

who had been one of the Hope-Jones "originals" at Elmira, N. Y. — the legendary James H. Nuttall. A lifelong friendship sprung up and Frank joined Nuttall in the latter's organ installation and maintenance business, an arrangement which lasted through the rest of the "golden era" and well into the next decade. Early in the '20s Nuttall took on another former employee of the Robert Morton factory, Lee Haggart, who learned the fine points of organ building from Nuttall and acquired a solid appreciation of Frank Rogers' musicianship; when installation work was slack, Frank doubled as a theatre organist, playing vacation and fill work for the Venice Amusement Co., on a string of Wurlitzer styles B, 185 and 210 in the chain's beach town theatres. He often subbed for such remembered organists as Jamie Erickson, Mel Ogden and in Los Angeles for Eddie Horton at the 5-33 Morton in the Kinema (later Criterion) theatre.

Frank Rogers never left the organ business. He always managed to find enough maintenance and installation



— Photo Copy by Bill Lamb

FRANK D. ROGERS is shown here as he supervised the piecemeal removal of the style 285 Wurlitzer from the Metropolitan/Paramount theatre in Los Angeles in 1961. Ironically, he was in the crew which installed the organ in the mid-20's.

work to keep him going, right up to the time of his retirement a few years ago. Even then he always had time to help an enthusiast struggling to set up a few ranks of home-based pipes on a

shoestring budget. One of them was Stu Green who later became an editor of sorts. Frank helped him remove an 8-rank Morton from a beach town theatre in the mid-'50's and move it to storage, a project which came to naught other than exposing Stu to the vast store of theatre organ knowledge and information Frank carried about in his head. Even in retirement, his services as an organ expert were in demand. When it was decided to sell the LA Metropolitan/Paramount style 285 (4-34) organ piecemeal in the early '60s, Frank was hired by the owner to supervise the dismemberment and put price tags on the treasures which came out of those chambers. It was a bittersweet job for Frank because he had installed the Wurlitzer when the Metropolitan opened in the late '20s.

He died on Sept. 20, 1968, at the age of 80 while living with his daughter and son-in-law at Paradise, California.

He was often described as "the grand old man of the theatre organ." Frank Rogers earned that title many times over.

NORTH TEXAS HOSTS SOONER STATE

"HEY — LET'S HAVE A PARTY!", someone suggested as we neared the first birthday of the Sooner State Chapter. So what could be more natural for a party-hungry group of ATOERs than to have an 'organ crawl' visit to another chapter. Our chairman, Ron Willfong, sent a hasty post to Charles Evans of the North Texas Chapter and they kept the postman busy for some five to six weeks delivering plans back and forth for our visit. In spite of our short time allotted and the many installations to visit, they did a tremendous job of organizing our trip.

Ron Willfong had made two 'grand-slam' devices so that the world at large could identify us on our visit. First there were the two four by ten foot banners attached to either side of the bus in red, white and blue reading AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN ENTHUSIASTS; and secondly special white sweatshirts with ATOE silk-screened on the front in blue and Sooner State Chapter on the back with



Sooner State Chapter members posed by bus. John Beck from North Texas is at left.

two red stripes on each side. How's about them patriotic color arrangements, friends?

Excitement and anticipation showed through the sleepy eyes of our members as they arrived at the Harvey Young Airport in Tulsa at 6:30 a.m. on March 29th, where our treasurer, Joe Crutchfield, more or less runs the joint. We took our coffee pot, a case or two of mixer — er I mean soda pop, boarded the bus quickly and went scurrying down the highway toward 'Big D' right on schedule. Stopping at Atoka for breakfast, we viewed the wonderful collection of antique nickelodions in the bus station concession room. Almost every type of antique coin operated piano, organ, orchestra, accordion and violin is here — you name it, get your nickel out and you'll hear it.

We arrived at the Baker Hotel in Dallas shortly after noon. Checking in was very fast thanks to the advance arrangements made by Bob Weddle. John Beck rode on the bus with and briefed

us on the local sites while Charles Evans drove ahead and served as a guide for our bus driver, Buddy Evans.

Our first stop was at the home of the E. M. Johnsons. Their home was designed to house the organ and we were given a complete tour of the specially designed installation. Mr. Johnson briefed us on the history of the instrument then asked Charles Evans to demonstrate the organ. The members were then invited to try the instrument — a 3-10 Wurlitzer, Special Opus 2110. This 1930 vintage came from a church in Corpus Christi and had no percussions other than the chrysoglott and chimes and none have ever been added.

The second installation was at the home of Charles Evans who has the beautiful "Moon River" organ, a 3-12 Wurlitzer from the WLW studios in Cincinnati. He favored us with some of the music heard on that program and during that era. Again, our members were invited to play the instrument and were so impressed with everything, we

got a bit too far behind schedule on our crawl.

We took a 'drive-by' with a quick 'look-see' at John Beck's home where we saw a newly poured concrete floor and some pre-fab vaulted ceiling arches. This should be quite an impressive installation when completed.



