

# CONVENTION DIARY 1968!

LOS ANGELES, 13-16 JULY

Selection of the Ambassador Hotel as headquarters for ATOE's National Convention in Los Angeles was a most appropriate location for an organization such as ours.

This sprawling edifice was built in the middle 1920's as a posh social center for the glamorous stars and satellites of the silent screen. At the time of construction, the area surrounding the hotel property was covered by homes of the movie colony (this was before the Beverly Hills section was built up) and the hotel, upon opening, became the "place to be seen." The bungalows on the hotel grounds were designed as residences, with hotel service, and housed many of the big names of the movie industry.

At one time a private zoo was located at the Ambassador. The zoo contained many trained animals which were used by the producers of pictures.

The swimming pool and diving boards have been used hundreds of times for sequences in movies. Other facilities, such as the lobby, arcade, and the Cocoanut Grove have also appeared extensively in movie sequences.

The Cocoanut Grove has been the scene of many of Hollywood's most glamorous parties which were highly publicized by the nation's press. The most auspicious occasions were the many Academy Award presentations held at the Grove. Of these, the awards of 1938-1939 in which *Gone With the Wind* won nearly all categories, no doubt marked the highlight in the history of this world-famous room.

The Ambassador at one time contained two theatre organs. One, a Wurlitzer 235, was installed in the Cocoanut



Grove and served there many years. (This organ was later moved to Radio WHEC, Rochester, N. Y., and then became the property of Dick Hull. (See Volume VII, No. 4 of *Theatre Organ* magazine, Winter 1965.) The other instrument was a 2-5 Morton, installed in the hotel's small theatre. The disposition of this instrument is somewhat clouded. The theatre itself was probably the first true "Art" house in the country.

Without a doubt many ATOE conventioners, especially the younger members, were unaware that practically all of Hollywood's silent stars were habitués of the Ambassador. While the famous people were making news at the hotel, their movies were being accompanied throughout the world by the instruments we, the ATOE, are now striving to preserve.

It was upon this scene of nostalgia and glamour that the ATOE descended on July 13, 1968.

Arriving at the Los Angeles Chapter's registration desk, it was soon evident that Bob Carson, Convention Chairman, had planned well and chosen his staff carefully. The entire meeting of four days was tightly scheduled and worked out smoothly. Twenty busses were chartered to shuttle registrants around the sprawling Southern California area. The bus routes were plotted out in such a manner that everyone would see the most possible studio and home installa-

tions without jamming any one at a time. On the whole it worked well, although one bus driver made a wrong turn and would have ended up in Bakersfield, a hundred miles away, except for an alert member who, knowing the area, pointed out the error. This group received a grand tour of the extensive Burbank-Van Nuys area, but heard very few theater organs on their initial "crawl."

The annual banquet, held at the Cocoanut Grove on Sunday evening, nearly filled the famous room.

Ben Hall was official M.C. of the program with his usual good humor and appropriate remarks. ATOE's President Dick Schrum conducted the business portion, announcing the newly elected National Directors, Lee Erwin, Fred Kruse, Ben Hall, and Dorothy MacClain.

President Schrum then named the honorary member of the year as being Richard Simonton. This statement literally brought down the house with applause. Simonton was one of the organizers of National ATOE (the initial charter meeting was held in his home). His assistance and advice was instrumental in placing ATOE on the road to success. The assemblage at the annual banquet, realizing Dick's devotion and efforts in behalf of the organization, showed its approval with a generous ovation. The National Board of Directors had chosen Mr. Simonton by unanimous vote.



## CONVENTION (Continued)

The new National Officers were then introduced. These include Dottie MacClain, Secretary-Treasurer; Dick Kline, Vice President; and Al Mason, President, with his wife, Betty, acting as National Secretary.

The roll call of chapters indicated that the largest representation ever accomplished at a national meeting was present. Of the 36 chapters listed, 30 were polled as having members present. Introductions also disclosed that ATOE members from Japan, Hawaii, and Great Britain were present, as well as several from Canada. Most of the top names in Theatre Organ performing and recording were also seen at the banquet.

