "unemployed" 24 hours before interested clergymen were knocking on his door. . . .

San Francisco's Grace Cathedral organist, Richard Purvis, recently paid a weekend visit to Sacramento to hear Eddie Dunstedter at the Carl Greer Inn. Eddie's stylings captivated Purvis completely. Later, while the two pros were comparing notes, Purvis modestly muffed a chance to take on a famous "student." The banter went something like this:

*Purvis: (Facetiously) "You ought to take up the organ seriously."*

*Eddie: "Can you recommend a good teacher?"*

*Purvis: "Not for you!"*

Floridian "Kim" Kimball is bitter about the circa 30 theatre organs that went into Florida churches in the '30s and '40s, while their percussions and toy counters went to junk men. The veteran pipe organ promoter feels that the owners of the few remaining in-theatre organs were taken advantage of by too many amateur "repairmen" who did more damage than good while parts of organs often disappeared. This would tend to explain why the Florida Theatre Corporation has closed down accessibility to the few remaining instruments in Jacksonville, Tampa and Miami, to all, reports. And now the Ritz theatre installation in Clearwater, so painstakingly put together by Terry Charles, must go. It may be some consolation to "Kim" to learn that the instrument is destined for a church—but with a difference. This church is a denomination that likes percussions and toy counter effects, so the whole organ will be installed.

Organist Ann Leaf is "home-hunting"—that is, she and hubby Russ have decided to become property owners. "All my life I've lived in apartments, and I want to know what it's like to have a

home of my own," says Ann. She's hunting in the Hollywood Hills.



**Coppertone's Jesse Crawford and friend. The name is the same but not the calling.**

Organ-minded tourists in Hawaii have been doing a double take over an advertisement which has "Jesse Crawford" endorsing Coppertone Suntan Lotion, with the statement that the stuff "gives me the fastest, deepest tan under the Hawaiian sun." But the accompanying photo of the heavysset, bronzed surfer cancels any thoughts that Jesse might be a close relative of the late maestro with the same name.

The ORGANizer reports that the plane returning Eddie and "Vee" Dunstedter from Eddie's regular weekend Carl Greer Inn pipe stint in Sacramento was called back from its LA journey because of a telephoned bomb threat. The plane landed far out in the field (in case there had been a bomb) and the couple had to scramble for the terminal on foot in a heavy rainstorm. But their luggage had already gone on to Angelville, leaving Eddie and Vee in somewhat damp condition until their next try, a day later.

**In Syracuse, New York, citizens are up in arms over talk of tearing Loew's theatre down. With Keith's and the Paramount (former Temple) consigned to the steel ball, the Strand and Empire long gone, Syracuse suddenly became aware that the last and most beautiful auditorium in town where concerts, operas and plays can be properly presented, is in jeopardy.**

**Herald-American columnist Mario Rossi has added his support to the "save Loew's" movement with an article which stated "If Loew's is destroyed, we will have nothing left in Syracuse that provides an eminently artistic background for theatre." Too bad Rossi wasn't around three years ago when "organ broker" yanked the 4-20 Wurlitzer practically over night—after local enthusiasts had put months into its restoration.**

Bill Coffman, back in the USA after a rewarding sojourn at the Panama Hilton 3-27 Wurlitzer, describes one of his maintenance projects on the instrument as "one of the fastest console rebuilding

jobs on record." Sensing that the console pneumatics and contact blocks were about to "go", Bill prepared replacements in advance and on a Sunday evening stayed up all night to rip out the stop keys, worn pneumatics and contact blocks from both stop rails. The worn parts were in place and wired in by five PM Monday—just in time for Bill to go to his room, change to his playing outfit and play the beast until 2:00 AM Tuesday!. Bill figures that going without sleep for 32 hours was worth it; he left a much sounder organ for the next guy to play.

