

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 an 8 cent postcard to get it to VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can afford a 10 cent stamp, why not include a black and white photo which need not be returned.

Organ Stop Pizza, Opus 2, opened in Mesa, Arizona, on June 20th. The Featured Organist is Ron Rhode. Betty Gould is playing at lunchtime daily, and Charlie Balogh is Associate Organist. The trio is using a



Betty Gould and Ron Rhode do some anticipating by sitting at the silent 3/23 Wurlitzer console they'll soon be playing.

Hammond (set temporarily on the lift) while the Wurlitzer 3/23 is being installed. It is hoped the pipes will be playing by late summer. Meanwhile, Lyn Larsen is holding forth at Organ Stop, Opus 1, with Balogh as Associate. Ron tells us he had a disappointing English "tour." He arrived at the airport which serves London only to learn that his sponsors had not obtained the required work permit. The immigration people bundled him onto the next plane bound for New York. So all he saw of Great Britain was the inside of the airport immigration building for eight hours.

Remember the upbeat item we ran recently about Al Sacker and his lifelong love affair with the Robert Morton organ in the Jefferson Theatre (Beaumont, Texas)? Apparently we rejoiced too soon. We thought theatre and organ were safe in the hands of the LBJ Foundation but now it appears the theatre has been leased to an aggressive evangelist who prefers to roll in a Hammond. Chuck Dailey submitted a clipping from the Beaumont Enterprise in which staff writer Bob Stump surveys the Jefferson theatre scene and it doesn't look encouraging, either for the future of the theatre or Al Sacker's devotion to the Morton. The evangelist now in charge, according to one of Bob Stump's published articles, is "a seven year vet-

eran of roadside religion and an expert practitioner of the kind of gospel delivery that moves audiences to their feet." He hasn't asked Al Sacker to play for his services, nor has he shown much interest in the pipe organ. We had reasons to expect more of the LBJ Foundation.

Hope you enjoyed the two-part story about George Allen's "4/28 Merger" home installation in Had-donfield, New Jersey. New Jersey? DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT! True it used to be there but before we could get Part 2 to the typesetter we got a phone call from George Allen — from Altadena, California.

"Yes, Stu, we've moved."

We had heard some disconcerting reports that George sold the organ, so we put it to him straight — what about the organ?

"The organ is on the way. It has been dismantled and crated for shipment. I'm going to set it up in Altadena."

Things happen fast in the organ hobby and one phenomenon is the vast distances often travelled by pipe organs in order to find a good home. For example the 5/24 Marr & Colton which once graced the Rochester, N.Y. Loew's is now near Portland, Oregon, the responsibility of Bill Blunk. The 5-manual behemoth (with an ever changing pipe complement) which continues to draw hobbyists to the Organ Loft in Salt Lake City came from an eastern theatre in the New York area. The most famous case is the Times Square Paramount 4/36 Wurli which suffered a couple of years of "durance vile" in southern California before finding a good home in Wichita's Century II civic hall. This would seem to establish a travel pattern from East to West, but there are exceptions, for example the Buddy Cole WurliMorton which was moved from North Hollywood to the east coast for a debilitating sojourn of neglect and water damage before going west once more to find a home in a California Bay Area pizza emporium.

Perhaps he doesn't know it yet, but we predict another chapter in George Allen's well-written saga — "My 4/28 Merger Goes West!"



Hector Olivera gets around. He's cut a fine biscuit, "Columbus Discovers Hector," on the Ohio theatre 4/20 Robert Morton which our record reviewer promises to explore next issue. On June 5th the agile organist played a well-attended concert on the Rockford (Illinois) theatre's well-maintained 4/17 Barton. In fact, Hector's concert pulled in a goodly array of ATOS notables. Bill Lamb's photo shows (L to R); Chicago Chapter Chairman Russ Joseph, CRATOE Chairman Ray Snitil, Hector, LOLTOS Chairman Orril Dunn and ATOS Director Bill Reiger (CATOE). Not shown but present was the Dairyland (Wisconsin) ATOS Chapter Chairman, John Hill.



