

SIoux CITY WOMEN RAISE \$25,000.00

by Lee McGinnis

My romance with worthy instrument goes back many years, to the era when it was in regular use as an integral part of the entertainment then in vogue in this area, however, this episode had its opening in May of 1968.

The Orpheum Theatre, in which this organ was a part of the original installation, was a magnificent R.K.O. Orpheum Theatre, completed in 1927 at a cost of \$1,750,000. Extensive remodeling of the theatre eliminated 4 stories of balcony, but most of the spacious lobby has been retained. This, though, is not a story of the theatre.

I am a full time organ technician. In May of 1968, I received a call from the manager of the Sioux City Municipal Auditorium requesting immediate action. Work was already in progress and it would be necessary that the organ be removed before completion of the remodeling job, or it would be lost forever. The Wurlitzer Pipe Organ had been donated to the City of Sioux City by the Iowa Public Service

Company, owners of the building. It was the wish of I.P.S., as well as the City Council of Sioux City, that this venerable instrument should be preserved, however, no funds were available and there was no available storage space to house this quantity of material and keep it safe from damage. It was finally agreed that we would remove the console, as the orchestra pit was to be covered; the balance of the organ then could be left intact in the chambers until funds could be provided to complete the job.

During the fall of 1970, the Sioux City Womans Club, an affiliate of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, took on the job of raising \$25,000 to remove the organ from the theatre, restore its working parts and re-install in the Sioux City Municipal Auditorium. This fund raising task was engineered by Mrs. Donald D. French, President of the Club; Mrs. R. Nason Friend, past President and currently chairman of the Community Improvement Committee, and Mrs. William Lohry, Chairman of the "SAVE THE ORGAN" campaign. When the kick-off meeting was held in February 1971, \$12,500 had been pledged to the fund and at this writing, the goal has been reached.

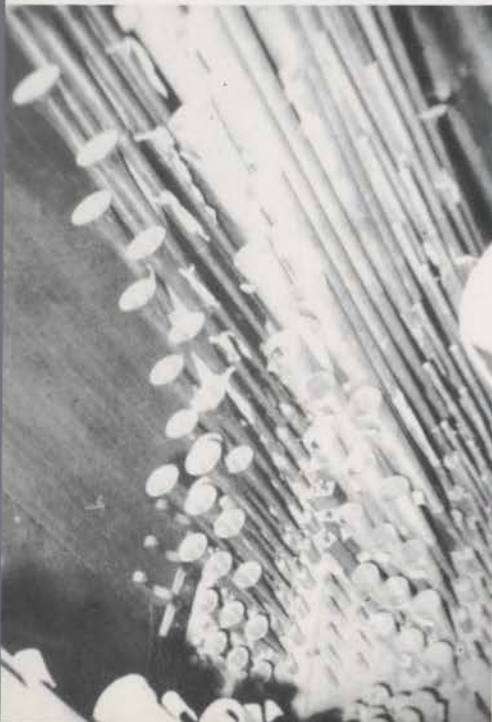
I have been working on the restoration of the console in my shop since November 1970 and since this project has to be worked around a schedule of church organ maintenance contracts, which my wife Marie helps me to operate, the progress has been slow. At this time, the ivory keys have been sanded and polished to give them their original brilliance, the black keys have been sanded and repainted; 112 stop tablets have been polished; new felts installed throughout and new silver contacts have been installed. 283 primary pneumatics; 224 stop tab pneumatics; and 31 piston relay pneumatics have been releathered and reinstalled.

As of, August 1971, I have two

full time assistants my wife, Marie, and Rick Darrow (a recent graduate from Morningside College with a major in organ) and several other people doing part time work making pneumatics and other odd jobs. We have the organ completely dismantled and at this time we are in the process of releathering all the pneumatics in the main chests, offset chests, percussion instruments, relays, switches, etc. It is our hope that the installation can be completed some time late in 1972.

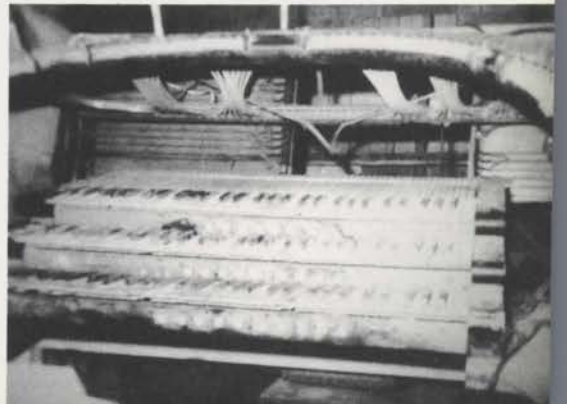
This, I believe, is a unique situation in the history of the theatre organ. The Sioux City Womans Club is a single club with a membership of 900 and the "SAVE THE ORGAN, INC." project is a civic undertaking which, when completed, will be a part of the City of Sioux City and will place this

View of pipe chamber including Kinura, Trumpet, Tibia, Tuba and Orchestral Oboe.



