

## SALUTE TO SIERRA

# The Roving Chapter

"a little traveling music, please"

Sacramento, the state capital of California, is home base for the Sierra Chapter, but their interests often take them to Pine Grove, Reno, Nevada and Death Valley, distances of up to 500 miles. Sierra members feel that any event of less distance is strictly a local affair.

Sierra Chapter commenced life as T.O.E.S., — Theatre Organ Enthusiasts of Sacramento. It was chartered March 8, 1967 as Sierra Chapter (charter 29) of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts and incorporated as a non-profit, educational organization under the laws of the State of California on October 17, 1968. The incorporators were: Ray Anderson, Robert Longfield, Donald Zeller, Jim Hodges, Harley Sommer and Carroll Harris.

In 1969 Jack Sogorka was chairman, George Seaver vice chairman and treasurer and Mrs. Donald (Catherine) Zeller was secretary. The Board consisted of Larry Weid, as past chairman, Ray Anderson, Robert Longfield, Carroll Harris, James Hodges, Harvey Whitney (brother of Lorin) and Donald

Zeller. Historian was Peggy Pharmer, photographer was Clint Savage and Robert Longfield handled publicity.

In 1972 Robert Longfield is chairman, Larry Weid is filling the vice chairman and treasurer spot left vacant in March by the death of George A. Seaver, Secretary is still Mrs. Don Zeller. Board members are Ray Anderson, Arthur Bobb, Carroll Harris, Dale Mendenhall, Charles Shumate and Hal Wilmunder. Historian is June Anderson; Clint Savage photographer and Carroll Harris tries to keep the ATOS before the public.

Sierra Chapter has several fine theatre organ installations in the Sacramento area. These include the 4/16 Robert Morton at the Sheraton Inn (formerly Carl Greer Inn). The original location of this instrument was the Music Hall, Seattle. There is a 4/21 Wurlitzer/Kilgen in the auditorium of the Grant Joint Union High School. This organ has been used by the chapter for silent movie presentations. It was installed in 1938 and 1939 while the now famous George Wright was a student at the school. The instrument was built from three smaller organs. The 3/12 Moller which once graced the lobby of the fabulous Fox Theatre, San Francisco, is now installed on the property of Mr. Hal Wilmunder in Carmichael, a Sacramento suburb. Several other noteworthy home installations are owned by Sierra members.

Not to be outdone by West Penn, or other chapters, the Sierra Chapter takes more than a passing interest in railroading, especially steam. In describing three home installations we find pipe organs and live steam engines sharing the billing.

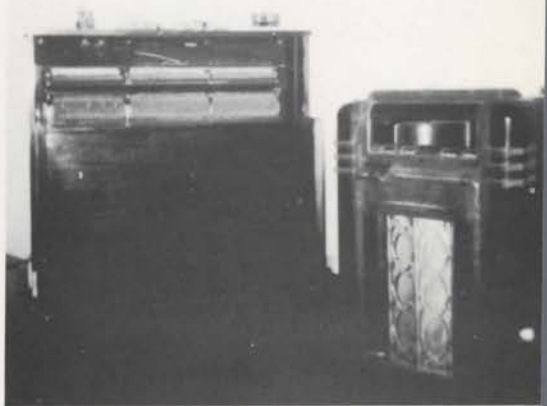
Janice, Jim and Jim, Jr. — the Welches of Pine Grove, California, (a mountain community 60 miles east of Sacramento) own a 2/22 Harris straight organ. They acquired it from an educational TV station's money-raising auction several years ago. At that



Outgoing and first chairman of Sierra Chapter, Bob Longfield, is seen with Bay Area organist Ray Frazier (in front) at the Grant Union High School's 4/21 Kilgen consoled Wurlitzer.