While the Atlanta Fox Theatre still isn't free of demolition threats, it has a new lease on life and a good chance for permanence reports ATOSer Herbert H. Lee. If it hadn't been for the bull-headed determination of numerous Atlantans, the rococo theatre on Peachtree Street,



Bob Van Camp

(Stufoto)

with its 4/42 Moller organ, would be already demolished. The aroused Atlantans, with organist Bob Van Camp and organ fixer Joe Patten in the vanguard, organized as "Atlanta Landmarks Inc." Bell Telephone wanted the property for a new 45-story building. The Landmarks group talked Bell into a land swap which diverted them away from the Fox property. Then came the big push for money — \$40,000 now and \$1.8 million within three years. Plans were underway to reopen the dark theatre as we went to press with both stage attractions and movies. The "Landmarkers" are confident they can raise the money. Something else they have raised is universal admiration.



David Burke submits a clipping from the *Orlando (Florida) Sentinel* which brings to light a long ago romance involving organist Eddie Hanson. In 1943 he received a letter from a girl he met while he was playing organ in an Indianapolis hotel. Helen worked in the coffee shop. They went their separate ways when Eddie's gig ended. Then Eddie received the letter. He had reservations about the romance because Helen was 22 years younger. He didn't open the letter and that was that. But 32 years later, rummaging through old mail, Eddie came across the letter. This time he opened it and read it.

Said the 77-year-old organist, who now plays in a Waupaca, Wisconsin, supper club, "If I had opened it (then), our lives would have been changed, I think, because... I would have married her."

Chances of warming up the romance are small. Although Helen

and Eddie have agreed to correspond, Helen's husband of 30 years makes primeval noises when a meeting is discussed.

Said Eddie, "Helen and I are just friends. I don't want to break up anything."

Said Helen, "All husbands are jealous."



Organist Karl Cole has relocated in Florida. He left his job in Syracuse, N.Y. and his 55 students to enter a partnership with the object of opening a pipe organ-equipped restaurant, probably near Fort Lauderdale. Meanwhile he's playing a plug-in at Howard Johnson's in Deerfield Beach. For the present Karl will continue to serve as pro-



Enroute to Florida, Karl (left) visited Dick Kline and his 4/28 Wurlitzer in Maryland.

gram director for Syracuse-based ESTMIM, the group which maintains the 3/11 Wurlitzer located in a state fair building.

Another organist on the move is Don Thompson, until mid-June chief organist and music director for San Diego's Organ Power pizzeria. Don has relocated and is now playing at the Melody Inn (Los Altos, Calif.) on the 4/20 ex-Oakland Paramount Wurlitzer. Don says he's missed the Bay Area of California too long.



Billy Nalle is now relocated in Wichita (from Gotham) and is shaping up plans for a novel use of Century II's 4/37 Wurlitzer early in '76. With the cooperation of Wichita Theatre Organ Inc., Billy is going to stage a combination concert/dance according to a report by Alden Miller. The Wurlitzer will be the source of dance music, with some



Historic photo of Billy Nalle made during a rehearsal for his "Swingin' Pipe Organ" record release. Here is the original New York Times Square Paramount console. The year was 1957. (Ben Hall Photo)

help by a percussionist — thus creating a sort of "Blackpool in the USA." It will be an American first for Billy, who has been in the vanguard of organ innovation ever since he was knee-high to a mint julep. Can he make it come off? In the 1950's Billy cut a record on the same organ when it was the pride and joy of the Times Square Paramount Theatre and his "Swingin' Pipe Organ" cuts have become jazz collectors' items. He'll make it.



Perhaps the most faraway organist heard from is Walter Strony. We received a postcard from Tokyo, while Walt was enroute to a two-month playing stint at Expo 75 on the island of Okinawa. Last time we heard from Walt he was rating kudos for his CATOE concert in Chicago last December.