*Q. David Bowers, whose "Put Another Nickel In" is a comprehensive and authoritative volume on pre-juke box coin-operated music machines, is busily engaged on a history of theatre organs. He's seeking photos of home installations for a chapter dealing with the present status of the theatre organ. Pix should be glossy, clear, contrasty, non-returnable and should have a suitable caption describing the instrument, location and owner. The more info, the better. The BOMBARDE will forward any photos designated for Mr. Bowers, who is currently engaged in a move to the West Coast—including his disassembled style 260 Wurlitzer and a number of roll-playing mechanisms. It seems Mr. Bowers doesn't play.*

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Jim Orcutt was wondering what to do with it. It wasn't as though Jim was hurting for an organ to play; he is regularly employed playing a full theatre 3-10 Robert Morton in a Tulsa church several days a week. But he heard an organ was for sale and he couldn't resist. Jim is now the proud owner of a mint-condition 4-rank Barton with Marimba, Chimes, Orch. Bells and Chrysoglott. A Wurlitzer Tibia had been added. He located it in the long dark Palace theatre, Fayetteville, Arkansas, the last in-theatre organ in Arkansas. Several truckloads later he had it all packed into his pad and was wondering where he would find space to set it up. What a delightful problem! Incidentally, the voices are Tibia, Vox, Trumpet, Flute and Diapason—no String.

In Baton Rouge, La., the Paramount's restored 2-6 (voluminously extolled in our last two issues) is currently being played by Dolton McAlpin who is described as having an uncanny ear for the Jesse Crawford style. That's the way a former organist started out at the same Paramount 36 years ago—Randy Sauls. Which completes the cycle. Lew Williams describes the trap system on the 2-6 as one of the most versatile. Pedal traps may be coupled to the accompaniment manual first touch and vice versa. That system makes an accompaniment cymbal, for example, available even if the manual has no cymbal stop key.

From Akron, Ken Richards informs us that Ken Alexander is doing nicely during intermissions at the Loew's Akron Wurlitzer, which has been back in service just a year.

And from Rochester, New York, Dave Howarth reports that over 800 hardy souls braved a miserable blizzard to hear Eddie Weaver's late February concert for the Rochester Theatre Organ Society, the one-time Palace Wurlitzer's debut in its new permanent home, the Auditorium Theatre. Eddie noted the storm conditions with a wishful *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*. Eddie Weaver is no stranger to Central New York, having studied at the Eastman School of Music. He met his wife, Marion, while playing in a Batavia theatre. She was the cashier. "I thought she had money," says Eddie.

The 3-13 Wurlitzer in the Omaha Orpheum (see story in April TO-BB) got a workout late in April when the University of Omaha Student Centers and Lectures group sponsored a "Midnight Slapstick" program with Bill ("Gabby") McCoy accompanying the filmed antics of onetime Keystone Kop, Charley Murray, in a 1922 comedy entitled *The Four Orphans*. Bill travels for a plug-in builder but had access to pipes during his formative years. He now becomes a "wind merchant" at the push of a starter button.

*Variety* stated that Gloria Swanson was set to introduce two of her most celebrated films at the New York Beacon theatre on May 8, the early "talkie," *The Trespasser* and the silent *Queen Kelly*, the latter with Lee Erwin (of WLW *Moon River* fame) at the recently restored Wurlitzer. The mag refers to the Beacon as "The last of the great movie palaces," reports Lloyd Klos. The show was being promoted by the New York Chapter which rented the house for a flat \$1000 and set admissions at \$2.50, says the showbiz journal.

Eddie Dunstedter is dicking with management of the newly refurbished Minneapolis Civic Auditorium for an appearance in June (14th or 28th) with the Minneapolis Symphony ork for a pop concert stint. When it was suggested that he should "open" the now-repaired and partly relocated Kimball, Eddie asked, "How can I 'open' it? I did that back in the '20s—when it was first installed."

In El Paso, Texas, John R. Thomas was doing a beautiful job at the Theatre Organ Club of El Paso's pride and joy, the 3-15 Wurlitzer. His audience was a Wurlitzer club, plug-in variety, which had come en masse to the Plaza theatre to be stupified by "the real thing." But there was something terribly wrong with the PA system; it was sputtering from the speakers and generally punctuating the music with bursts of what the slip-stick boys refer to as "white noise." The trouble

was traced to Jim Connor's German Shepherd, Toby, who had parked his ample poundage on a nice soft nest of PA cables while waiting for his master. Normal dog activity was enough to start the static.

New Jersey-based Leroy Lewis, champion of the visual pipe organ bar installation, visited relatives in El Toro, California, during April. The organist, who with Ted Campbell introduced "black light" on the moving parts of Wurlitzers is currently developing a most unusual instrument—a Hammond wedded to an Artisan plus a real windblown Wurlitzer-scale Tibia (built by Wicks). The total effect will be "black lighted." This will be Leroy's "cocktail bar" organ and it's even money that West Coasters will be experiencing it within a year. He's currently playing in a New Jersey bistro.

