



The 23rd ATOS National Convention ATLANTA '78

Photos by Bill Lamb unless otherwise noted.

Y' All Come, Atlanta 1978

That was the invitation extended to ATOS by the Atlanta Chapter. Over 750 members responded and another ATOS meeting began on July 9th.

The headquarters hotel was the older Sheraton-Biltmore which has been refurbished and provided adequate facilities for the convention needs.

The entrance of the hotel is styled in the gracious manner of the Old South. One of the restaurants even featured waiters, obviously trained by Step 'n' Fetchit, who became famous for their slow shuffle response to all situations.

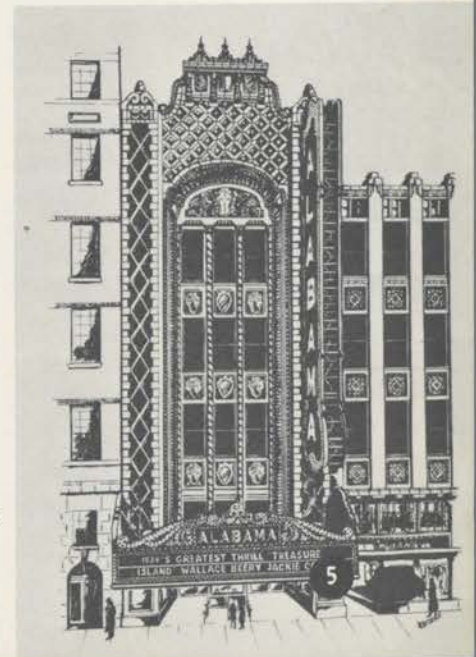
The 23rd ATOS Convention got off to a leisurely start on the humid afternoon of July 9th at the huge Atlanta Fox Theatre. The organist was Lee Erwin. He had arrived



◀ The main entrance to the Sheraton Biltmore, our convention headquarters in Atlanta. (Don Lockwood Photo)

A drawing of the Alabama Theatre by Linda Whitmire. ▶

THEATRE ORGAN





Lee Erwin opened the convention at the Fox. With him are his sister, Sara Hix from Huntsville, Alabama, and his brother, Joe Erwin from Tryon, North Carolina.



Don Schwing, custodian of the ATOS Wurlitzer in Carnegie Hall Cinema, was a great help in tuning the Fox Moller before the first concert.



Convention Chairman Jim Thrower emceed the programs at the Fox, in addition to his other duties.



The buffet dinner in the Egyptian Ballroom was a serious affair from the look on the faces of these members.

In the Egyptian Ballroom.



several days early and when he checked out the 4/42 Moller, he found it badly out of tune, due to the heat and on-and-off air conditioning. Lee found volunteers in Lance Luce, Robert Foreman, Robbie Irwin, Don Schwing, and visitor-brother Joe Erwin, who, with Joe Patten, tuned for the next three days in chambers where the heat reached 90 degrees.

The resulting fatigue might have floored a less dedicated artist, but there was nothing in Lee's performance which revealed the strain he had been under. In fact, he was in top form.

A brief greeting was made on behalf of the Atlanta and Alabama chapters by convention chairman, James Thrower.

Then, at 2:45 p.m., the huge console rose slowly in the glare of a white spot as Lee played a fanfare, his introduction to "But Not For Me." Among Lee's selections was a medley of tunes associated with the South, a bow to the host chapter, including "Carolina Moon" and "When It's Sleepy Time Down South." He then demonstrated the organ's voices, avoiding several ranks which were not useable. During his display of the Moller's battery of sound effects, Lee encountered a cipher in the sleighbells which was heard faintly through the next several selections until silenced.

Perhaps Lee's claim to early fame was his midnight organ performances on Cincinnati's WLW during the '30s. These programs conjure many sentimental memories for aging lovers, and Lee's brief but beautiful re-creation of a portion of one of the programs hit the spot. He included the left-hand counter melodies which made the program's signature, "Caprice Viennois," distinctly his. It was a highlight. Leading up to intermission was a varied medley of favorites, closing with a powerful reading of Leonard Bernstein's "Tonight."

After intermission, it was silent movie time, and Lee applied his theories on movie accompaniment (which excludes recognizable selections) to Buster Keaton's detective work in *Sherlock Jr.*, Lee dropped his rule for a moment with a musical allusion to "Sailing, Sailing" as Buster's flivver floated down a river, but quickly recovered his pose and got out of it. Horrors! Buster and Lee rated an enthusiastic round of applause after Buster won the girl and was contemplating the results of matrimony at the fadeout. Lee gave a spiel on the ATOS "Little Mother" organ, now on lease to the New York Carnegie Hall Cinema, and invited audience members to drop in when they are visiting the Big Apple.

The audience was then directed to a stairway which led to a huge closed door above the theatre's lobby, at mezzanine level. After about 10 minutes' wait on the steps, the door was opened and the conventioners were admitted to a huge, but empty ballroom. More waiting. Then more doors opened and in another ballroom were bars where lines quickly formed ("Coke" is the local drink in Atlanta), and two tables were loaded with buffet food around which hungry ATOSers soon assembled, three and four deep. It was catch-as-catch-can with those equipped with long reaches and more adventuresome natures got their plates loaded first while the meek could only wait for the traffic to subside. A little guidance on the part of hosts in forming lines would have forestalled much unpleasantness generated around the buffet tables. Once a plate was filled, the diner learned that the tables provided

were far too few to accommodate attendees. So, he ate standing up or sitting on stairway steps. And most remained standing from circa 4:30 p.m. to the next event at 8:30 p.m.

If the attendee survived the badly planned cocktail hour and buffet, he could look forward to hearing Ron Rhode's concert at the Fox. Ron, a young man who has made great strides as an organist, had very little practice time, due to last-minute work on the Moller, but being a pro, he never let the deficiencies show.

He brought the console up with a sprightly "A Sunny Disposish." He welcomed his audience and went into a ballad arrangement of "More Than You Know." His tune list included one classical toccata in the baroque pattern with mainly untrem'd brass/reed registration, Henry Busse's "Hot Lips," a non-Chevalier "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me," "March of the Steelmen," Victor Herbert's "Rose of the World," and an impressive "Deep Purple." He proved to be an adept musician and a pleasant MC. Thus ended the first day of convention concerts, and the audience braved the heat to walk back to the Sheraton-Biltmore, headquarters hotel, to visit electronic showrooms and the record shop.