Jim Welch, Jr. at the console while his father looks and listens. In the background, one of two lathes in their well equipped machine shop. — (Welch Photo)



Wurlitzer piano and vintage 78 RPM Wurlitzer juke box adorn Beeks' music room. Room also contains a player grand piano. (Beeks Photo)

The console of the Welch 2/22. On the right is a chest, complete with pipes, to be installed in one of the instrument's two chambers. — (Welch Photo)



Milon Thorley (kneeling) and Hal Wilmunder admire Milon's live steam model locomotive which burns coal and pulls one man riding on its tender (note pad on tender). Hal is leaning on his 3 foot gauge CAMINO-CABLE & NORTHERN 3 spot which once hauled sugar cane on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu. The railroad operates on weekends from June through October. Camino is just off US 50 east of Sacramento.

(Larry Weid Photo)







From left to right — Jim (KHIO/KEWT) Hodges, Tiny James — with a coat!, Clyde Derby and Emil Martin.  
(Clint Savage Photo)



Clyde Derby, complete with mod haircut, is a study in concentration at the George Seaver tribute on April 16, 1972.  
(Clint Savage Photo)



Tiny James studies his "cheater sheet". Note, the lack of coat. He and Emil Martin brought forth laughter from those present when each shed their coats.  
(Clint Savage Photo)

Sierra Chapter members also travel short distances to concerts. One such trip was to hear Dave Reese at this pizza emporium with pipes in Martinez, California. Quite a place as one can see by the background in this picture with Dave at the console.  
(Clint Savage Photo)



time there was only the console and some 18 pipes. In 1971 the installation was "completed" in a combination machine shop and musical warehouse on their property. Besides the organ, the building contains the makings of a live steam locomotive and at least one car.

Milon and Betty Thorley shipped a 2/4 Wicks to Sacramento in 1967. It had been installed at Concordia Teachers' College, Seward, Nebraska. In 1971 it was installed in the garage of their suburban home. Sometime in 1973 it is going to move east some 40 miles where a new home is being constructed on five acres of Sierra foothill land. The increased elbow room isn't just to prevent the organ from 'bothering the neighbors'. Milon owns a live steam model locomotive which he is getting tired of finding help to lift into his VW for transportation to the live steam club's tracks for a few rides. He is going to build some 900 feet of track around the ranch — reports have it that one neighbor is already worried about the noise from the train — they may be soothed by the Wicks.

As mentioned, Hal, Betty and Leslie Wilmunder own a piece of the long gone San Francisco Fox Theatre — namely the 3/12 Moller lobby pipe organ complete with roll player. It is installed in Hal's former workshop on his Carmichael (Sacramento bedroom community) property. A toy counter has been added with a Harp-Celeste and Xylophone to go. But, Hal, Betty and Les don't have the miniature railroad blues. They own the CAMINO-CABLE & NORTHERN railroad located in the El Dorado County Community of Camino. Camino is in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and is a center for the growing, packing and marketing of some of the best apples since Eve tempted Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Eva and Fred Beeks of Reno, Nevada, own a Wurlitzer/Smith theatre pipe organ, as well as a 'rare' Hammond Novachord. The pipes are a Wurlitzer Style D, first installed in the Dunsmuir Theatre, Dunsmuir, California in 1925. It was moved to Redding, California in 1930, where five ranks of Smith pipes were added. Verne Gregory, San Francisco lithographer and pipe organ lover, acquired it and in 1960 it was moved to the Beeks residence. A piano, from Oakland, California theatre organ-equipped



The Beeks' 3/11 Wurlitzer with Novachord along side. Pipe chambers are behind doors on each side of drape. Drape conceals the relay and mixing chambers. — (Beeks Photo)

neighborhood church, has been added.

Sierra Chapter lost its vice chairman and organist, George Seaver in March of this year. His passing was detailed in these pages (THEATRE ORGAN, June, 1972). George had one wish when it came time for the closing chord — no eulogies, but if any friends wanted to gather around a theatre pipe organ some place and play theatre music it would be all right with him. That is exactly what over three hundred of his friends did on Sunday, April 16. Three artists played the 4/16 former Seattle Music Hall Robert Morton. The instrument never sounded better. Don and Kathy Zeller and been there since 5:30 tuning and regulating the Morton to a peak of perfection. Jim Hodges introduced the artists which included house organist Clyde Derby, Norcal Chapter's "Tiny" James and McClatchy Broadcasting Company's long time organist and musical director, Emil Martin.