The Los Angeles Chapter's Malin Dollinger and John Ledwon (Chairman and Program Director, respectively) have come up with a novel idea, an organ swapmeet to be held on a huge parking lot on a Sunday afternoon, about the time this hits print. Anything connected with organs, pipe or plug-in, is fair game, and we can't help picturing some of the possibilities. Each entrant gets a single lined parking

space for his \$2.00 entry fee, and he is free to use it any way he wants. Can you imagine a couple of dozen electronic organs blasting forth simultaneously? And although the exhibitor is encouraged to show photos of heavier items such as 25 kw blower assemblies, 32 foot Diaphones and 10-rank windchests, there is actually nothing to stop him from stacking his wares into a veritable tower so long as he remains within his white lines. Then there are the possible come-ons, such as using a topless dancer to gather a crowd so the pitchman can deliver his pitch to a multitude. The one "heavy" item sellers are encouraged to bring, according to the chapter's official announcement, is brass pipe-work. What a sneaky but magnificent way to locate that needed



John Ledwon

(Stufoto)

Brass Trumpet or Saxophone! Our post-swapmeet report should be interesting.



No details yet but Central Indiana Chapter's *Ciphers* reports that the Embassy Theatre in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and its Page organ, have been saved and now belong to the Foundation. Congratulations to hard-working Bob Goldstine and his group.

Atlantans — take heart!



If Robert Hope-Jones had been told in 1908 that the organ he had just installed in Rochester's First Universalist Church would be used to accompany a Buster Keaton comedy 67 years later, he would probably have thought the prognosticator slightly bananas. However, this did happen on April 19 when Tom Lockwood accompanied *One Week* on the Opus 2 Hope-Jones 3/13 organ. A sizeable audience waxed enthusiastic as Tom, aided by closed-circuit TV camera and receiver in order to see the screen, gave a presentation which encouraged the sponsors to plan similar events later.



One of the circus performers' latent fears is that of a tent blow-down. It happened to our touring circus organist, Col. Harry Jenkins on May 23 at Marion, Iowa. The tent was up and the sides were being attached. Harry was just about to test his trusty Hammond in preparation for the afternoon show. It started to rain, then came a mighty wind. Harry saw the tent lift up enough to release the 8-inch diameter tent poles, which started falling. He heard yells of "Everybody Out!" but it was too late. A falling pole narrowly missed Harry, who then crawled down under his organ bench. Then the wet canvas came floating down. A moment before the wind blast, Harry had been talking to Parley Baer (you know him as the mayor of Mayberry on the old Andy Griffith Show). As the water-heavy canvas settled around Harry's refuge he saw a pole hit Parley and the heavy canvas forced him to the ground. Parley

was winded but not injured. Together, the two men sought air pockets in the flattening canvas. As the air became stuffy they knew they would have to worm their way out from under their dark prison — or smother. Outside they could hear the yells of the roustabouts (including Harry's son who does a gorilla act). Slowly, they progressed on hands and knees, as the giant wet blanket sucked away the air pockets. After a couple of minutes of squirming, Harry saw daylight and wiggled toward it, followed by Parley who was holding on to Harry's foot so he wouldn't get lost in the dark.

They made it okay, and Harry handed his son the eyeglasses the younger man had left on the console. Harry had automatically grabbed them when the tent started to billow and flap. One of the roustabouts, Dave Burke, wasn't so lucky. He was hit by a falling pole and suffered gashes in his back and hand which landed him in the hospital. But the show went on only 17 minutes late. The canvas was rolled up, the seats replaced and the performance was given in the open air — under a sunny sky.

Harry has dropped *Blow The Man Down* from his repertoire.



For the sixth consecutive year veteran theatre organist Rosa Rio performed her spring concert for the Huntington, Conn. Congregational Church on April 12. Her program was augmented by contributions of singer Nancy Ibsen and blind organist David Scrimenti, the latter a student of Rosa. In the juniors' division in the recent Conn. Valley scholarship competition, David won first prize, and he has stated that "when I'm on television, I expect to ask \$5,000 for my appearance." Lots of luck, kid!