Inspired by a particularly awesome performance by Martha Lake, young Eric Zeliff (16) of Madison, New Jersey, decided to design her a "dream organ." From a look at the stoplist it's quite evident what kind of horrendous literature has saturated the young man's mind—organ magazines!

#### The MARTHA LAKE SPECIAL

3-9 OPUS 1396

RANKS (really!)

Main  
DIAPASON KAZOO  
KLARINET KLOTZ  
FLUTE FUBB  
VIOL d'BENSIE  
VIOL d'BENSIE CEL.

Solo  
TIBIA MARTHA  
ABYSSINIAN STRINGED OBOE  
CONTRA SNARL\*  
TUBA HORRENDOUS\*

Double sets of usual traps and percussions.

Specials: MARIMBA MIRABILIS  
TUNED BEER BOTTLES

EFFECTS: Moose call, Bensie call, Chlo-e call, Factory Whistle, Fog Horn, Jet Exhaust, General Cancel (Abandon Ship!), Major Disaster, Sforzando Superfluous

\* Unenclosed (barroke)

Mrs. David Marr, widow of the Marr and Colton Organ Company's founder, recently observed her 84th birthday in good health. She lives in the home her husband built for her in Warsaw, New York, and enjoys the company of her cat, "Puffy."

Columnist George Grim, writing in his *I Like It Here* column in the Minneapolis Tribune, described impending concerts by E. Power Biggs and Virgil Fox in the same week as a "battle royal of organ music . . . as the two men pull ranks on each other." That phrasing was no accident of verbiage; Grim was once a theatre organist. From a 3-manual Barton to a 4-manual Underwood! Progress?

In Marion, Ohio, ATOEr Howard Burton was thinking about a project which would double the in-theatre organ



NEW HORIZONS LOOM — Howard Burton was the last organist to be featured by Tri-State Theatres at the Cedar Rapids Paramount Wurlitzer (shown here) from 1959 to 1962. He has a 2-9 Geneva in his home.

potential of his corner of Iowa. A small group of enthusiasts, of which Burton is the nucleus, maintains the organ and holds informal sessions at the Cedar Rapids Paramount 3-11 Wurlitzer, the only operating organ in a theatre for miles. Now Burton has discovered a

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## FIFTH GRADER BUILDS PIPE ORGAN, continued

member that Debra Johnson was attempting to cover centuries of organ innovation in a three month period. When we say she started from scratch that tells only a part of the story. Until the project loomed, her interest in music consisted of a vague desire to play the guitar. But she has had no more musical instruction than that available in school.

She worked out a keying system involving rubber bands in place of the more common spring-loading of pallets. And she learned that modern foam products aren't as leak proof as old-fashioned leather for facing pallets. She finally used chamois leather.

The Johnson family is what might be called a closely-knit group. There are five children and their parents practice "togetherness" in practical ways. In this case, when time ran short and there were still many problems ahead, Debra's problem became a family problem. There was much midnight oil burned in order to get the instrument ready for the competition. In fact, when it was delivered to the school to go before the judges, the paint was still tacky.

Charles Johnson readily admits there were times when he wishes that he'd never suggested the organ project. In fact, he wasn't serious about it. But daughter Debra took it as a challenge, and once started, there was no turning back. Debra has an inquisitive mind, an abundance of stick-at-itiveness and a positive and outgoing personality. Once she had been "turned on" she knew she had to finish.

Not that there were not moments of doubt. She actually went through five stages of organ building experimentation before she finally hit upon a workable combination. And always the "science fair" date loomed to spur her on. For awhile she toyed with the idea of using a toy balloon for an air pressure regulator and reservoir. But instead, she voiced her pipes to take the full output of the vacuum cleaner, and thus eliminated the reservoir.

Through all the anxious days Debra's mother, Lee Johnson, encouraged her daughter and helped ease disappointments. And no one was more excited than Lee when the finished product worked. There it stood, a 13-pipe chest atop the console afforded by the greatly altered toy piano, it's gold-tinted wooden pipes and black finish gleaming. And it gave out a deep-throated Tibia sound.

One of the last jobs was "fine tuning." Because Debra is not a musician she had no idea as to how it should be tuned, nor did she even have a pitch pipe to start her off. She solved that problem by inviting a girlfriend to the house, a voice student with an accurate sense of pitch. The girl sang the notes while Debbie worked the stoppers in the pipes.