On the weekend of April 29 and

An unidentified artist tries her hand at the console of Betty and Hal Wilmunder's 3/12 Moller, originally installed in the lobby of San Francisco's late Fox Theatre. The organ has a working roll player. A toy counter has been added, and a Harp-Celeste and Xylophone are yet to come. The curtains hide the swell shade opening of one chamber. On the wall is an illustrated early-day newspaper article describing the organ's original installation. — (A Clint Savage/Harold Baxter Photo)







Death Valley Scotty's famous castle has a player grand piano in the lower music room and a Deagan Carillon in the clock tower. A circular staircase in one tower leads to a large living room containing a 3/15 Welte with grand piano and roll player. The castle owned by the National Park Service. — (Beeks Photo)

30 this year, the bulk of the Sierra Chapter membership traveled 1,072 miles roundtrip (all within California) to hear a beautiful fully restored 3/15 Welte complete with a Welte Mignon (?) Grand Piano. This unique installation is in the upstairs music room of the famed and fabulous castle constructed by Chicago millionaire Albert M. John-

The Welte console in Death Valley Scotty's Castle. Look closely between the console and the bench for a sample of the beautiful tile work used in profusion throughout the castle. It was all hand-made and imported from Spain. — (Beeks Photo)



son with his partner, Death Valley Scotty — a wild west show trick rider and full-time prospector. It was said by many that Johnson was Scotty's only mine but there are documented stories of saddlebags filled with quartz and wild spending sprees by Scotty long before he met up with Johnson. The secret(s) of Scotty's mining properties died with him in 1954.

The castle is now owned by the National Park Service. It is opened to visitors every day and a part of the tour is an impromptu organ concert, ala the concealed Welte player using a worn roll of "Valencia".

Sierra Chapter members, Fred and Eva Beeks have worked many hours and traveled many miles between the castle and their Wurlitzer equipped Reno, Nevada home to put the organ in pristine condition.

Chapter member Rex Koury, played an April 29 evening concert to over a hundred music lovers. The concert had its interruptions in form of a temperamental circuit-breaker in the primary power supply to the blower. In spite of this, and the fact that seating was on the floor, the chapter and its friends are ready for a repeat performance.



Solo chamber, Death Valley Scotty's Castle. (Beeks Photo)



The immaculately kept main chamber of the 3/15 Welte in Death Valley Scotty's Castle. — (Beeks Photo)

Fred Beeks at the console of Scotty's Castle 3-manual Welte console. (Beeks Photo)







James (KHIQ/KEWT(FM)Hodges emceed a Sierra Chapter silent motion picture presentation at Grant Union High School. Jim was responsible for the weekly half-hour broadcasts of live theatre pipe organ from the Carl Greer Inn's 4/16 Robert Morton. Following a change in ownership, use of the organ was resumed, and the live broadcasts began again July 28, 1972.

August 20 found chapter members on the move again. This time it was to Pine Grove, California and the Jim Welsh residence. The 2 manual, 22 rank Harris classical organ, installed in a former steel warehouse building, is what the sixty some members and guests came to hear after their annual picnic lunch. Hear they did, and who says one needs the Tibias, the Vox, toy counters and tremulants of a theatre organ to enjoy theatre organ music. Rex Koury played the classics beautifully and then turned to the 'pops'. In the words of the Chairman, Bob Longfield, "If you don't believe pops can be played on a classical organ, you sure missed the best of proof. Rex really had that poor Harris panting for breath." The living room Hammond also came in for its share of the Koury touch.

October 21 found the chapter members traveling to Reno, their annual trip to the home of members Eva and Fred Beeks. As has already been noted, Fred and Eva are the owners of a 3/11 Wurlitzer.