After concluding the formal business, retiring President Schrum turned the rostrum over to Ben Hall, who began by asking pipe organ owners to stand as the various "brands" were named. This proved to be very informative, as over 25 different makes of theatre organs were represented. Wurlitzer and Robert Morton led the field by a clear majority.

Ben made several of his inimitable announcements, some bona fide, others designed for laughs. In the humor department, he proved once again his ability to place the meeting in a gay mood.

The members were treated to a performance by the George Carl Duo, assisted by organist Don Lee Ellis, who also played background music during the banquet. The Duo opened with a pantomime routine that embodied elements of all the greats in this comedy form. It was enthusiastically received. The balance of the act consisted of typical night club jokes, although well done. The pantomime portion will be remembered as the best part.

This act was followed by a surprise appearance of Martha Lake, well-known organist from the Northwest. Miss Lake played several standard tunes, continually improvising, making key changes, and using deft registration changes to enhance the numbers. She then teamed with Ben Hall, who sang the famous "Orphan Annie" radio show theme. Ben has promised to learn another tune some day. The banquet, always an annual highlight, was enormously successful, mainly due to the hard work of convention chairman Bob Carson and his committees.

**MORE CONVENTION  
PHOTOS and CONVEN-  
TION VOX POPS**  
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## Action Awards

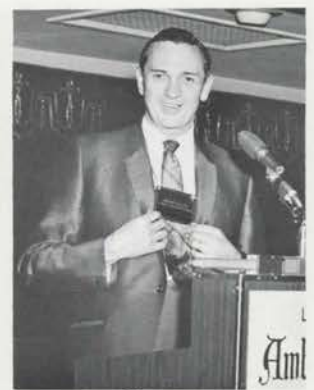
### MEN OF THE YEAR—Old, New, Honorary



Schrum



Mason



Simonton

### WAITING—for Buses, for People, for Action



### BOARD—but not boring!



ANNUAL BOARD MEETING sessions kept hard-working members and attending chapter chairmen from some Convention events. An account of the lively proceedings will be carried in the October issue of TOB.

### 'MY WIFE SAID ...'



RON PIGGOTT of Toronto, Canada, producer of the organ film premiered at the Convention, poses with two of the film's bit players: organist Gaylord Carter and Ben Hall, and Burton Ford, Ontario.



WELCOME, ATOE!—The Wiltern marquee announces 1968 Convention's big finale, Harold Lloyd's 1923 classic "Safety Last" with Gaylord Carter's organ accompaniment. This last event, the only one open to the public, packed the 2,400-seat Wiltern.



KEYBOARD ENTERTAINMENT'S Bob Arndt (second from left) makes pitch at firm's exhibit in Ambassador lobby. A long-time TOB advertiser of its Howard seat reproduction, the company surprised many by the variety of other organ parts it also produces (see page 8).

## Artists



Carter



Dunstedter



Leaf



Beaver



Hazelton



Dell



Baker



Beacham



Larsen



Rio



Duffy



Kibbee

## Convention Artists and Organs

The 1968 National ATOE meeting was beyond a doubt the most comprehensive ever held, from the standpoint of the number of topflight organists and organs.

Space is too limited to describe each program and the details of the instruments used. Instead, we have listed the artists who entertained the ATOE members and the organs they used. Needless to say, every performance was first-rate, and the instruments were in the best possible condition.