Portion of percussion section.

Console being dismantled for rebuilding.



historic instrument in its rightful position in the cultural life of the community. This project was assumed by the Womans Club after several other organizations had failed to obtain community support.

During the early 1930's, the period in which vaudeville was being phased out in this territory, I was a professional musician and it was my privilege to have performed both on stage and



Keyboards after refinishing.



Console during process of re-installing stop tablets — pneumatics have been releathered.

in the pit in the Orpheum Theatre. The organist, Pierce Wall, (now deceased) was a personal friend and on many occasions, I have heard this grand old Wurlitzer fill the theatre with sound before it was finally relegated to the forgotten past. This instrument was much on my mind as I did not wish to see it destroyed and thereby a very important piece of Sioux City's musical history lost forever. It is a rare privilege for me to be a part of this restoration program and also that it is a part of my regular profession. □



Hollywood Cavalcade

Directed by Lyle W. Nash

ESTHER RALSTON TALKS: "Different films pleased me in different ways. Which did I prefer? 'The Case of Lena Smith' gave me my first big chance to be an actress. Von Sternberg created some fine films at Paramount. *Old Ironsides* was enjoyable. I felt honored to head the cast of *American Venus* Paramount turned out a lot of escapist fare during the twenties. The films were fun to make. They served the movie public well. It was a happy time for me."

ACTRESS ER worked long and hard. Between 1926 and 1929, when films were switching to sound, she appeared in 16 Paramount films. That's about as fast as they could be produced.

PICTURES which fans of ER remember include: *Something Always Happens*, *The Prodigal*, *Lonely Wives*, *Mighty*, *Wheel of Life*, *Fashions for Women*, *Quarterback*, *The Blind Goddess*, *Children of Divorce*, *Kiss for Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, and *Lucky Devil*. Not too many epics but films that make for lasting happy memories.

DEMANDING CRITICS found ER worthy of attention. About "Figures Don't Lie" the reviewers said: "... a thing of charm ... a lyric of laughter ... the gaily spontaneous action of ER ... the girl is good and improves with every picture." When ER made *The Betrayal* with the great Emil Jannings, the critics said: "... she wins sympathy as the erring wife and shows herself superbly fitted for heavy dramatic roles all too soon."

LASTING FAME. The night I called N.Y. information and asked for ER the operator said in extra soft tones: "You mean, that Esther Ralston?" "Yes, information," "I replied," the one who was in films long ago." The phone operator said she fondly recalled her. I had the number in a flash.

DOCUMENTARY film maker Robert J. Flaherty summarized movies best when he said: "Film is the language

of the eye." Nanook the hero of the 1922 Flaherty production eventually starved to death in the far north.

ALTHOUGH the odds are 100 to 1 it won't come to pass, a brash young college film maker thinks he might talk Mary Miles Minter into sharing some of her thoughts of the last 50 years about Hollywood. MMM lives in quiet retirement but has been extra kind to a couple of young film buffs recently.

WHO IS WHERE?—Readers Report contacting Patsy Ruth Miller at Ocean Drive West, Stamford, Conn. They write to Stepin Fetchit at 203 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill. ... Irene Rich used to live at 940 Monte Drive, Santa Barbara, Calif. ... Singer-composer Pinky Tomlin used to have an office at 9889 Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills, Calif.

HEDDA & LOUELLA by George Eells is the biography of the two Hollywood gossip columnists. Here is powerful cinema drama you always thought might be true but never imagined you'd see in cold print. Never has an industry been so harried as by these two illiterate, highly opinionated and vindictive women. One queen accented kindness; the other cattiness. Both were repressed. They massaged the egos of greedy executives. Film greats such as Chaplin, Welles and Brando mostly ignored the much-feared gossip mongers. Eells says Louella will be 91 years old this autumn.

ORGANIST Gaylord Carter, who is celebrating his 50th year as a motion picture theatre pipe organ great, travels to Australia for a concert tour in September and October.

COMMENTS, contribution and questions are welcome at P.O. Box 113, Pasadena, California, 91102. □