The Sierra Chapter not only travels far and wide for their own activities but some members will be found at almost any West Coast ATOS program. The Home Organ Festival, the annual electronic organ get-together held at Asilomar on the Monterey Peninsula, entails a drive of 180 miles in each direction for members.

If it's organ music, pipe or electronic, you can count on Sierra to be there! □

## VOX POPS



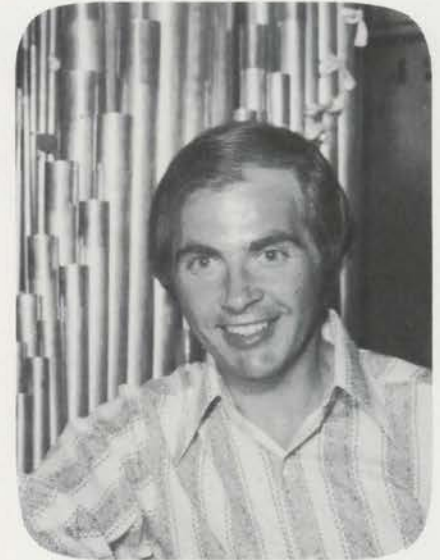
Conducted by Stu Green

*Readers are encouraged to submit interesting sidelights on the organ hobby (exclusive of chapter news items) material they believe will be of general interest about local organ activities and installations and the people who work at the hobby. We know "there's VOX POPS in them there chapters" and it only requires a 6¢ postcard to get it to VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can afford an 8¢ stamp, why not include a black and white photo which need not be returned.*

In the October issue of THEATRE ORGAN the Niagara Frontier Chapter's column described how a young organist from Syracuse, N.Y., took over the Riviera Theatre's Wurlitzer to sub for ailing Leon Berry, and on 24 hours notice. That's a big order, and all who reported on Karl Cole's pinch-hitting concert job were most enthusiastic in their praise of the Syracusan's performance. A little investigation revealed some interesting sidelights about Cole. He's been playing in the Central New York area for about ten years, and we recall that he participated in the final vaudeville-organ show which closed Keith's Theatre in Syracuse circa ten years ago, along with Luella Edwards and Paul H. Forster. Karl is now expanding his concert activities to areas other than home ground. ATOS 1972 Conventioneers will recall hearing him play during the Washington Marriott hotel banquet. He did a benefit concert for leukemia research in Doylestown, Penn., on Sept. 25, then a cameo bit at the famous Atlantic City convention hall ballroom Kimball 4/55 during the Delaware Valley Chapter's meeting

there on October 8th. And Shirley Hannum invited Karl to play a cameo spot following her joint ATOS/AGO concert at the Lansdowne (Penna.) Theatre later in October. He obliged with a Gershwin medley. He was booked for a Dec. 10 concert on the 3/11 Wurlitzer maintained by ESTMIN on the N.Y. State fairgrounds.

The off-console Karl Cole is also fascinating. He's an authority on antique cut glass, which he collects. He has \$1500.00 cut glass lamp sitting next to the plug-in Wurlitzer in his home, and he's happy to report "my music hasn't shattered it yet." Last summer he reports visiting a nudist beach and refused admittance because he was clothed. Recalling an old adage "when in Rome" he shed his toga and reported later that he blushed only until he hit the water. "Everyone should try it — at least once", says Karl.



Karl Cole 'midst Syracuse pipes. He blushed only while running for the drink.



"Wolves" that have been howling in the direction of youthful organist Carol Jones (and many a distant howl has been passed to Carol through the good offices of this column) can forget it: lovely Carol has been claimed, and she has a 1¼ carat sparkler weighing down a playing finger to prove it. The fortunate swain is a former Covina, Calif., neighbor and childhood friend by the name of Ron Walls, who also happens to be a talented organist. Ron made his initial pitch to Carol several years ago, then left California to seek his fortune. Recently, Carol played a concert for the Detroit Theater Organ