

Closing Chord

The passing of **Albert Mason** on July 25th came as a stunning shock to all who knew him.

His affiliation with ATOS began in 1964. Al entered the national ATOS scene in 1968. He served two terms as National President, guiding the affairs of ATOS through a critical and expanding period which required a straight thinking, driving force. Thoroughly dedicated to the purpose of ATOS, Al conducted our organization with wisdom and perception. His mild manner of speaking, peppered with philosophical quotations and witticisms, held his listeners attention. This not only added zest to any conversation but made him an eloquent spokesman.

Al served national ATOS well. After finishing his terms as President and Past President, he successfully ran for a seat on the Board of Directors, and was reelected to serve another term starting in July of this year. Previously and during these years he was active in the Motor City Chapter and the Detroit Theater Organ Club. In addition he has been publisher of **THEATRE ORGAN** since 1970.

Al and his wife, Betty, were given the Honorary Member citation in 1973, a tribute highly deserved.

As Convention Chairman, Al directed the recent 1974 National Convention to a smashing success. His health had been declining for the past several months, but his determination to make it the best ever drove him on to that goal. At the conclusion of the ATOS convention he tried to rest and relax but the tension and activity proved to have been too much. A heart seizure struck at 1:30 A.M. on July 23rd, he was hospitalized, and passed beyond mortal help at 1:30 A.M. on the 25th.

Mason is survived by his wife Betty, step-daughter Patsy, son Gerald and four grandchildren.

The ATOS, Motor City Chapter, and the world have all lost a wonderful individual as well as a fine mind, but in the balance of things we are also richer because Al Mason was with us for 67 years.

The family has asked that any contributions in Al's memory be forwarded to Motor City Chapter to form



Al Mason
(Bill Lamb Photo)

the nucleus of an educational scholarship, a long time dream of his.

Send your donations to: Al Mason Fund, Motor City Theatre Organ Society, P.O. Box 2329, Livonia, Michigan 48150.

Arthur W. Melgier, 67, prominent Buffalo area theatre organist, died on May 12. After high school, he played Shea's Buffalo, Shea's Hippodrome, Lafayette and Fox Great Lakes theatres in Buffalo. He accompanied Jack Benny, Ken Murray and Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians when they visited Buffalo, and he performed over radio stations WPDQ and WEBR. When the theatre organs were no longer used, Mr. Melgier became a photographer for the Buffalo Courier Express. Never losing his love for the theatre organ, he performed for the past seven years at the Buffalo Museum of Science silent movie series, did occasional programs for Niagara Frontier Chapter of ATOS, and upon retiring from the Courier Express two years ago, was featured in several week-long silent movie programs at the Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda.

A member of ATOS, Mr. Melgier is survived by his wife and a son.

George Rosing, former co-owner of the Roosevelt Theatre in Buffalo, died on May 17. With a brother, Morris, Mr. Rosing kept alive the theatre organ in Buffalo by featuring Harold Jolles at the console in regular programs until 1962 when declining attendance at the neighborhood house forced its closing and ultimate razing. The 4/18 Marr &

Colton became the property of an enthusiast.

Mr. Rosing is survived by two sons, a brother, a sister, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Robert P. Posey, 58, of Greenville, S.C. died Thursday, May 9.

Mr. Posey had been a member of ATOS for many years and at one time a member of the Southeastern Chapter in Atlanta, Ga.

He loved pipe organs. Wherever he went, he worked at restoring theatre organs, including those in the Kentucky Theatre in Lexington, Ky. and the Princess Theatre in Honolulu, Hawaii.

He was an electrical engineer and an electronic genius. He wanted a pipe organ, but his work required frequent moves, so he compromised with something more portable. He designed and built a 3 manual 186 stop-tab electronic organ based on Artisan generators (56 octaves) modified to his own designs. Although huge in tonal capacity, it was portable. The console (3 manual, double bolster, theatre type) unfolded in such a way that it could be moved through a standard doorway. The amplifiers, power supplies and speakers (beautiful corner cabinets containing woofers, mid-range and tweeter speakers) could all be unplugged and moved when necessary (even though the main cable was fifty feet long and contained over a thousand wires). With several hundred watts of sound power, it was marvelous to listen to, and was estimated to be the equivalent of about 100 ranks of pipes.

Bob lost the decision to cancer before he could complete the organ. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Janice Posey and a brother, T.H. Posey, both of Greenville, S.C.

Merlin L. Stutz
Southeastern Chapter ATOS

Eddie Ford, distinguished and respected American theatre organist, died of acute hepatitis June 3, 1974 at Lake Hamilton, Florida. After graduating from the Yale School of Music, he had an exceptional solo organist career from 1924 through 1948 with long engagements in the following theatres: Paramount, New Haven; Centre Theatre, Durham; Tampa Theatre, Tampa and ending his theatre career at the Fox Theatre, Atlanta. During the 1950s he did further study on the

classical organ with Ernest White in New York. In recent years he had played both classical and popular music concerts in Florida, including one at the Kirk of Dunedin (4/20 Wurlitzer). At the time of his death he was director of music at Grace Church, Winter Haven, Florida.