Events started early on the second day -- buffet breakfast starting at 6:30 a.m., so conventioners could board buses around 8 a.m. for the three-hour journey to Birmingham where the Alabama Theatre and its 4/20 Wur-litzer were waiting. It was a pleasant ride through forest and grassland. Many continued their night's sleep.

Birmingham proved to be just as warm and humid as Atlanta, but the hospitality of the Birmingham chapter members minimized the discomfort outside; they had the theatre in a cool, air conditioned state.

Cecil Whitmore proved to be a personable MC. His humor-spiked announcement first introduced Chapter Chairwoman Alleen Cole, then Eddie Weaver, veteran of previous conventions whose music and wit are quite unlike anything else served at the annual bashes. Eddie brought the red and gold console skyward with a medley of south-oriented songs, starting with "Sleepy Time Down South" and closing with a rousing "Alabama Bound." Then came a quickly fabricated set, describing what had happened to him the previous evening. The tunes were "Tea For Two," "Climb Every Mountain," "Flight of the Bumblebee," and "The Sting" which indicated that during the evening meal, a bee had crawled inside Eddie's pant leg, ascended, and had stung him just above the knee. The audience emphathized. Eddie offered a medley of mod tunes which he felt were quality, to combat the oft-heard saying that "they don't write good ones anymore," then married off "Georgia" and "Big, Bad Leroy Brown."

Most listeners were unaware that Eddie was fighting two flaws in the pedals. One was a recurring cipher (A natural) which he countered by playing in keys which included A. There was only abstinence in the case of a couple of pedals which had "runs," that is, they sounded the note desired, plus one or two other notes. Eddie just didn't hit those pedals more than once. During intermission, the Alabama Chapter's technical crew up-ended the pedal-board and untangled the offending contacts. No further trouble.

After the repair job, Eddie Weaver really opened up with his bag of entertainment tricks. He likes to find tunes



The Fox Theatre piano, complete with candelabra, is on its own lift. Here, Ron Rhode chats with the audience during his program.



About 18 buses were required to transport conventioners for the day in Birmingham. As usual, one of the buses got lost.



Cecil Whitmore emcees the Eddie Weaver and Don Baker concerts in Birmingham.



Eddie Weaver chats with the audience at the Alabama Theatre.

"Fantasy Impromptu" for one piano, three hands. The newly-discovered dynamic duo of Helen Dell and Judd Walton "perform" during the buffet dinner in the Egyptian Ballroom at the Fox.

Anna Olive and John Muri, two convention regulars, exchange ideas in the lobby of the Sheraton-Biltmore.





Lobby of the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham following the Eddie Weaver concert. Lunches in boxes and pop in ice — all ready to be consumed in the 'picture palace.'



Don Baker between numbers at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham.



Edward Tibbs at the Birmingham Civic Center Schlicker console.



The box lunch was expertly handled at the Alabama Theatre on Monday. It was sandwiched between Eddie Weaver and Don Baker.

At the end of a long, but enthusiastic day in Birmingham, the three-hour bus trip back into the Eastern Daylight Time Zone seemed like the perfect way to relax.



which can be played simultaneously so that they harmonize one another. He played "Secret Love" and used "Dancing Tambourine" as ornamentation. They match all the way through. He later did it with "There's a Long, Long Trail A-winding," "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Love's Old Sweet Song." He presented an operatic duo, a nautical set which included "Sailors' Hornpipe" and "Asleep in the Deep." He mentioned that he is a Glenn Miller fan and proved it with a "walking bass" during "Tuxedo Junction" which employed Eddie's two feet, rather than automatic electronic crutches. Eddie Weaver left 'em wanting more.

Then it was box lunch time. Each was served his lunch and a soft drink with little fuss, long lines or delays. People were invited to sit in the auditorium. To many old timers it was quite a novelty to sit in a plush picture palace balancing a lunch on the knee.

After lunch, it was time for Don Baker. Considering the ordeal he went through at the Rialto Theatre in Joliet, Ill., in the last convention, his audience was glad to see him assigned to an instrument which could reflect the Baker magic. Don relied on a number of his trademark arrangements such as "Ghost Riders In the Sky" and "Willow, Weep For Me" but added newer titles such as "Brian's Song" which really soared. Baker stylings are something to behold. His rhythmic work is often embellished with downward chromatics, applied at places in the music where they give the listener spine-tingling sensations. And his famous "chop-chop" treatment was heard briefly during "Coquette." There are no dull moments while Don is at the console, and he was in fine form on this day.

The audience fared less well when members of the audience tried to write a new "Poor Butterfly" by calling out unrelated notes at Don's request. The notes added up to a hideous melange, but the way Don supplied the harmony, the result wasn't bad, but no replacement for the original.

Don left his audience with an unresolved riddle, then chatted with old friends, signed record jackets and endured the lightning-like flashes of uncounted shutterbugs.

When ATOSers emerged from the Alabama Theatre, they were greeted by a very expressive thunderstorm. As they boarded the buses, Thor's kettledrums assailed their ears and bright streaks of zig-zag lightning cavorted overhead. By the time the buses unloaded at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center a few minutes later, the storm had largely subsided. The conventioners filed past the impressive buildings and gardens of the center to the Concert Hall, the interior of which is a pistache of uneven surfaces (for acoustical reasons), and painted black and white. The hall is part of a larger stage which the movement of a wall of linked panels can make one. At the back of the stage, was a large castered box which contained the pipework of an 1135-pipe Schlicker organ, some of it under expression. A look at the organ specs on the program reveals that it is highly unified and has no more than 15 ranks of pipes, played from an austere two-manual console. The artist introduced was Edward Tibbs, a classical organist with many credentials, the most valid to conventioners probably being the help he has afforded Birmingham Chapter ATOSers.

Mr. Tibbs brought on his page turner, a tall beautiful woman, attired in a flowing black gown, and went into his

first selection, during which his hands never touched the manuals. It was "Pedal Solo on a Theme by Frescobaldi," adapted by Jean Langlais. It put Mr. Tibbs into the running with some of the other convention organists who have developed an eye-catching pedal technique.

The pedal display continued into two chorales by Bach (also with hands) and a well-played "Prelude and Fugue in C Major" by Bach.

Following two very dissonant pieces by Leo Sowerby, Mr. Tibbs unleashed the untrem'd and often harsh ranks of the Schlicker on Marcel Dupre's eleven "Variations on a Noel." Each was quite different from the preceding one and Mr. Tibbs tackled them all with verve and a technique which listeners could only admire. Yet, when the frenetic variations of the finale "Fugato" died away, one couldn't help but wonder, thinking as a theatre organ enthusiast with a reasonable affinity for the classics, had it all added up to music? There's no denying that theatre organ enthusiasts might not fully understand nor appreciate the current vogue in classical organ recital material, yet the organist had made no attempt in his choice of material to include at least one or two titles known to appeal to the type of audience present. Perhaps the start, chiff-riddled tonalities of the Schlicker would not make an effective vehicle for anything less than the type of material presented.