Chambers at Dale Flannery's home — note glass shutters.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale Flannery in Garland were our third hosts. Dale showed us his truly delightful 3-15 Wicks theatre organ with a horseshoe console from a St. Louis Baptist Church. Traps and other percussions came from a Cadiz, Ohio theatre. The shutters are made of heavy glass and the toy counter and percussions are positioned up front and shown to excellent advantage with colored lights playing on them. What to watch — the percussion goodies chattering away or the organist. The installation was completed in just three months to be ready for our visit. We were both impressed and delighted.

Stop number four was at the home of Rodney Yarbrough in Celina, a home that is so musical it 'sings' a welcome as you approach the front porch. Rodney, technical advisor for the North Texas Chapter, had his mother put a player roll on the beautiful little 2-4 Robert Morton that was given to him by his friends in the chapter in 1967. Then the Sooner State Chapter bunch put two of their professionals to work entertaining, Ray Elmore at the organ and Joe Crutchfield at the player grand piano. As they tired, others helped to keep the little Morton going including Phil Judkins, Charlene Roberts, Dennis Minear and Joanna Weaver. Several members

NAT'L CONVENTION JULY 3-7



of the North Texas Chapter had joined us during the evening. It was nearly midnight when we said good bye to a remarkable young man and fine technician, Rodney Yarbrough.

The end of a perfect day and a good night's sleep to prepare for the next day — well almost a perfect day. It seems that on this particular week-end, our hotel was besieged with countless numbers of young people attending the Young Democrats Convention. I do hope in passing, that the friends of Charlie and Delores FINALLY found them. The last time they went down the hall yelling their names at top volume level was about 4:30 a.m. Now I know the real meaning of the generation gap. I'm too damned old for this all night foolishness!

Up the next morning bright and early — well early anyway, we had a hasty side of beef for a "light" breakfast before we met our genial host, Jerry Bacon, assistant manager of the Capri Theatre in downtown Dallas. Jerry has done a fine job of repairing and maintaining this beautiful Wurlitzer 235. A jam session with members from both chapters was followed by Jerry pulling out all the stops and giving out with a thunderous and rousing march to wind up the session. We made a fast pass at the hotel, checked out, boarded the bus and headed for our luncheon where we were the guests of the North Texas Chapter. Like I said, this Texas hospitality is something else.

Our final installation of the week-end was the home of Mark and Nola Kenning in Richardson. We had a brief tour of their self-designed, and for a large part, self-constructed spanish style home which houses the giant 4-17 Robert Morton formerly installed in the Ritz Theatre in Tulsa. Mark is a professional musician and teacher and I'd venture to say, one of the best musicians in this part of the country. We sincerely hope that you both enjoy possession of the instrument through the years as much as we enjoyed hearing you play it.

It was late afternoon when we boarded our homeward bound bus, reluctant to leave but most grateful to all the fine and generous people in the North Texas Chapter. In large glowing letters may we say, A BIG HEARTY THANKS TO YOU, OUR NEIGHBORING NORTH TEXAS CHAPTER. We're looking forward to returning your hospitality.

A suggestion to all chapters who have not been on an organ crawl. Call your neighboring chapter, pick yourselves a week-end and go find out what wonderful people you have in your near-by chapters.

— Photos and Story by Joe Crutchfield

The North Texas Chapter was delighted to host the Sooner State Chapter. During their all too brief stay, they listened to and viewed five Dallas area residence organ installations (Dallas area because our membership spreads over five counties). We were sorry that the time limit of their trip prevented the Sooner State Chapter from hearing, among others, the Wurlitzer Publix #1 in the Palace Theatre.

One of the biggest surprises was the impressive amount of talent per capita displayed by the Oklahoma folks. It was truly astonishing to see and hear the way in which any one of them could walk up to a strange organ and produce beautiful and often unusual registrations with exceptional competence. Although they are a relatively young chapter, they are coming on strong.

Such a marvelous, cram-packed day and a half. The Sooner State Chapter will be welcomed back to Dallas at any time.

— John Beck

BILLY NALLE

(Continued from Page 19)

organists dare attempt to any degree because improvisation is a separate art form in music, and must be studied. It is not the routine variations on chords we hear church organists playing on Sundays, but rather something which takes years of practice and experience to do well. It is an understatement to say that Billy Nalle does this well. In short, he is a genius while being at the same time a sensitive human being whose interest is to make any audience an integral part of his program, to make them feel that they belong in his music.

This reviewer not only notes the feeling for the music that Billy Nalle imparts, but also an exquisite taste in registration that permits just so much at any one time to do the job in the most successful manner. Only twice did we hear the full organ and just then for brief moments because the power of more than one-hundred and sixty ranks can be overwhelming in the confines of the ballroom. Judging by the enthusiasm of the audience, we can surmise that Billy will be back at Longwood and we hope that day will be very soon.

For information of tourists wishing to hear the Longwood organ, it is played by its resident organist Clarence Snyder every Sunday afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m. Admission is free of charge for all concerts.