Dennis and Heidi James realized a long-time ambition in June — a trip on the famous Delta Queen on the Mississippi river. Naturally, they were interested in the ship's steam calliope during the voyage and played many guest shots at ear-shattering volume (the one-rank calliope still has an estimated range of two miles). Heidi learned that the limited range of the screamer didn't



Dennis James. All steamed up.

allow for some of her more elaborate piano arrangements but Dennis reveals that she was awarded her *Vox Calliopus* certificate anyway. On the last day of the excursion, as the craft approached Cincinnati, Dennis sneaked up to the calliope, turned it on and played a somewhat truncated version of Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor." Halfway through the ponderous selection Dennis heard a stern voice, louder than the calliope.

"This is the captain speaking. Turn that thing off. You're not leaving me enough steam to maneuver the ship!" Killjoy!



Another record-breaking season, attendancewise, was the achievement story for the Rochester Theatre Organ Society as it presented its final concert for 1974-75 on May 9 at the Auditorium Theatre. The crowd of 1167 swelled the season attendance to 14,868 for 12 concerts. Ron Rhode, from Phoenix, regaled the audience with some very sprightly music, from classics to current tunes. The enjoyable program was devoid of hackneyed selections which too many performers are prone to use. Much should be heard from this 23-year-old artist in the future.

A busy season will begin in the fall. RTOS Program Chairman Ken Veneron promises an even better concert schedule with new faces appearing plus some proven performers. Jim Leaffe, Lowell Ayars

and Gaylord Carter have been booked for the first three months, starting in September. Work on the 3/8 Wurlitzer is progressing well, and it is hoped to have it playing in Eisenhart Auditorium by winter.



The Pipe Piper announces three corrections on the April list. There is no Montague Roller Rink in New Jersey. The Montvale Rink is the only one with a pipe organ in the Garden State. The Landmark Pipes & Pizza is in Dallas, not Ft. Worth. And there is no pipe organ in the Taft Auditorium in Cincinnati, though there are chambers for which one had been planned. We urge all correspondents to be accurate in locating pipe organ installations in their areas, and to be sure of the size and make of instrument. Change of status should be reported immediately to the Pipe Piper. And please don't pull our gamba with reports of non-existent organs!



Bernie Venus says that the organ in the Casa Loma in Toronto keeps his crew busy. "We are getting all the bugs out but during this shake-down period we have had some good concerts, and the organists with their varying styles are getting to be known in Toronto now. Like all clubs, the Toronto Theatre Organ Society has its limitations as to what it can spend on artists. So far, the income from concerts has been pumped into the organ.



In April, Lloyd Klos finished a most successful first season as a lecturer before various clubs in the Rochester, N.Y. area, subject: "The



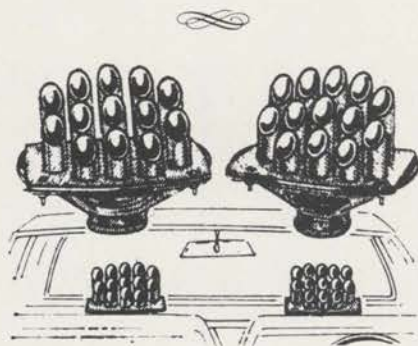
Old Prospector Klos. 'On the Road' for a good cause. (Stufoto)

Theatre Pipe Organ, Yesterday and Today." Audiences were most attentive, and the fun began after each session when members of the audience asked questions and volunteered information. "I talked to almost 800 in the 11 appearances, and the slides I used were most instrumental in appraising folks of the magnitude of the theatre organ renaissance." As a warning to prospective lecturers, Lloyd says that most organizations, to use their own words, cannot afford to pay a speaker. Yet, while sitting in on meetings of these groups Lloyd noted that "hundreds of dollars were mentioned, and budgeted for other things." Perhaps lecturers need a union.