Following the Tibbs concert, there was a social hour in a large salon of the civic center, followed by a sit-down dinner in an adjacent dining room. The well-served food was delicious. The Birmingham Chapter had their portion of the convention well planned, and it came off without a visible hitch.

The Atlanta-bound buses took on passengers shortly after the meal was over and the trip back provided a chance to catch a little shuteye. The passengers had been up since 6 a.m. and the little hand on timepieces was nearing midnight. Once in their rooms at the hotel, going to sleep was no problem.

On Tuesday morning a less rigorous schedule was presented.

The national board met with chapter representatives at 8:30 a.m. concurrently with the cameos.

The cameo segment was originally scheduled to be played at the East Point Theatre but was transferred to the Music Grinder 3/24 Wurlitzer. Because of the unavailability of the theatre each artist played 15 or 20 minutes and considerable quality musicianship was revealed.

The cameo performers were: Bill Taber, Ohio; Chris Phillips, Ohio; Dennis Norden, age 11, Georgia; Jimmy Boyce, Virginia; John Sander, Pennsylvania; and Walter Winn, Georgia.

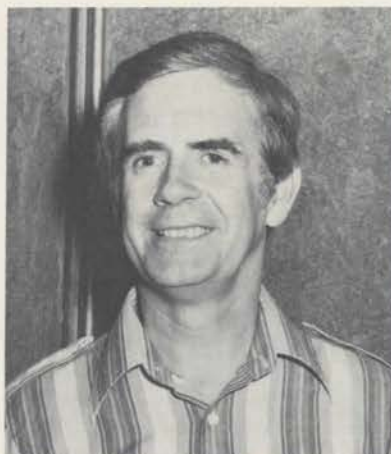
The East Point Theatre could not be used because the organ installation was not completed. The crew had worked hard to get the organ playable but time ran out.

The Colson/Goddard program at Peachtree Christian Church featured two organs, one a 3/35 Pilcher, the other at the rear of the church, is a 3/37 Ruffatti. At the opening, Sue Goddard was playing the Pilcher while Gregory Colson was at the Ruffatti. This was a duet featuring two organs and having two organs available for such programming is unusual. Using the two instruments, widely separated, required closed-circuit TV between organists to enable the performers to keep together.

In this motif, several numbers were played. Then the



The sit-down dinner at the Birmingham Civic Center was worthy of being called a "banquet." The service was good and the food delicious.



Jimmy Boyce, Potomac Valley.



Dennis Naughton, Atlanta.



Chris Phillips, Miami Valley.



Bill Taber, Western Reserve.

Our English friends at the banquet. England now seems to be represented at every convention.





Sue Goddard and Gregory Colson played a 3/37 Ruffatti and a 3/35 Pilcher for their duets at Peachtree Christian Church.



Helen Dell after her concert at the Fox Theatre.



Ray Snitil, out-going president, conducted the annual membership meeting at the Fox Theatre.

With the discovery of demolition plans for the Chicago Theatre, a corporation was formed to try to save the theatre. Ione Tedei (R) collected signatures and money in the lobby of the Fox and Richard Sklenar (L), CATOE, made an impromptu plea for member support.



artists both played the Ruffatti in duet.

After intermission, the two artists moved to the Pilcher and played in the same manner. In closing, they returned to the original format.

The entire program was classic in nature and featured an outstanding variety of classic literature. As an encore, the duo played, of all things, "Tico Tico." Probably the first time either organ was ever called upon to imitate Ethel Smith. The results of this depended on the ear of the listener and his imagination.

The program was well-received. Each artist exhibited a thorough knowledge of music and both were well-grounded in technique.

Music played included compositions by Wagner, Bach, Schubert and an outstanding performance of "Grand Choeur Dialogue" by Eugene Gigout.

Then it was back to the buses for Helen Dell's Tuesday afternoon program at the Fox. Helen is a popular West Coast organist who is especially beloved of baseball fans because she plays a Conn theatre model for the Los Angeles Dodgers' home games. This subject came up when she announced the current pop, "Rainy Days and Mondays." It's not what they look forward to at ball parks.

Helen opened with a rousing French march, "Aux Flambeau," then demonstrated her characteristic "Chiffon-bounce" style with Johnny Mercer's "My Sugar is So Refined." Her program had much variety, with titles ranging from a mod "I Write the Songs" to selections from *The King and I*.

It was a lovely setting. The orchestra and grand piano elevators had been raised from the start. The piano even had a candelabra (equipped with light bulbs). The house curtain displayed a stylized Oriental scene with perhaps Moorish architecture. When the organ console rose, it completed the picture. This was the setting for the remaining concerts.

Helen Dell presented one classical piece, Bolleman's "Toccata," but remained mostly with standards, "If I Love Again"; current, "Send a Little Love My Way"; showtunes, "If This Isn't Love" and one piece by the master of British marches, Eric Coates' "Oxford Street."

Her encore was an original, "Here Goes." The lady displayed scads of charm as she MC'd her show and her audience approved. At the conclusion of Helen Dell's program everyone adjourned to have dinner.

The beginning of the evening's scheduled program was started with the annual ATOS membership meeting, in keeping with requirements of the corporation laws.

After the membership meeting, it was spiel time. A slide presentation heralded the wonders in store for those who attended the 1979 ATOS Convention in Los Angeles and San Diego. The Jefferson Theatre boosters (actually the Southeast Texas Chapter) managed to mount a plug for Beaumont and their Robert Morton organ. A slide, showing the slick building proposed to replace the Chicago Theatre, spread alarm among the "Flagship" preservers and galvanized the CATOE contingent to organized resistance against theatre demolishers in their bailiwick. The non-ATOS Dickinson Theatre Organ Society was permitted to present a brief film about their fall regional. There was an original pep song, voiced by Lowell Ayars and narrated by the club's sparkplugs, Bob Dilworth. In all, it was a varied and informative half hour, well-produced.

Before the evening concert started, Convention Chairman, Jim Thrower made the announcement that the 3/11 Moller organ, partly installed in the East Point Theatre, could not be made ready for the next day's concerts, although chapter members had been working day and night to get it in shape. They had about five ranks playing, but even these couldn't be relied on, so Mr. Thrower regretfully scratched the East Point. Instead, the East Point concerts would be held at the Fox. This meant another juggling of rehearsal times, but it had to be done.