### DON BAKER

4-34 Robert Morton, Lorin Whitney Studio

### DWIGHT BEACHAM

3-13 Wurlitzer, Haven of Rest Recording Studio

### PAUL BEAVER

3-16 Robert Morton, Universal Pictures Studio

### GAYLORD CARTER

4-37 Kimball, Wiltern Theatre

### HELEN DELL

2-15 Wurlitzer, Tubes Inc. Warehouse (Chuck Baker)

### JOHN DUFFY

3-26 Wurlitzer, Bob Carson Residence

### EDDIE DUNSTEDTER

4-37 Kimball, Wiltern Theatre

### BILL FIELD

3-19 Wurlitzer, Iceland Skating Rink

### TOM HAZELTON

4-61 Robert Morton, Elks Lodge

### GORDON KIBBEE

4-36 Wurlitzer, Dick Simonton Residence

### LYN LARSEN

4-37 Kimball, Wiltern Theatre

### ANN LEAF

4-37 Kimball, Wiltern Theatre

### DEAN McNICHOLS

2-8 Wurlitzer, Friends Church, Bell, Calif.

### JIM MELANDER

4-27 Wurlitzer, Harvey Heck Residence

### ROSA RIO

4-61 Robert Morton, Elks Lodge

### BILL THOMSON

2-10 Wurlitzer, Rialto Theatre, Pasadena

### GEORGE WRIGHT

2-10 Wurlitzer, Rialto Theatre, Pasadena

## Universal Movie Studio Tour

The Universal City Movie Studio Tour was a hoofbuster (despite the partial transportation by trams), but the studio Morton was worth the effort. It has the dearest surroundings of any organ heard on the tour, but the subtle artistry of Paul Beaver made it really sing. The tour through the studios and around the back lots was climaxed by a short stop at a hilltop restaurant where

real beer was served in plastic "glasses" (which all were stowing as souvenirs; Kay Chenoweth packed away the six glasses emptied by Stu Green). At one point the conventioners were confronted by an 8-foot tall Frankenstein, who was more interested in signing autographs than spreading terror. The conventioners were bussed back to the Ambassador late in the afternoon, many with tired (if not sore) feet.

## "My Wife Said, 'That's Enough,'"

On the agenda of the ATOE annual meeting an "American Premiere of a Theatre Organ Movie" was listed as one of the events. This turned out to be a delightful color film, titled "My Wife Said, 'That's Enough!'" made by Ronzen Productions, Toronto, Canada. Ronald Piggott was the producer.

The picture featured Bernard Venus of Buttonville, Ontario, Canada, and his trials and tribulations of fitting a theatre pipe organ into his home. The movie touched on the history of ATOE via an interview with Dick Simonton. A brief review of theatre organ history was included, with Gaylord Carter shown at the Brooklyn Paramount Wurlitzer, cueing a cowboys and Indians silent movie sequence. Producer Piggott managed to further include a sequence showing a

volunteer crew rehabilitating an organ in a theatre. His production covered the theatre organ hobby very completely, and his unusual camera angles and bits of subtle humor enhanced the film. It is a well-done, smoothly edited picture, and while it may not be a sensation as a general release, it is a wonderful documentation of our hobby, and should certainly manage to get prime time booking on the non-commercial TV channels as well as playing time on the better commercial channels. The film has enjoyed wide distribution viewing in Canada with good notices.

Ronald Piggott, the producer, has promised to give THEATRE ORGAN BOMBARDE a complete story concerning the making of his film. This will be published in a future issue.

CONVENTION (continued)

## Harold Lloyd Tops Convention At Final Event Movie—'Safety Last'

The 1923 Feature Comedy "Safety Last" starring Harold Lloyd, has been described by students of the silent screen as the finest of Mr. Lloyd's many excellent efforts.

It is fast-paced throughout with each situation allowed to build, creating the maximum of merriment and suspense. The timing of each gag is flawless. The film is ageless since the comedy seems as fresh as it was 45 years ago. And the famous scene in which Lloyd is on the face of a tall office building has the same nailbiting effect on the audience today as it did then.

"Safety Last" is an ideal film to exploit a theatre organ in its purest form. Gaylord Carter took full advantage of the film and the resources of the organ to involve the audience in an unforgettable experience.

At the conclusion of the picture, Harold Lloyd appeared onstage in person. He explained some of the techniques used in producing "Safety Last."