Famed theatre and radio organist **Eddie Dunstedter** succumbed to a long bout with heart trouble on July 30, 1974, just three days short of his 77th birthday. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Viva, and two grown children, Eddie Jr. and Dodie. The Dunstedters have lived in Reseda, Calif., for many years.

A co-worker at the Kilgen Organ factory in St. Louis later recalled the rawboned farm youth who was hired in the late teens of this century to help in the erecting room where organs were assembled and checked out before shipment. Even then Eddie had ideas about merchandising. He did his best to talk the foreman into letting him play for prospects being shown through the erecting room. The boss said yes. Eddie learned all he could about the workings of organs during his Kilgen years and the knowledge helped him in later years to transform various makes of instruments into "Dunstedter instruments." Regardless of the brand name, an organ worked over by Eddie took on the characteristics known as the "Dunstedter sound" — full combinations with a silvery top and a very prominent 5-1/3' content, usually on the Tibia. The 3/14 Wurlitzer he played to national recognition from WCCO Minneapolis, was as representative of the Dunstedter sound as the Kilgen in the KMOX St. Louis studio.

During World War I, 19-year-old Eddie was expecting to be called into service so he used every moment of remaining liberty to pursue his chief interests, music and entertainment. He attended a vaudeville show one matinee with a friend and as the two youths sought seats in the crowded house, Eddie became aware of a girl on-stage belting out a popular song of the day. Something in the way she sang made Eddie want to meet her and after the show Eddie and his friend went backstage to meet the girl billed as "Viva!" It must have been love at first sight. In the hurry-up of wartime, the two were married soon afterward. The war didn't last long enough to



Eddie Dunstedter

catch up with Eddie, but the marriage endured. Another war did catch up with Eddie; he achieved the rank of Air Force Colonel during World War II.

Edward Jacob Dunstedter first came to national public notice in the early days of network radio when his weekly CBS *Fast Freight* organ program from the studios of WCCO Minneapolis was the first pop organ show to be broadcast by network radio. He later moved to St. Louis where his organcasts over CBS were originated from the KMOX studios. Moving to Hollywood in the late '30s, he soon became a familiar figure on motion picture scoring stages. He is remembered for his playing of the weird Novachord theme which personified the haunting "Mrs. DeWinter" in the Franz Waxman score for *Rebecca*. He later wrote, orchestrated and conducted scores for a number of Hollywood films, among them, *Donovan's Brain*.

Dunstedter's recording career spans a period from 1928 to 1970. In the earlier days his record hits included "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers," "Dancing Tamborine" and a top seller which had him accompanying a young man named Bing Crosby — "Goldmine in the Sky." With the advent of the LP record Eddie could record his extended arrangements of selections which through the years had become his trademarks — "Park Avenue Fantasy," "Chloe" and his friend Ferde Grofe's "On the Trail." During his career he recorded for Brunswick, Decca, Capitol, and for several independents.

The ATOS *Honorary Member* (1963) was always popular in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area where in the mid-'20s he first won widespread acclaim as an organ soloist in local theatres. His "return engagements" there in recent years were SRO events. One of his memorable concerts was played for the American Theatre Organ Society during the national club's 1968 convention in Los Angeles. He was coaxed from semi-retirement to play on the Wiltern theatre's huge Kimball pipe organ which proved to be one of the convention highlights.

He also played an engagement in the late '50s at Pacific Ocean Park, cueing the antics of trained seals, dolphins and sea elephants on a frequently splashed Hammond. This assignment included a full concert band which Eddie conducted, in addition to making the arrangements and conducting rehearsals. "Sorta like the old days," grouched Eddie, who had had charge of the orchestra for a commercial network radio series originated by WCCO, Minneapolis.

During his last two years, Eddie was frequently hospitalized. His nurses describe him as a cooperative patient, although given to some grumbling — until they got used to his quiet humor. He never was one to talk much — unless necessary. This trait drove interviewers up the walls. They usually ended up doing a monologue.

Even a year ago he suspected he didn't have much time left, yet he always looked forward, not back. One of his projects was the tape for a new recording. An electronic organ company with a model equipped with a cassette tape recorder moved one of their models into Eddie's trailer home (he and "Vee" lived in trailers for many years) so Eddie could work on the tape at will. Being a perfectionist, Eddie made many recordings but never one which entirely suited him. "This recorder is completely merciless," he complained.

When the end came, all plans had been made, Colonel Eddie Dunstedter, U.S. Air Force (Retired), preferred to return to the "wild blue yonder" and the bosom of Mother Earth. Shortly after cremation, a small plane winged out over the blue Pacific and all that remained of the legendary organist was consigned to the sea.

Stu Green