Then it was time for the Walt Strony concert. Walt selected a mix of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Dixie" as a console riser. He chatted easily with his audience, during which he revealed that 14 of the Moller's 42 ranks were not operative during convention concerts. But even as a 28-rank organ, the Moller filled the bill.

Walt's offerings included a *West Side Story* group, a very well performed excerpt from "Rhapsody In Blue," "My Romance" with an interpolation of the main theme from Tchaikowsky's *Romeo and Juliet Overture*, "There's No Business Like Show Business" with a touch of "Hur-ray for Hollywood," a group of five of Gershwin's most popular standards and a maestoso "Battle Hymn of the Republic" with a sly reference to "American Patrol" and a verse played on slurping tibias.

On Wednesday morning the conventioners were divided into two groups because the Grinder Pizzeria could accommodate only half of them at a time. First on our list was Trevor Bolshaw whose concert was moved to the Fox Theatre when the East Point organ couldn't be finished in time.

At the appointed hour (9 a.m.) Jim Thrower appeared on stage to introduce the first concert artist, a youthful Briton who is rich in English music hall, cabaret, concert and broadcast experience. Trevor brought the console up to a spirited English march, "Through Night to Light," then greeted his audience in a soft spoken accent which only occasionally marked his British beginnings.

One of the strong points of Trevor's concert was the predominance of English and continental tunes and stylings, affording conventioners an opportunity to experience what is being heard on the other side of the pond. The dearth of practice time caused him to describe his predicament as "organistic Russian Roulette." His tune list was intriguing: a jazzy coach ride for a pseudo-western called "Stagecoach;" a pastiche of '20s style music from the long running London stage production, *Salad Days*; an intermezzo named "Moonbeams Dance;" a Scotch novelty called "Tartan Dance" to the skirl of pipes; a Sydney Torch remembrance entitled "On a Spring Note;" three British TV program themes strange to U.S. ears, an old early boogie woogie "Dardenella" and the "Lustspiel Overture." Trevor's encore was a salute to one of Atlanta's claims to fame, "Tara's Theme" from *Gone With the Wind*. It was written by Max Steiner, a Viennese whose composing career came to fruition in the USA.

On the personal side, Trevor Bolshaw was a solid hit with his listeners. His introductions fixed his selections in time and place in as few words as possible. With Trevor the music bore the message and his clean execution of his selections made his audience want more.

After a brief intermission, it was time for Tom Helms at the Fox Moller. This time the console pilot was a native of Florida, who is known for some very original silent movie



The Fox console looked impressive indeed against the jeweled grand drape during the Walt Strony concert.



A toast to Conn Valley from Past President Stillman Rice, his wife Claire and Allen Miller at the cocktail party in the Egyptian Ballroom.

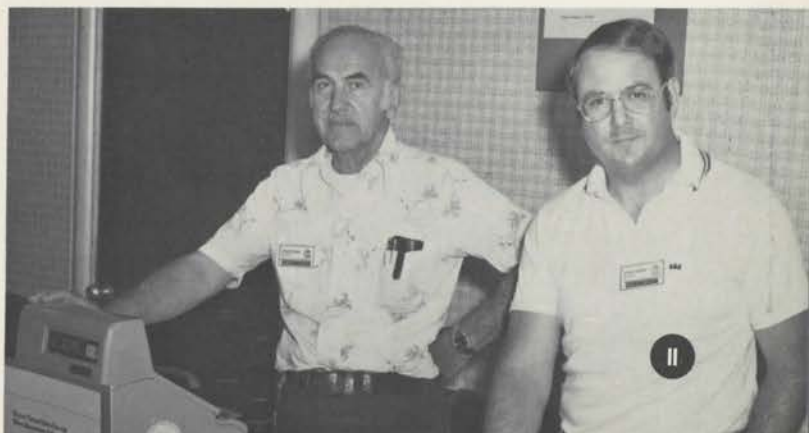


Trevor Bolshaw at the Fox concert. Originally scheduled for East Point Theatre, the program had to be moved to the Fox.



Walt Strony after his program at the Fox.

The record room did a brisk business in Atlanta. Nelson Harris was in charge of the record room, assisted here by Paul Beaver (R).





Lew Williams at the Music Grinder.



Tom Helms, scheduled for the East Point Theatre, played the Fox Moller.



Many hours are spent in the electronic rooms when not at a concert. The Conn room this year was no exception.



Lunch at the Music Grinder in nearby Marietta on Wednesday was accomplished by dividing the conventioners into two groups. The food and the music was hot, good and plentiful.

The Music Grinder.



scores. Tom was at ease once the console reached stage level as he played "It's a Good Day." He placed a tack on Rachmaninoff's chair with "Russian Rag," a burlesque of the Russian composer's "Prelude in C-sharp Minor."

Using Leroy Anderson's "Sleighride" as a vehicle, Tom took us to Vienna for a Strauss waltz treatment, a "Cathedral Engloutie" version in French accents, a Spanish minor mode representation in the "El Relicario" style, bagpipes and drums for a few measures in Scotland and then a Texas-style cowboy version. His stylings were self explanatory. There was also a Bach "Jig Fugue," an organ boogie, George Wright arrangements of "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "South," then came the pomp of William Walton's 1937 coronation march, "Crown Imperial," which was not a leftover from Trevor Bolshaw's concert an hour earlier.

Clean execution and many registration changes marked Tom Helm's concert.

The buses were waiting outside the Fox to take conventioners to the Music Grinder, Atlanta's first and only pizzeria with pipes. It was a warm but somewhat overcast noontime and the air conditioned buses were a blessing. There was a brief wait aboard the buses in the Grinder parking lot while the first shift finished their pizzas and boarded buses for the Fox. Then, the multitudes debarked and formed a long line which didn't seem to move for a half hour, during which a number of the more hungry customers quit the line for a sandwich shop across the street. When they returned, after enjoying a ham-on-rye and a beer, the line had started to move — but ever so slowly. It snaked into the pizzeria and around rows of tables. The attendants were doing their best; there were just too many hungry customers.

At one end of the balconied room was an attractive Wurlitzer console — "Winifred," a lady of many moves (Buffalo, Schenectady, Plattsburg in New York and now, Atlanta) perched on a Barton four-post lift, fully raised. Behind Winifred (so named by owners Dick and Audrey Weber) were the lighted chambers, some unenclosed percussions and a couple of "portativs."

