

years and provided a much-needed outlet from the humdrum of everyday living. In fact, the beer can organ enjoyed a life of more than ten years, on and off.

During the same period Art did a stint with the Austin Organ Company as assistant sales and service rep in Virginia, a job which saw him doing considerable maintenance and installation work. Between 1953 and 1959 he did the same for the Wicks Organ Company, first in Virginia and later in Florida where he lives now. While he was thus engaged Art Stopes was honored by the American Academy of Organ with a Charter Membership in the organization and a Certificate of Merit "for services rendered the community through organ music." No reference to Art's beer can organ was made by representatives of the Academy when they conferred these honors, but we'll wager there were a few chuckles among the dignitaries who knew.

In recent years Art became interested in electronics and took a correspondence course which won him diplomas, first in radio and television engineering and later in TV servicing. Now he's taken up "do-it-yourself" aviation and is building a "Volmer Jensen 22," a 2-place amphibian plane, a new twist which came about when he joined the Experimental Aircraft Association. Art Stopes is the kind of guy who always seeks new challenges, yet never forgets the old ones — like the beer can organ.

What finally became of it?

Alas, the beer can organ is no more! When Art tired of his "show biz" sideline he found himself accepting fewer and fewer engagements. The beer can organ's final gasp in public was heard during a performance at the Florida theatre, Jacksonville, in the early '50s. After that, the two large packing crates were stored in Richmond, Va., where, after a few years of inactivity, the instrument was scrapped. Thus ends the saga of the beer can organ.

Yet, in retrospect, Art Stopes looks back on the years of barnstorming with his "refugee from a brewery" as the most colorful of a varied career. And no one who ever sat down to play the beer can organ would ever forget what took place when he got up from the padded beer keg which served as a stool; even though no hands were near the manual, the organ would bid "adieu" with a chorus of "How Dry I Am." Art had wired a switch into the keg stool which activated a motor-driven cam programmed to play the tune when the player left the stool. Somewhere he had heard the old vaudeville motto, "Leave 'em laughing!"

Closing Chord

JAMES ALLEN ORCUTT

Jim Orcutt knew he had to play organ by the time he was 15, after hearing the 3-11 Kimball in the Empress theatre, Anchorage, Alaska, where the Orcutt family was then living. Jim later came south and gravitated to Chicago where he played plug-ins in cocktail bars for 10 years. There was also a four year period as pianist with a dance band which took him to "just about every town in the mid-west with a population of at least 20,000" said Jim. He is best remembered as the organist who won the audition held to select an organist for the Cathedral of the Christian Crusade, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Jim's home town (see the August 1967 THEATRE ORGAN BOMBARDE). Jim was first on the list and played the ten-rank Robert Morton theatre organ installed in the church's broadcast auditorium so appealingly that the selection of Jim by the music committee was made without their hearing the others on the list. But Jim was the nervous type. He just couldn't stay put. A year after his appointment in Tulsa, he showed up in Hollywood, playing a Hammond in a rather sleazy bar. That didn't last long because Jim decided to return to Tulsa and resume his church organ work and also take a job selling

electronics in Tulsa. By then he was deeply in debt and tried "moonlighting" in an attempt to catch up. It proved too much for him and a breakdown landed him in the hospital for several months. Shortly after his release, he told the BOMBARDE only three weeks before his death, he married a long-time friend, a gal he had known for many years. There was a brief session as a dance band pianist and Jim returned to Hollywood, "this time to



stay." But he didn't stay. He dropped from sight and even at the bar where he was supposed to start playing a plug-in they didn't know what had become of him. He had been offered a playing job in Butte, Montana, and was probably on his way there when he was taken ill. We received word from his mother that he had passed away in Warm Springs, Montana, after a very short illness. He was 36. Interment was at Coweta, Oklahoma, near the Orcutt family home. Ironically, his first pipe platter for Concert Recording is in release.

FRANK D. ROGERS

Born in Helena, Montana in May 1888, Frank Rogers came to the West Coast in the early days of the century. In 1906 he started his lifelong love affair with the pipe organ by getting a job at the Marshall Bennett Organ Co. (Spokane) as an apprentice during summer vacations. It was a very necessary step; he needed the money to pay tuition for his last two years at Whitman College in Walla Walla. He graduated in 1908, with honors in both piano and organ. The theatre organ age was already making faint rumbles; the first use of an organ to accompany films which Frank recalled was at the Mike Gore theatre at 3rd and Main in Los Angeles. It was a small Estey roll player located behind the box office so the cashier could change the rolls. That was in 1906.

Upon his graduation from college, he started doing organ maintenance work for Bennett in Spokane. One of his assignments was a 7-rank Estey in the Klemmer Theatre, often played by a quiet young lad named Jesse Crawford. Then he moved south and got a job with the Robert Morton Co. in Van Nuys, California which covered the span 1913 to 1918, and completed Frank's education in the mechanics of organ building. Then he met a man



GALLONS OF THE GOLDEN FLUID are represented by Art's handiwork. Tops of the bottom-octave wooden Bass Flute pipes can be seen behind the inspired facade of onetime "empties". Wind pressure: 4". Controls for the "instant transposer" are directly above Art's left hand. No, the "M.C." doesn't stand for Marr & Colton, this time.

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