Organist Lew Williams. Good news from his home state. (Stufoto)

days at 12:30 p.m., according to a brochure released by the theatre and a downtown promotion group called *City Lights Inc.* Among the organists scheduled for pop concerts are Ray McNamara, who easily rates the title "Mr. Theatre Organ of New Orleans" (he played the night the Saenger opened, Feb. 4, 1927), Bob Reid, and veteran organist Robert Kingsworth. Classical concerts were set for Floyd Lee Reeves and Gwen Goodrich, both of whom have musical pedigrees a mile long. Another theatre organ goes back to work.



Gary Connor of Wilmington, Delaware, sent in this ad for stereo "Pipe Organ Speakers" he clipped from an auto-parts mail order catalog (see cut) The accompanying blurb is a classic: "They look like they sound great — and they do! Beautiful chrome-plated plastic organ style pipes with full range 6" x 9" heavy duty speakers. 10 watt maximum output per speaker. Frequency resonant to accent high tones and the lows with full rich sound." The seller doesn't state whether all sounds from the radio or tape player which drives the speakers are guaranteed to sound like a pipe organ. Well, it's your \$22.95!

Lew Williams, who just got his Bachelor of Music degree from Texas Christian University at Fort Worth, sends along encouraging evidence that things organwise are looking up at the New Orleans Saenger Theatre. The 4/26 Robert Morton has been put in good shape and concerts are played on Satur-

Krenek and Schoenberg music was "Starr," which ended up being presented via 12 tape playbacks (mostly Fred's "boom-boom"), two pretaped organs plus Fred playing the vintage (1901) Murray-Harris 4/69. Reports seeping back to us indicate Fred's heart valve earned a ringing round of applause.

"In fact" admits Fred modestly, "It brought down the house."

A few years ago we revealed that Alice Blue, one of the veteran theatre organists, was retiring and moving to the island kingdom of Tonga in the South Seas, and under somewhat romantic conditions. We are happy to report that Alice is well and happy in her new life. She has her house built and it's one of the classiest abodes on the island of Vava'u. She keeps her fingers nimble with piano practice and if it gets too warm she can roll down the hill and land in the Pacific. Her only big want is someone from the USA or Europe to talk with. Yes, she gets lonesome for the congestion, smog and speed of US life sometimes. But in all, it's an agreeable life. Sure beats playing a plug-in in a Hawaiian beanery, as she did for so many years.

That wonderful zany of the classical organ, Fred Tulan, is still cooking up novel ways of presenting music, usually by blending old (organ) and new (synthesizer) methods of tone production. His latest is a lulu.

The fact is, Fred used adversity to his advantage. Troubled by a palpitating "ticker," Fred's doctor decided his patient needed more heart, so he installed a Starr-Edwards artificial heart valve in Fred's pump. Fred perked up immediately, one might say "heartened" by the now steady "boom-boom" of his pulse. So, when he needed a novel piece of music for his Standford University concert, he had a friend, Jay Wright, record his new heartbeat in quadraphonic sound. This was used as a basis for the composition, "That Splendiferous Starr." Electronic mutations of the beat were taped and combined with an organ part written mostly for pedals.

Came concert time and tucked in among the Bartok, Poulenc,

It's well known that Australia has an organ hobby club (TOSA) but it isn't generally known that New Zealand has an equally active hobby group, the Organ Society of New Zealand, Inc., with headquarters in Auckland. Their monthly 4-page *Console Whispers* describes organ events very similar to ours.

Peter de Young reports from Casapolis, Mich. that work is progressing on the 2/10 Kimball in the Elkhart, Ind. Ecco (formerly Lerner) Theatre. De Young will take the console home, completely restore it to its original finish and recondition it inside and out. Upon its renovation, it will be placed in the middle of the orchestra pit, and the Howard Seat replaced. Bill Miller, owner of the Ecco, is behind the restoration and giving the crew full cooperation. The chambers are in pretty good shape, and even the piano is not hopelessly out of tune. More on the project later. □