The first organist announced was Lew Williams, who has shown an interest in theatre organ since he was 10. Lew has enough diplomas in classical organ studies to paper a fair-sized chamber, but his first love is the theatre organ. Lew's program reflected both his interest in the Age of the Theatre Organ and his recent studies in Europe where he picked up some interesting European music such as a wild "Orient Express" and a song, sung by the late French chanteuse, Edith Piaf, "My Lost Melody."

Lew started his show with a tune from the 1933 movie, *Footlight Parade*, "Sittin' on a Backyard Fence," and included "Canadian Sunset" with Buddy Cole-style untrem'd Diapason passages, "Temptation Rag" in the Sidney Torch manner, and more from old musicals such as "I Only Have Eyes For You" and "Forty-Second Street." At one point, he performed a nearly perfect re-creation of Jesse Crawford's 1927 hit record, "At Sundown" for a friend in the audience. Lest we get the impression that Lew Williams' forte is in imitation, let us state that his treatments of "Mr. Lucky," "By the Fireside" and "Whistling Teeth" (a German tune) were strictly his own. His classical selection was Marcel Dupre's "The Spinner" and his encore was a rousing version of Robert Elmore's "Rhumba." For good measure, he threw in John Seng's

rarely-heard, recorded arrangement of "Beyond the Blue Horizon."

A young man of very serious demeanor, the ATOS photog, Bill Lamb, finally got him to smile for a photo.

His audience let him know their approval in the usual way, added to the favorable comments of Eddie Weaver and Lee Erwin, who were in Lew's audience. Rarely had pizza been so palatable.

Next at Winifred was house organist, Jay Mitchell, who hails from Birmingham where he served as house organist at the Alabama Theatre. Jay is credited with much of the success Atlanta's first pizzery has enjoyed during its initial year of operation. His audience soon fathomed the reason; he's a showman. He came to the console in a light blue suit, and the jacket was festooned with rhinestones which provided much sparkle, even when Jay wasn't playing. His ballooning sleeves would seem to interfere with playing, but he managed an almost Wagnerian "How High the Moon," then unleashed a friendly greeting: "How yewall? Consider yourselves at home."

Jay's numbers included "Atlanta G.A.," "Nobody Does It Better," "Nadia's Theme," "Rhinestone Cowboy" (a natural, considering the sequins), Max Steiner's "Taran-telle" from *Rome Adventure*, "You Light Up My Life" and the very popular pizzery request, *Star Wars* excerpts. His serious offering was a prelude in the classic style which had Winifred going baroque briefly. His closer was a "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" with train sounds which were a bit much. Jay's selections were interestingly registered and his warm personality got through to his enchanted listeners.

Back to the buses for the trip to the Biltmore where preparations were well along for the banquet.

Wednesday evening began with a no-host cocktail party followed by the annual banquet.

The banquet was, as usual, a high point of the annual ATOS get-together. It was well served and very tasty.

Erwin "Cap" Young served as emcee and did an excellent job of conducting the proceedings smoothly.

A roll call revealed 46 chapters were represented. Members from Australia, England, Canada, Holland, and Germany were also in attendance. Five ATOS past presidents were acknowledged as were several charter members present.

Preston "Sandy" Fleet, the new ATOS President, was introduced and the badge of office (a Tibia pipe) was transferred from Ray Snitil to Sandy.

Then it was off the the Fox for more music.

After the banquet the conventioners covered the six blocks between the hotel and the Fox Theatre mostly by shanks mare, a veritable parade of ATOSers. It would be Tom Cotner's second appearance at an ATOS convention; he played at Chicago last year and his audience liked what they heard.

Tom has a style of playing that is dramatic both to the eye and the ear. He doesn't resort to the slithery type of "body English" which often turns off audiences, but the way he reaches for stopkeys, a hand lingering over a manual or poised for the attack, the way he throws his head to coincide with musical emphasis — these sights punctuate the music of Tom Cotner.

His console bringer-upper was the familiar 20th Century-Fox movie fanfare, followed by Alfred Newman's "Conquest" from *The Captain From Castile*, a dramatic



If convention attendance records were kept, Leonard and Theresa Winter, from Salem, Mass., might well get a "gold star."



Jay Mitchell at the Music Grinder.



Cap Young, emceeing the banquet festivities in the Sheraton-Biltmore.



The "Old Prospector," Lloyd E. Klos, announces the 1978 entrants into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame.



Newly-elected ATOS President "Sandy" Fleet accepts the wand of office, a Tibia pipe, from outgoing prexy Ray Snitil at the banquet.

In the Atlanta Fox lobby.





The registration room, just off the hotel lobby, was a busy place.



Tom Cotner at the Fox Moller.



One of the many organs available in the Conn room, and ably demonstrated by this Conn representative.



George Buck of the Wurlitzer Company with two ATOS ex-presidents, "Doc" Abernethy and Judd Walton, in the Wurlitzer room.

Bus captains complete with hats: John Tanner, Larry Hope, Gail Hope, Jane Torell, Wanda Corey, Jack Goodwin, Monte Smith, Richard McGee, Steve Baughman, John Torell, Carole Hubert, Bob McKee, Jim Gleeson, Ed Rainey, Al Newell.



swashbuckler depicting the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Tom played it with all the intensity of a Hollywood studio orchestra. Variety was the keynote in both titles and instrumentation. Tom's program ranged from Stephen Foster to Litoff's "Classical Concerto." He played Harry von Tilzer's "Cubanola Rag" (1909) with help from the grand piano (played from the console), Drigo's "Valse Bluette." "Bohemia Rag" (composed by the grandfather of ATOS official fotog, Bill Lamb), "Ten Cents a Dance," "With a Song in My Heart," and a "St. Louis Blues" with many variations and added frippery. Tom also accompanied a short film, a compilation of brief scenes from silent dramas and comedies showing "Perilous Escapes." All those trains barely missing autos at crossing, chases at breakneck speeds, the hero standing on a locomotive's "cow catcher," picking up the baby on the tracks ahead, forgotten comedian Monty Banks walking a plank stretched between two parallel trains — all these scenes Tom accompanied without once slapping the manuals or using hand wipe "schmeers" across the octaves. His chase music was well-tailored to the thrills depicted.

Tom Cotner's big, bravado playing style was a revelation to those who had not heard him previously, one more example of the contrasts possible from the rich tonal facilities of the Fox Moller.

Afterglow...

Several events were scheduled for this affair. This is actually not officially a part of the National Annual Meeting, but has become a tradition, whether it involves a boat trip, salmon bake or winery tour.

