

NUGGETS
from the
GOLDEN
DAYS



Prospected by Lloyd E. Klos

In our annual February Valentine salute to the hard-working gals of the ATOS, we change our format and reprint two stories which appeared back in the good old days. The first was in the November 1926 issue of *Jacobs Magazine*, and is about Mrs. Jesse Crawford.

This charming lady and talented organist, Mrs. Jesse Crawford, has been playing in Chicago since a child. Of musical parentage — her father played piano, though now in the advertising business — she started her musical career at the age of three. At ten, she played piano sufficiently well to occasionally relieve her father at his theatre. Later, she turned to the organ and played quite a while for Ascher Bros. At the time Balaban & Katz took over its management, she was organist at the Roosevelt Theatre and was retained there as head organist.

Romance came along about a year later, when she met Jesse Crawford, world-renowned movie organist. Shortly afterwards, they were married. Then, Sam Katz conceived the two-console idea for the Chicago Theatre, and both Crawfords were featured there for over a year and a half, until the Chicago was placed on the circuit routing with the Upton and the Rivoli last winter, when Mrs. Crawford went to the McVickers. On December 13, 1925, another organist arrived, Miss Jessie Darlene Crawford, from whom much is expected, and not entirely without reason. I heard papa Crawford say, "We think the baby is musical because we can easily put her to sleep with record-playing." She prefers jazz piano records!

The romance, courtship, marriage, and the arrival of Miss Jessie Darlene have been events which the public considered their property, and many charming slide specialties have been created and performed in the Chicago on these topics.

Mrs. Crawford, besides her other activities, is quite a successful composer. Her recent ballad, "Prison of My Dreams", has been included in the Forster Music Publishing Company's catalogue.

Mr. Crawford thinks very highly of Mrs. Crawford's ability to play jazz, an estimate with which Chicagoans agree. In this respect, they make an admirable contribution, for Crawford handles the classic variety of music beautifully, particularly in the modern idiom. She will, of course, be with him in New York to open the much talked-about Paramount Theatre, and Gothamites are assured of a rare treat in listening to this gifted and attractive couple.

The second item appeared in the September 1925 issue of *Melody Magazine*. It was written by Irene Juno, Washington organist and correspondent of that periodical, following her visit to several Washington theatres to observe her contemporaries at work.

ORGANISTS! How do you appear to others when you play? How many types of organists are there? Have you ever thought of yourself as you play? Visiting a few theatres in the city we found one young fellow who made his appearance by leaping onto the organ and then to the bench from some dark opening on the stage (it was the morning show). After a little while, he stuck a small stick or match between two keys, which held them down, did a few notes with his feet while he lighted a cigarette, took a couple of puffs, put it out, removed the match and once more, some tunes came forth.

A visit to another theatre disclosed an organist who popped up from the pit, put on the light, tilted the mirror so he could see all of the front rows of seats, adjusted his grin, all set for action and then go up and down the keys, turning page after page of music, but his eyes never left the front seats, either via the mirror or directly.

It's a wonder one organist, who used to play downtown, didn't get a cramp in his neck. He kept his head crooked around so he wouldn't miss a trick in the house, and the bigger

the house, the more he turned. He didn't miss a thing, until one day, the management decided it wanted an organist to play the picture and not the audience.

Have you ever noticed the one who plays with elbows crooked out and all sorts of motions, including shaking his finger on a key? Wonder if that is supposed to increase the tremolo? And haven't you just been worn out watching the hard-working fellow with lights all over the console and pedals? He just works himself to death; tears the stops up and down, and kicks his feet around so that you can't find time to watch the picture.

Then, how quiet and restful is the fellow who slips onto the bench, turns on a soft light, and plays with the picture. The one who knows one pretty stop at a time, once in awhile, and depends on quality, not quantity in an organ, is appreciated.

One organist must have opened swell shades and crescendo and pumped out everything in the organ in one theatre I was in, for it gave such a crash I actually jumped right out of my seat. Then, with no warning, he dropped to a soft stop, and to my chagrin, I heard myself shouting at my companion, trying to tell her what it was all about! Organists who jump from FFF to ppp should have warning signals and not embarrass the patrons by sudden changes.

And the girls — God bless 'em! Who hasn't seen the cutie who puts down a stop, glances at the picture, then into the side mirror, and fluffs up her permanent wave; and the candy-eaters who play with one hand and eat with the other, and rattle the paper for accompaniment.

The organists are very much in the public eye and are all yelping for salaries in the One-Hundred Zone, but until they see themselves as others see them, they will fall short. It's the worker, not the one who just plays or shows off, who gets the good job.

GOLD DUST: These members of the Los Angeles Theatre Organists Club were playing LA theatres in 1925: HELEN DUFRENSE, Jensen's Melrose; LEILA ELLERY, California in Alhambra; EMILY HOFF, Strand in Pasadena; KATHERINE FLYNN, Pasadena's Florence; ELLA MILLER, Bard's Crenshaw Blvd.

That should do it until next time. So long, Sourdoughs!

LLOYD & JASON