There was considerable suspense while the judging was being done at the science fair, which included projects from most all the schools in the Valley Oaks District system. The competition was stiff. But finally Debra's pipe organ was adjudged the winner in its class and today she will show visitors a desk pen set with an inscription engraved which proclaims Debra a prizewinner.

Meanwhile the prize instrument adorns a proud spot in the Johnson living room and visitors are frequent. Every once in a while dad stops on his way through the living room and looks at the instrument with a "I hope I never have to go through that ordeal again" look on his face. But then, parental pride shines through and he adds, "Y'know—I'm mighty proud of Debbie."

But Debra is already making plans for when she reaches the 7th grade. "You know—I've heard about a type of organ called a 'mighty Wurlitzer.' Now—perhaps. . ."

## VOX POP, continued

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theatre with gaping chambers where pipes used to be and a willing management. If things work out, Burton and his group will install the rare 2-9 Reuters theatre organ they have been getting into shape in the empty chambers.

The new Sierra Chapter (former TOES) scheduled an ambitious movie night

at Grant Union High School in Sacramento on April 29th. Chapter "veep" George Seaver was set to cue a Ford Sterling comedy and the well-remembered 1928 hit, *Lilac Time* with Colleen Moore and Gary Cooper, the instrument being the famous 21-rank instrument assembled in 1938 from Wurlitzers removed from theatres in Redding, Calif., Reno, Nevada and San Francisco.

Over Easter Dean McNichols "did it again" when the little Friends church in Bell, California, filled to overflowing to see the old silent *King of Kings* and hear Dean's accompaniment at the two-deck (style D) Wurlitzer. Encouraged by the turnout for his November 1966 concert, the film was planned as a special Easter presentation. That Dean's accompaniment hit home was evident in the audible sniffing heard above music during the scourging scenes. One scene called for a gong, which the organ doesn't have. Dean solved that one by cueing the projectionist to turn up the sound track at that moment to hear a gong struck in 1928. No one was the wiser. Dean says he enjoyed playing the movie; "it's much easier than a straight concert."

Gene Featherston reports from Cincinnati that the 3-10 Uniphone organ in the Rivoli theatre has been kept busy so far this year with no let-up in sight. In February the Central Indiana Chapter had John Muri playing a silent film, in April

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**'BRASS' REEDS**  
J. L. HAGGART  
Organ Builder

"All 'brass' reeds  
in a pipe organ are  
very much alike  
—the main difference

being in what might be called the 'embouchure'—if I may make an analogy with orchestral brass"—is how veteran organ voicer and inventor James H. Nuttall explained the difference in timbre of otherwise similarly constructed "brass" pipes. He pointed out that the shape, size, air passage, diameter (and bevelling) of the various brass orchestral instrument mouthpieces (such as Cornet, French Horn, Trombone and similar Saxhorns) are generally comparable with corresponding organ counterparts, with shallot size, shape and air passage diameter shaping the resulting sound which is built up by the resonant pipe attached. Thus the originator of the Kinura, Krumet, English Posthorn and Valvular Diaphone, increased understanding of the mysteries surrounding the beating reed type of sound source, by comparing it with something known to every school boy—the familiar Boy Scout bugle.

## Closing Chord

**Jim Braun** arrived in Los Angeles from Seattle seven years ago with one burning ambition—to own a theatre organ. He was well schooled in the technique of servicing and restoring player pianos and he soon built up a reputation for excellent work among player piano aficionados, and a remunerative trade.



Jim Braun

The profits went into buying organ parts and a building in which to house the instrument. Jim was a perfectionist and he tackled his project accordingly. Every spare moment was devoted to the organ project. Not being financially able to buy the kind of building he felt his instrument deserved, he did most of the construction work himself on an addition to

### VOX POP, continued

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it was a concert by Kay McAbee with a silent movie cued by Tom Ferree (the Uniphone's owner and champion). For May it was to be a joint ATOE-AGO chapter meeting and the possibility that some AGOer would play some classics on the Uniphone. Reginald Foort had proved it a worthy instrument for concert music with a surprise rendition of Bach's *Tocatta and Fuge in D Minor* during his stint at the Rivoli last December.

