

VISITORS!

by Bette Peterson

Holding up a picture, the music teacher at our local Junior High school in Melrose Park asked, "Does anyone know what instrument this is"?

My 12 year old daughter Cheryl answered, "A pipe organ . . . We have one at home." And that's how it all started. What could I say when she asked if she could bring her music class home to see our pipe organ?

Until that point, the music teacher had acted quite skeptically when Cheryl mentioned having a pipe organ at home. To protect her image, I gave permission to invite the class to see the organ — all the while thinking to myself that this idea would never get off the ground. Was I ever wrong! A few days later the head of the music department telephoned to ask if we really did have a pipe organ, and if the students would be welcome to view it.

Arrangements were made for Cheryl's class of 25-30 to tour the installation . . . the only catch was that it wouldn't be fair to the other students unless ALL the other music classes could visit . . . So-oo, all 800 students in the school came to visit during a 6 day span.

Over and over I reminded myself of the ATOS goal of promoting the theatre pipe organ, and this was certainly an untapped field.

As each group entered the living room where the console is located, I told them the history of our 46 year



Students entering house after the two block walk from the Junior High School.

old 2/7 Estey theatre pipe organ. Originally it was one of the 13 pipe organs installed in the Masonic Temple building in the Chicago Loop, home of the famous Oriental Theatre. Masonic Lodges used the instruments, several of which are now located in private homes.

In order to show the various parts of the organ, we split each group, and Cheryl would take half of the young people to the basement where they could view the blower, air regulators, and most of the percussions. From there they could look up to the first floor pipe room through the cut-out in the floor beneath the chests.

I remained at the console and activated the percussions, and sound effects for the youngsters, who seemed to enjoy seeing the Drums, Glock, and Xylophone apparently working "by themselves".

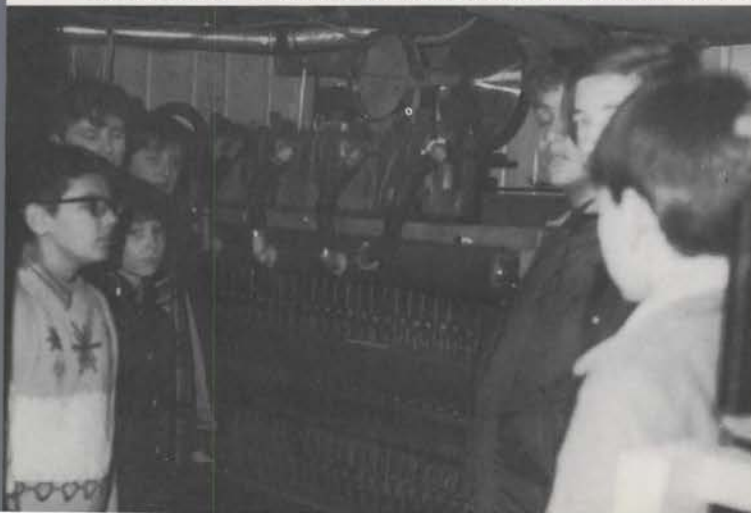
The other half of the group would view the pipe room, containing the

harp, bird whistle, snare drums, and ah-ooga horn. After switching places, the groups got back together for a question and answer session. Several were courageous enough to try the "beast".

"Cool", "Neat", and "Wow" were some of the comments heard later back at school. Now, hardly a week goes by that I don't get a telephone call or meet someone at the store asking, "Aren't you the lady with the pipe organ . . . my son or daughter just raved about the monstrous jig-saw puzzle . . . Is it really as big as they said"?

Our efforts were more than repayed in knowing that there are now 800 more young people who know a pipe organ is not just a piece of furniture with grinning teeth. They left us, in awe of all the work involved, so all you technicians out there in ATOS-land, take heart. You'll be appreciated yet. □

A look at some of the percussions located in the basement chamber.



Bette Peterson demonstrating the Estey 2/7 Theatre Pipe Organ.

