



**Al Sacker**, founder of the South East Texas Chapter, died of a stroke November 27, 1979, at age 60. Al's studies included a period at the Juilliard School of Music in New York, studying with Dr. George Liebling, one of five surviving U.S. students of Franz Liszt. He had been organist and choirmaster at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Beaumont for 23 years and organist at the Jefferson Theatre for 30 years. His affection for the 3/8 Robert Morton, the only theatre organ still playing in a Texas theatre, was well known and is largely responsible for the formation of the Jefferson Theatre Preservation Society.

**Kathleen "Kay" Stokes**, the Grand Lady of Canadian Theatre Organ, died on December 14th. In a senior citizens home following the death of her longtime friend, Lillian Brookes, in September 1978, Kay broke her



Kathleen Stokes.

hip in a fall in the home. The operation was a success, but she contacted pneumonia, followed by a cardiac arrest. She was 85.

Born Kathleen Norah O'Connor in Durham, Ontario, she began piano lessons at six. To pay for her music lessons while in high school, she played for silent movies in a St. Catharines, Ont. theatre. Further studies were at St. Joseph Convent and the College of Music in Toronto. Until 1917, she was a theatre pianist, but in that year, she played the organ in the College Theatre, the beginning of a long career as one of Toronto's leading theatre organists.

Theatres in which she played were the Tivoli, Loew's Downtown (her favorite), the Pantages (later Imperial), Uptown and Shea's Hippodrome. Radio shows on CFRB utilized her talents, and in 1937, she began a 22-year run on CBS's *Happy Gang*, a five-day-a-week, 39-week program. It was broadcast coast-to-coast and to the States. Kay played a Hammond on the show; an otherwise all-male production. There were 4,890 broadcasts of the memorable program.

After the *Happy Gang*, Kay concertized and taught. She suffered a quadruple loss in 1951. Her husband, Francis; a son, a grandson, and a brother were all killed in a boating accident. She kept busy as a musician into the seventies. On August 28, 1975, she participated in a reunion of the *Happy Gang* members before a capacity audience at the CNE, playing an electronic for the occasion. Her theme song, "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," brought tears to many, who were caught in the nostalgia of the day.

An avid follower of theatre organ revival, she frequently appeared at Toronto's Casa Loma and in Rochester, accompanied by Lillian Brookes, to hear the artists of the day. In 1974, she was inducted into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame. The writer will never forget this gracious, kindly lady who was in his company on several occasions.

Lloyd E. Klos □

## For The Records



*Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information (post-paid price, ordering address,) if applicable, and a black and white photo of the artist which need not be returned.*

**CANADIAN CAPERS, Don Thompson playing the 4/22 RTOS Wur-litzer in the Auditorium Theatre, Rochester, N.Y. Phonodisc PHE-6004. \$7.00 postpaid from Pipe Organ Presentations, 112 Sumach Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5A-3J9**

Don Thompson probably has more record releases out than any other organist, past or present. He is easily one of the most energetic of the present generation, and he probably earns more bread through record royalties than any other organist, by his own admission. A mere record reviewer can't argue with such success, so Don has got to be doing something right.

The British-trained organist is also voluble in explaining his aims, so reviewers will not misinterpret his efforts. He dismisses "elegant, refined playing with tasteful registration, as it was 50 years ago" because "the public today, and more ATOS-ers than you know about, could not care less about these qualities." So, Don produces what he knows will sell — strict tempo tunes ("... there