
Closing Chord

Mildred Rice, wife of former ATOS national president, Stillman Rice, died in North Haven, Connecticut on April 3, 1973.

Mildred and Music . . . always they went together. Often in the hearts of those fortunate enough to know her, the two seemed to be one. She loved music and was ready to enjoy it at every turn. Always she was genuine, warm, generous, lovable; she just did not know how to be otherwise. These wonderful gifts in her sunny personality made music in others.

In 1963 I was introduced to Mildred and her husband Stillman by organist John Holtz when the Rices and I chanced to visit the Allen organ showroom in Hartford the same afternoon. Immediately I felt at home with them and we all talked music and theatre organ until we had put ourselves in a state of perilous hunger. In thinking back, I believe we anchored ourselves in solid friendship from that first encounter. We had a large number of mutual friends and each time we gathered at their lovely Connecticut home the number of friends increased as did our friendship each for the others. In large measure this process was the result of Mildred's loving ways with people. She drew out the best in us as we were drawn to her and, somehow, you always departed not only having had a marvelous time but also liking others more. From the earliest days, long before Stillman had become ATOS national president, she had loved the theatre organ for all the right reasons while she reveled in the music it can make uniquely. Unfailingly, she was involved in supporting its cause and worked with her husband to promote it into the "outside world." In all this, her way with people was given to promoting understanding, patience, appreciation and the long view of things. Never was she provincial and so, even when she was the least aware of it, she was a force for *unity*. She understood well that you cannot divide, fragment, undercut the welfare of music in general and theatre organ in particular and then expect them to have a future. She gave a quiet but potent example of how *and why* to work for music un-



MILDRED RICE

selfishly, an example we all need far more than we like to think. She lived the truth which insists that when you lose your unity in a cause, you lose your cause. She never lost perspective in these things and so left us all a challenge to rethink, re-evaluate *and remember*. To do these will be to honor a great lady properly.

Mildred and Music . . . you could not know the one without knowing the other. She was a lovely wife and mother, a lovable partner and an altogether satisfactory human being. When she died, she did what it has been said a good person's death always does: "Like the extinguishing of a perfumed candle, it recompenses the loss of light with the sweet odor it leaves behind."

Billy Nalle

Howard L. Peterson, well known Chicago theatre organist, died in Laguna Hills, California on April 17 or 18. He was 77. He played the WLS Barton as staff organist for 18 years and was featured in many Chicago theatres. He had played for the *Quiz Kids* and *Ma Perkins* radio shows and was arranger for Wayne King. Mr. Peterson also played over WJJD and at the Chicago Stadium. He cut the first organ record that Columbia made in the early 20's. CATOE member Frank May now owns the WLS Barton and had just prepared a tape to send Mr. Peterson of his old instrument when word of his death arrived. Mr. Peterson is survived by his wife, Avis Leone,

former operatic soprano, a son and two daughters, one of whom is Mrs. Richard Bunker, the classical music critic for the Los Angeles *Times* who writes under the name Melody Peterson.

Mrs. Avelyn M. Kerr died in Chicago at the age of 83 on April 23, 1973. Mrs. Kerr had played organ in leading Milwaukee and Chicago theatres during the twenties. While staff organist for the Wisconsin News radio station she operated a theatre organ school in Milwaukee which was equipped with a three manual Marr and Colton. She was the owner of Harmony Music Publishers Co. and had written more than 100 religious and other songs. Her membership application in CATOE was pending at the time of her death. She had written requesting to play a program for the chapter at which Don McNeil, who got his start in radio on her show, would be present. She is survived by a daughter and a sister.

Viloma Gaumer, pianist and organist, died on September 16, 1972 at the age of 68.

Born and reared in Fairfield, Iowa, she began her career as a pianist in local theatres there before the arrival of sound movies. She was then employed by major organ firms in Chicago and New York, selling the first organ to Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus which that organization used in its tent performances. After retiring in 1967, Miss Gaumer returned to Fairfield to live. She was a member of Local 802 in New York. □

WE GOOFED DEPARTMENT

In the General Index published with the December 1972 issue, the wrong title was applied to Leon Berry's Album. The correct title is: "LEON BERRY - LEON AND THE LION".

Leon reports to us that Audio-fidelity, 221 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 has purchased the record and will produce and market it.

Also photo credit to TOM B'HEND was omitted for the pictures in the "Mother Dedicated" article in the April, 1973 THEATRE ORGAN.