

American Theatre Organ Etiquette

by Ray Brubacher

A.T.O.E. has grown and how it has grown. From its inception in 1955 to the present it has spread in all directions. I have witnessed its growth from almost the very beginning until now when we are almost overwhelmed with the increase in membership. We have progressed from an "enthusiast" classification to the more dignified standing of society. The organization is to be congratulated for making this change which no longer places us in the "gee dad I'm an enthusiast" rating.

With the increase in membership there has been an increase in the number of people who have purchased and installed theatre organs in their homes, studios, old theatres and even garages. That they have undertaken at considerable expense and sacrifice the job of installation and maintenance of the instruments is highly commendable. However, I am afraid that many of our number have in some way or another forgotten that these people however generous they may be with their in-

struments and their time are still entitled to live their lives as private individuals. Constant intrusion is rude from outside sources who feel that because they have a membership card in A.T.O.E. they hold the key to the front door of any member owning a theatre pipe organ.

In the area which I represent there are a great number of home installations, many of them being outstanding. Many of these people have obligations to their businesses and work schedules that will simply not permit their being as generous with their time as they would like to be. There have come to my attention reports from many of these people that they are periodically subject to intrusion often at late hours of the evening by callers who have not had the courtesy to write a note or to make a phone call before presenting themselves at the front door for an impromptu organ recital. Everyone likes to be accommodating, but there is a limit. Many organ owners who are like myself fans of the first order have chosen to follow a tighter policy than would ordinarily be necessary. This is one reason why so many of our more well known professional theatre organists are not members of A.T.O.E., because in trying to be "the nice guy" they have been taken advantage of on so many occasions that

they refuse and rightfully so to join the crowd.

Members on vacation or anticipating a trip into an area populated with theatre organs should if possible drop a brief letter or card to the owner asking if it will be convenient for them to accommodate those who would like to see the instrument in question. Enclose a self stamped addressed envelope for a reply, especially if you do not know the person you are corresponding with. Upon arrival in the city or town where you wish to visit, confirm things with a phone call. In this way you are not taking advantage of someone who perhaps has made other plans but feels that someone has come a long way and then decides to alter theirs to be accommodating at a personal inconvenience.

It is my observation that if people would be more considerate in their pursuit of the hobby, there would be better relations within the entire structure of A.T.O.E. This would encourage many of our number to lift the ignore and get tough policy that members are running into.

In anything there must be moderation. Let us begin to apply it to our common interest so that everyone may share in a portion of our theatre organ heritage. □



Forty Candles for Loew's Jersey Theatre

Allen Rossiter (right) ATOS Vice President and Sec'y-Treas. of the New York Chapter, joins in a three-handed cake-cutting ceremony with Joseph Sesta, Deputy Mayor of Jersey City (left) and Nat Bernstock, genial manager of Loew's Jersey Theatre in public ceremony celebrating the palatial theatre's fortieth anniversary.

Ben M. Hall, ATOS Board Member and author of *THE BEST REMAINING SEATS*, presents a copy of the book in behalf of the New York Chapter to William Roehrenbeck, Director of Libraries for Jersey City as Nat Bernstock, well-loved theatre manager, looks on.

