

# CHICAGO WEEKENDER

by Joseph F. Sonntag

So few . . . did so much . . . for so many, is the story of approximately twenty dedicated and hard-working CATOE members who created the "Chicago Weekender." The "Weekender" began on a damp cold Friday evening with the attendees being bused to the Scottish Rite Cathedral to hear Devon Hollingsworth play the three-manual E & G Hook tracker organ of 46 ranks. Devon was ably assisted by his wife and a friend, who pushed and pulled the stops, allowing Devon free to concentrate on his performance. This organ was a bit unusual to be featured in a theatre organ convention.

About midnight, the organ enthusiasts braved the elements to walk several blocks to the Oriental Theatre to enjoy the distinctive organ styling of Rob Calcaterra. In spite of some problems in the theatre, Rob presented a diversified and entertaining program. This may have been the last concert of this magnificent organ at the Oriental Theatre as the theatre is to be closed at the end of 1980.

Early Saturday morning, the conventioners were bused to Maine North High School to hear an extraordinary happening. Walter Strony, CATOE's own prodigy, performed at CATOE's own three-manual Wurlitzer organ. Walter grew up in CATOE and we are justifiably proud of his accomplishments.

Traveling further north, we arrived at St. Marys of the Lake Seminary to be entertained and delighted with the youngest of our artists, Lance Luce. It was a hectic weekend for Lance. He flew in on Friday, practiced several hours and flew back to Michigan. He flew in Saturday morning for his performance and left immediately to fly home. In spite of the pressure, he thrilled and delighted his audience.

Then it was back to the hotel for a couple of hours of relaxation before the banquet. Following the delicious banquet, the charming and tiny

Maria Kumagai was introduced. She was barely able to reach the pedals of the beautiful Rogers Trio, and weighs so little that the bench had to be taped to the floor to keep it from sliding away from the organ. She admits she does not speak English too well, but she communicates fluently when she plays the organ, as attested to by the standing ovation she received at the end of her performance.

The organ enthusiasts began assembling Sunday morning before 7:30 at the Chicago Theatre to hear Dennis James play this famous organ. Typical of his innovative na-

ture, he presented slides of his recent trip to France and Belgium to the tune of "April in Paris."

Across town, fighting the blustery winds, we reached the Civic Opera House, where, in the setting of the final scene of the masked ball, Walter Strony again thrilled his audience with his versatility at the 3/50 E. M. Skinner Opera House Organ.

Then, back to the hotel for a bountiful and delicious brunch. There were oft-repeated expressions of pleasure and delight with the "Weekender" as we bid adieu to our guests. □



## CHAPTER NOTES

**Let us know what's  
happening in YOUR Chapter!**

Send Photos and News to:

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Jan. 1st. for Feb./Mar.  
Mar. 1st. for Apr./May  
May 1st. for June/July  
July 1st. for Aug./Sept.  
Sept. 1st. for Oct./Nov.  
Nov. 1st. for Dec./Jan.

### ALABAMA

Cecil and Linda Whitmire have moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. They wrote this column, and I miss them already. We wish them the best of success at the new job and location.

The Cinema Unlimited Series came to an end December 10th at the Alabama Theatre. This was a showing of some of the old classic movies such as *Show Boat* and *Casablanca*. The organ was played for thirty minutes before every evening show and on Wednesday, Saturday and

Sunday matinees by Cecil Whitmire, Barry Norris and Billy Evans. A lot of interest was shown in the organ and many people were thrilled again by its playing. They also learned that the Alabama Theatre is still a beautiful place. The series may be repeated in the Spring.

The chapter had its regular meeting November 9th and was entertained by a very nice program by Barry Norris. Barry was on the way to being an all classical organist until he heard the Wurlitzer. He got hooked. He has caught on fast and now plays the theatre style very well.

December 7th was not our regular meeting time, however, we found that Walt Winn would come from Atlanta to play for us on that date so we moved the meeting date up a week. Walt and Larry Donaldson spent most of the night at the Alabama setting the presets and making some adjustments to the organ. Walt was still awake enough to give us a magnificent concert the next morning. His program was full of wit and humor as well as excellent organ playing. We found that Bob Van Camp was with the group from Atlanta and we persuaded him to play a