In this case, those who signed up had a choice of visiting three home installations or the Stone Mountain Park and Callanwolde Mansion.

The Stone Mountain trip offered a view of the largest solid mass of exposed granite known. A sculpture, commemorating the Civil War has been carved on one face.

At Stone Mountain, a 732-bell carillon (electronic) is featured. The carillonneur, Mabel Sansing Sharp, played this beautiful instrument, donated by the Coca-Cola Company, for the afterglow audience. The sound was impressive.

Next on the tour was the Callanwolde Mansion which contains a 3/51 Aeolian organ. The program was unique in that all selections offered were by player rolls. This was a most interesting organ. Although labeled "classic", it sounded more orchestral, a very pleasant sound.

From Callanwolde, the trip back to the hotel was about a half hour.

At the same time that some members were visiting Stone Mountain and the Callanwolde Mansion, others were on Home Tours. There were two different tours on Thursday morning. Two groups saw the Holbrook organ with Bobby Clark at the console and the Simmons organ played by Gordon Johnson. Another group went to the Ford home and heard Tommy Ford.

The Holbrook Residence organ is controlled by the console formerly in the Piccadilly Theatre, Chicago. This organ was the largest theatre installation built by the Kilgen Company. It is the only horseshoe console with 4 manuals built by Kilgen. (They did make many 4-manual "wing-type" consoles).

The organ originally had 19 ranks. The genius of Mildred Fitzpatrick is evidenced here inasmuch as she designed the organ. Ms. Fitzpatrick was one of Chicago's most popular organists for many years. The Kilgen was installed in 1926 and removed in 1963.

In its present state there are only 4 original Kilgen ranks and two percussions. The complementary ranks are mostly Robert Morton from the 3/15 installed in the Capitol Theatre, Atlanta.

Fourteen ranks are presently playing. There are an additional eleven ranks to be playable as the string organ.

The 2/8 Simmons Kimball organ in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Edd Simmons was installed in the Plaza Theatre on Biscayne Bay, Miami Beach, Florida, in 1927. Little is known about the instrument until 1945, when it was removed from the theatre, with the traps and toys discarded, and installed in the First Methodist Church of East Point, Georgia. There it was used regularly, and in 1954 was "modernized" with a new console. In the process of doing this the xylophone, all second touch and much of the unification of the old horseshoe console were eliminated. Nevertheless, the organ served the church well until the mid-1960s, when the church made plans for a new sanctuary and a new organ.

While looking forward to the new, the old was neglected, and the roofs above the chambers began to leak. Gradually more and more damage became noticeable. In 1967 the organ was put up for sale. The local ATOS chapter had a meeting at the church and played the Kimball with its church console and pronounced it hopeless. Serious water damage had resulted from neglect. Many of the pipes had been removed and holes plugged with cotton.

The organ was cleaned, releathered, and chambers were constructed. Gradually it is again becoming what it was built to be. Though it has only 6 of the original 8 ranks (Kinura replaced by Dulciana and Violin II by Quintadena), and only three percussions, it still has the theatre sound. Future plans are to restore the original console (its pieces have been found) and mate this organ with a Style 235, 3/11 Wurlitzer which is now being restored.

The Ford Residence Organ is a Robert Morton with Wurlitzer manuals and pedals. The pedalboard is from the slave console of the St. Louis Fox 4/36 Wurlitzer Crawford Special. Second touch is available on the accompaniment, great and pedal manuals.

A new method of stop control was devised to have more stops available with less space in the console. DialightR illuminated pushbutton switches are mounted in left and right horseshoe support panels. When activated, they light with the appropriate stop illuminated on their face. An adjacent button cancels the stop and the light. These are compatible with the electric combination action. When combination pistons are depressed, they will also light, indicating which stops are in operation.

Hector Olivera! What can we say? In the few years since he thundered in from South America, he has become an institution. Few pedalboards on the concert circuit have escaped the incessant patter of Hector's soles as he pursues the elusive bumblebee. And his Desi Arnaz brogue is as rich as ever. He opened with a loud and furious "On Broadway" (written by organist Jimmy Boyce). In complete contrast was his "Ave Maria" approach to Barbra Streisand's "Evergreen." His "Close Encounters of the Polish Kind" included such surprises as "Beer Barrel



Jerry Kenney, from the Wurlitzer home office; Linda Fidler, in charge of the slide presentation; and John Muri, consultant for the DeKalb installation, manned the Wurlitzer room.



This is what you call a 'whole bunch of talent.' (L to R) Tom Cotner, Karl Cole, Lew Williams, Tom Gnaster, David Hamilton, Lowell Ayars, Ashley Miller and Lyn Larsen. Where else but a national convention would you find this many talented men in one room?



Dick and Marilyn Schrum, past president and former national secretary, seem to be enjoying the cocktail party at the Fox.



Chuck and Mary Schrader dine on the steps in the Fox, having just recovered from the '76 Convention.

Ashley Miller makes his point to Ron Rhode as Judd Walton listens in.

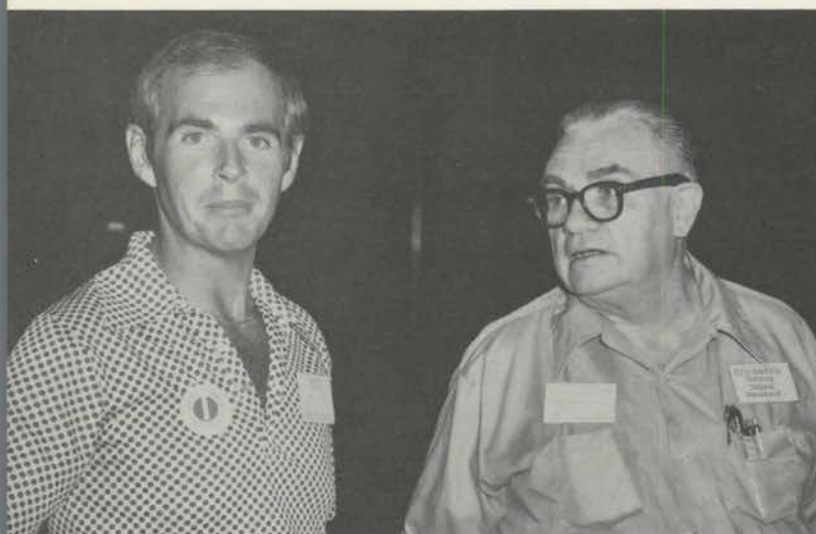




At the afterglow, Hector Olivera is about to improvise on a theme submitted by Lee Erwin.