Many of the 1600 persons in the audience were surprised to find out that Mr. Lloyd used no "doubles" in the making of his pictures and that the office building sequence was actually photographed in downtown Los Angeles. Mr. Lloyd captivated the audience with his easy manner and friendly way of speaking. He was obviously delighted with the reception given "Safety Last."

At the conclusion of this presentation, the 1968 convention was adjourned. All participants left the Wiltern Theatre with memories never to be forgotten.

Special mention is due the following chapter committeemen—Chairman, Robert Carson; Registration, Louis Lynch; Program, Richard Simonton; Transportation, William Exner; Publicity, Stu Green; Finance, Jack Shemick; and Printing, Tom B'Hend. Under the guidance of these chairmen, over 100 chapter members were active in the preparation and conduct of the convention.

## EXHIBITORS AT CONVENTION

Each year the electronic organ and recording concerns take interest in ATOE activities at convention time. This year, more than any other, this interest manifested itself in several highly interesting showings. We wish to acknowledge the following:

**Hammond** was represented at the banquet with a model X 66 ably played by Don Lee Ellis and Martha Lake.

**Conn Organ Corporation**—demonstrated by Buzz Olson, Pliny Allen, and Don Baker. Used a 641 from the factory with Pipe Speaker attachment.

**Thomas Organ Company**—demonstrated by Bill McCoy and Byron Melcher, assisted by Shin Tsukui of Tokyo. Three models were used.

**Baldwin Organ Company**—demonstrated by Michael McLaughlin and John Duffy.

**Gulbransen Organ Company**—demonstrated by Skip O'Donnell.

**Rodgers Organ Company**—demonstrated by Andy Crow and Jack Richardson, using a 33E model. Rosa Rio was also furnished a Rodgers 33E for the Music Workshop.

An interesting exhibit by **Keyboard Entertainment Products Manufacturing Co.**, of Des Moines, Iowa, was set up in the lobby to offer parts for theatre pipe organs, such as magnetic parts, gaskets, name plates, and pneumatics, among others.

**Concert Recordings**, specializing in Theatre Organ music, Lynwood, California.

**Malar Recordings**, Glenwood, Calif.

**Relay Records**, Seattle, Washington.

### CONVENTIONEERS!

Have you an anecdote or a photo of an artist or an incident at this year's Convention which is not covered in this issue? Follow-up coverage is planned for the October issue, so send us such contributions to:

A. T. O. E. PUBLICATIONS  
P. O. Box 7404, Bitter Lake Station  
Seattle, Washington 98133

## Blower Failure Forces Program Cancellation

A highlight of the recent National Convention was to have been a presentation of George Wright at his studio 3-30 Wurlitzer organ. Unfortunately, the blower motor burned out shortly before the convention date, forcing cancellation of this eagerly awaited event.

From time to time Wright had noted that the voltage supply from the power company had been below normal. He had brought this to their attention.

However, in preparing the instrument for ATOE presentation the organ was on for long hours to permit regulation, tuning, and other adjustments. Since the voltage supply was abnormally low, the blower motor was subject to continual overload causing the windings to burn out.

Valiant efforts were made by George and a crew of volunteers to repair or replace the burnt motor, but time ran out before this could be accomplished. As all owners of Spencer blowers know, the motor shaft is a single shaft from the rear motor bearing clear through the blower fan blades. In the case of the Wright studio blower, it was found that this shaft was not of standard size and to replace the motor would have required alteration of either the rotor section of the motor or modification of the blades and all support bearings. In other words, a complete custom-made arrangement. Time did not permit the accomplishment of this task.

Another method was considered; that of rewinding the existing motor, which would have required the dismantling of the blower, removing the motor to a shop suitably equipped and then reinstalling it. Again time was against the crew, since the blower had been installed and walls built around it afterward. The matter of knocking out walls and then proceeding with the mechanical work proved to be too time-consuming to have the organ ready.

The last-minute blower failure was a bitter disappointment and a personal embarrassment for George Wright as he had done considerable work on his studio and the organ for the presentation and was looking forward to showing off the magnificent instrument to the ATOE membership.