In San Francisco, Lyn Larsen was having the time of his life, and loving it. Lyn, now the staff organist at the Avenue theatre (the silent movie house with the big Wurlitzer), is a "natural" at cueing silent films reports Dewey Cagle (Dewey spends his weekends there). Audiences are getting larger and part-owner Ed Stout credits Lyn's close-fitting, sensitive scores to a large extent.

his Inglewood home. Being something of a "loner," this was no great sacrifice. Nothing was more important than getting his organ playing. Jim was never what might be termed a joiner; he sometimes attended TOC and ATOE concerts but never became affiliated with any organ club. There just wasn't time.

Jim teamed with Chuck Smith and the project was well under way, with the building completed and much of the organ installed, when Jim learned that he had Leukemia. That was about two years ago. But at a point where many people are inclined to give up, Jim pitched in with renewed vigor. Now he had real reason to hurry because he wasn't certain as to how much time he had left. He never complained to friends or even let on how ill he was and many learned the extent of his acting ability only by the notice in the newspapers.

Jim Braun, 25, died on March 17, leaving a mother and father in Seattle. The future of his 22-rank Wurlitzer and its special building in Inglewood, California, was assured by the determination of Jim's partner, Chuck Smith, to complete the project. Chuck plans to make the organ and building available to organ clubs and concert groups, with rental fees to go toward a lasting memorial to Jim Braun—a Leukemia Foundation which will bear Jim's name.

\* \* \*

**Bart Wright** was a tall, skinny guy with eyesight so bad that he had to turn out the console lights in order to see the picture on the screen, ever so dimly. Reading from the rack was out of the question, so he memorized thousands of compositions needed to cue silent movies. If his personality seemed somewhat lacklustre it was because he was a shy man, but one who, nevertheless, made an imposing figure in the glare of the spotlight as he played a solo or took his bow. In the middle and late '20's his gaunt figure and sharp features might be seen at a number of Central New York theatres before the show or on break—but never at the console unless it was spotlighted because as previously mentioned, he did all his playing sans console and rack lights. That is a summary of the surface impressions one was apt to get of Bartholomew P. Wright, but there is lots more. If one took the trouble to cultivate "Bart" Wright, a warm and kindly human being materialized, one who loved music and the theatre organ. And when he started playing a theatre organ, an entirely different Bart Wright came to the fore. He used the tone colors of the solo-voiced Marr and Coltons in the Syracuse Empire and Regent theatres with a flair for drama but always in excellent taste. His weaving of "leit motifs" during silent film scores was a study in both arranging

and composing, because Bart Wright was gifted not only with an ear for music but with the ability to compose themes and settings as needed.

He first gained public notice playing opposite Paul H. Forster and Lew Baker at the Syracuse Empire, although he had played in other houses (the Syracuse Eckel and the Rome Capitol) for some years. His theatre career came to full fruition when he replaced Herbert Henderson shortly after the opening of the Syracuse Regent's 3-13 Marr and Colton organ in 1927 (for several years the largest TO in Syracuse). There he played not only for silent movies but presented top-flight "sing-alongs" (then called "organlogues"). He left the Regent to open Harry Gilbert senior's atmospheric neighborhood Riviera theatre on South Salina Street in 1929, a "talkie" house but one where Bart's "Organlogues", played on a 2-6 Wurlitzer, flourished for the next few years.



Bart Wright Circa 1926

As the demand for organists lessened in the early '30's, Bart could be heard playing his song slide novelties at the Syracuse (later the Civic) theatre's 3-10 Marr and Colton, where burlesque was the usual program. They even gave him marquee billing along with a succession of "top bananas." During this period he often returned to his beloved Regent organ for late-night broadcasts from WFBL. Little was heard of him after 1935, the year the Regent was remodeled minus the organ, which was junked.

Bart Wright was the son of a Syracuse police chief, and had two brothers, Leroy and George Wright (the latter was a doctor). In later years, Bart turned to education, and the last five years of his life were invested in teaching at a home for retarded children. In earlier years he had quite a number of organ students but only two can be recalled. One, a gifted singer and entertainer, Jackie Shannon, quit the secular life to become Rev. John Shannon. The other, Stu Green, showed up years later as one of the editors of this magazine.

Bart Wright died on May 1, after a brief illness in the city he left but briefly in his span of 75 years.—Syracuse, New York. He would like the way the Herald-Journal headed his obituary; "B. P. Wright Dies: Theatre Organist."