Lew Williams, Walt Strony and Lance Luce are representative of the "younger generation" at this year's convention.



Karl Cole can hardly contain himself as the 'wisdom' of Stu Green flows freely.

Peachtree Christian Church.



Polka," and his "I'll Follow My Secret Heart" was often loaded with Cole. Buddy, that is.

The Olivera vocabulary is becoming very Americanized and he has fun projecting his very pronounced accent, but when he announces such a title as "Ad Nos, Ad Salutarium Undam" there may be a communication problem. There was. So far as we dare attempt a translation, the Franz Liszt piano piece is "To Us By The Saving Waters." Hector played it as he might cue a disaster scene in a movie. His slambang attack was appropriate for *Earthquake*; the volume, too. There are no dull moments in such an Olivera rendition and Liszt must have been spinning in his sarcophagus just from the sympathetic vibrations. If ever the word "colossal" applied, it fit here. How such a small guy can make so much noise adds to the wonderment. Whatever the musical value, the spirited playing and sheer volume galvanized the audience into furious approval.

At another point in the program Hector played on the portion of the stop complement there hadn't been time to tune, the Ethereal organ. True, the dozen or more voices were slightly out of tune with the rest of the organ, but not badly. They celested the tuned stops.

Perhaps the most effective test of Hector's musicianship was his improvisation. Betty Mason handed Hector a sealed envelope. Inside was a theme sketched by Lee Erwin before he returned to New York to recover from his three days and 3 nights of organ tuning. Hector looked at the hastily scribbled notation and shook his head, "Lee threw me a curve." Then Hector went to work on the improvisation. First he played what Lee had written, something that sounded a little like "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater." Then he went to work on it — forward, backward, upside down, and as a pedal solo with manual ornamentation. His registration changed constantly with lightning flips of stopkeys and liberal use of the Crescendo Pedal. What Hector didn't do by way of developing that innocuous little theme isn't worth mentioning. He literally wore it out, leaving some auditioneer as limp from exhaustion as he should have been, but wasn't.

For an encore, he started what could have been a fine calliope solo of "Over the Waves" but habit was too strong; he was soon skittering over the pedals in lightning pursuit of his favorite bumblebee. Hector has changed the character of this particular bee. Instead of the friendly little buzzer pictured by composer Rimsky-Korsakoff, Hector has built him up to the stature of a roaring monster, perhaps looking more like a tyrannosaurus. Had Eddie Weaver had the misfortune to encounter this brute, instead of the normal size bee which stung him, he would have been swallowed whole.

But that's the type of show Hector's fans expect from the diminutive South American and they let him know of their appreciation in no uncertain terms, including hyped record sales.

The final event was in the capable hands of Lyn Larsen, a young man who has built up an enviable musical reputation in the circa 10 years he has been recording and playing concerts.

Lyn opened his show with a happy "When I Take My Sugar to Tea" then went into an unannounced "La Rosita," played with a tango beat. Next a fine ballad presentation of Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do?" followed by a fast hula, "Ukelele Lady" which displayed the Moller's

color reeds effectively. He then re-created one of the memorable titles from one of his earliest records, "How Long Has This Been Going On" with that unforgettable upward, surging modulation for the final bravura chorus. The Moller provided all the power and color that Lyn's record played on a 3/26 Wurlitzer had displayed. Lyn offered medleys from two shows, *Desert Song* and *Girl Crazy*, and a big, fast and loud presentation of Vincent Youmans' "Great Day," which is exactly how it was heard during the stage presentation. Lyn played two novelty selections, an organ transcription of Strauss' "On the Beautiful Blue Danube" and "Silver Heels," which turned out to be Hollywood style Indian music. It was written by Neil Moret (remembered for "Chloe") and was brought to Lyn's attention by his friend, the Fr. Bill Beibel. The closer was Ponchiellis "Dance of the Hours" which Lyn has admired ever since he saw Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (Lyn copped the name for his current record). Sure enough, mention of the film was enough to conjure memories of the ballet dancers played by a lady hippo and a macho crocodile, especially the place in the music where the hippo takes a running leap into the arms of her partner and nearly squashes the poor croc flat. This reviewer actually dodged when that sequence surfaced.

Lyn's winning personality made his brief announcements palatable, and his playing is as clean and engrossing as it has been throughout his career. He is another who leaves audiences wanting more.



Lyn Larsen, following his afterglow concert, with Jack Goodwin, vice chairman of Atlanta Chapter.

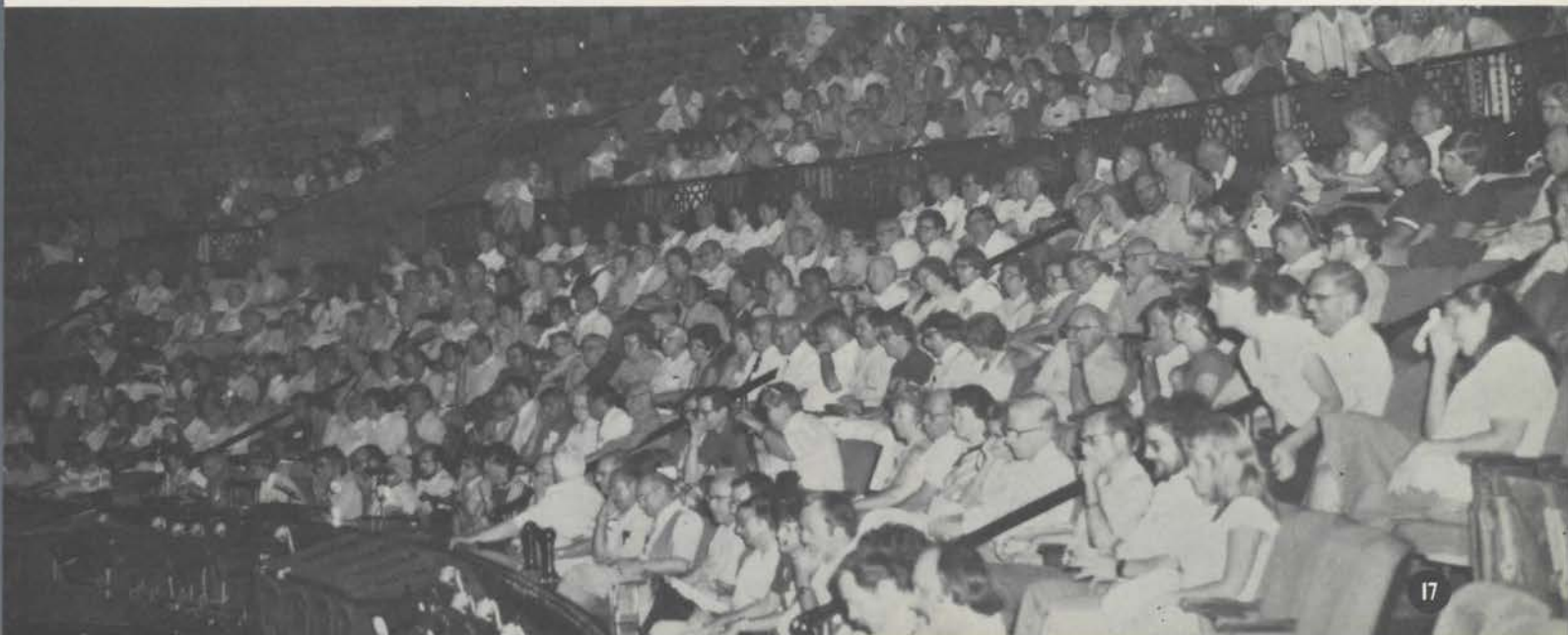
After his concert, the Fox had to be cleared for a symphony concert starring Benny Goodman and his clarinet, so Lyn directed his well-wishers and autograph seekers to the record shop on the 10th floor of the hotel. He was still there an hour and a half later, holding court. Lyn just likes people.

In closing, we again express our appreciation to organist Lee Erwin. He came on the scene early, saw the problem and took the bull by the horns. Without Lee's leadership in organizing a volunteer group to assist Joe Patten in getting the Fox organ tuned, there could not have been a successful convention.



Group B waits patiently for lunch at the Music Grinder Restaurant.

The Atlanta Fox balcony during the Helen Dell show.





At the Banquet.



▲ The line for lunch at the Music Grinder extended out into the parking lot.

▼ The Birmingham Civic Center Concert Hall.





1978 ATOS President, Preston "Sandy" Fleet.

New President...

Preston "Sandy" Fleet has been active in promoting interest in theatre organ in the Southwest. He is a charter member of the San Diego Chapter which he helped to organize. He has been influential in obtaining pipe organs for civic auditoriums. He has also donated a pipe organ to the San Diego Chapter.

Jam Sessions...

There were jam sessions held during most nights of the convention at the Music Grinder Pizzeria which is equipped with Dick and Audrey Weber's immaculate 3/22 Wurlitzer, described elsewhere in these pages. The jam sessions started after the days' concerts were finished, perhaps around 11:00 p.m. and attracted near-capacity crowds to the Grinder (which can accommodate 300 pizza munchers). It must be pointed out that these late night sessions were not on the convention schedule, they just materialized from the enthusiasm generated by a large gathering of theatre organ aficionados who couldn't get enough. Bob Oberlander attended several of the Grinder sessions and he reports that the most inspiring one was on Tuesday night, an evening during which everything fell into place and the fervor grew with the introduction of each succeeding participant.

Age doesn't seem to be a factor in the construction of a successful jam session. Singing organist Lowell Ayars was on hand; he admits to 60 — plus a few. But Harry Koenig was there on Tuesday, too, and he boasts about 80 — plus (we assume he's kidding).

One of the youngest to play was Jerry Nagano (21) of Southern California. Jerry's first record has just been released and he offered some of the tunes he recorded. Tom Cotner was on hand with his dramatic stylings, so was a promising young man named Lance Luce who gets better with each passing year.

Of course, the piece-de-resistance was the inimitable Bull of the Pampas, Hector Olivera, who has a natural talent for entertaining. His wild and devastating approach to the console has frazzled many a concept of organ entertainment. Hector is unique — and his music is pretty good, too.

One novelty bit was a duet by "Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Crawford," impersonated by Texans Lew Williams and Danny Ray. They had a small problem deciding who was who but their re-creation of the Crawford's recorded duets, although performed on a single console, were not bad. At one point usually deadpan Lew Williams actually smiled, something Crawford did but rarely when acknowledging applause.

One must be at a jam session to realize the mounting fervor when all the governing factors are just right. Such magic was manifested during the wee hours of July 11-12 according to many witnesses. We wish we could fathom the secret so future events could be staged with assured enthusiasm, meanwhile we'll settle for the rare "happening" during which everything is just right to assure a very memorable experience.

Electronics...

The electronic displays consisted of Conn and Wurlitzer. Other companies had indicated a desire to display but did not do so.

Conn had three organs available and were heard regularly during the leisure hours.

The Wurlitzer display was audio-visual and there were also two organs on display. As noted elsewhere, misfortune struck so this exhibition was only available Sunday and Monday.

The chapter operated Record Shop did a brisk business with a large display of theatre organ recordings and other organ oriented items.

MYSTERIOUS DISASTER!

Sometime between Sunday night and Tuesday morning, disaster struck the Wurlitzer Display on the 10th floor of the Sheraton-Biltmore.

The display featured an audio-visual display of Wurlitzer's project, the Mightiest Wurlitzer and included a history of the Wurlitzer Company with emphasis on the pipe organ.

This comprehensive audio-visual presentation was shown to attending ATOS members on Sunday July 9th. Since everyone was in Birmingham on Monday there was very little activity at the display.

Realising the ATOSers would return quite late Wurlitzer representatives Russ Gazda and Linda Fidler shut down the exhibit, locked the doors and left the display.

Tuesday morning, John Muri came to the room, found the doors unlocked, went in and started preparing for the expected crowd. Soon after, audio-visual expert Linda Fidler arrived and began to prepare the equipment for the day's work. At this point she detected something amiss with one of the slide projectors. Upon checking it was found that extreme heat had melted all the plastic parts and ruined an entire set of slides. Examination showed the projector, a rental machine, to be completely ruined. Although all switches were in the off position some sort of heat or malfunction had consumed the projector, and associated equipment.

Because the entire display depended on this projection equipment and slides, the loss forced Wurlitzer representatives to close the exhibit.

This was a most unfortunate event as the few who saw the display on Sunday were extremely enthusiastic in their praise of the pictorial history of the Wurlitzer pipe organ.

As we go to press, no explanation or reason for the disaster has been forthcoming from the hotel security staff and it is totally unexplainable to the Wurlitzer Company.

Since the loss of the slides, the center of the display, was complete, there was no reason to keep the exhibit room open. Therefore it was closed and the Wurlitzer representatives returned to De Kalb, Illinois.