

# PIPE DREAM

by R. D. Lee

Twenty-five years is a long time to nurture a dream, but that's just how long Bill Newton kept alive the dream of having his own pipe organ. Now, with the patient help of his wife, Donna, and friends like Marlin Mackley and others in the St. Louis Chapter of ATOS, that dream has become a reality. Sitting in full splendor in the Newton's Florissant, Missouri, home is a Wurlitzer hybrid pipe organ with two manuals, eight ranks, 62 stops, percussions, and traps. The Dream breathes, and sings, and has become a permanent member of the family.

The story really begins back in 1956 when Bill heard Leon Berry play the Chicago Skating Rink instrument. This was really a case of "love at first sound." Many elec-

tronic organs were heard over the years, but to Bill's ears, there was something lacking. As a supervisory motion picture engineer with the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force, Bill had experienced a great deal of professional "listening." In charge of various technical aspects of top-rated 35mm motion picture theatres in dozens of bases and posts, he was used to hearing sound of good quality provided by Dolby Stereo. And when it came to hearing organ music, there was just nothing quite like the sounds of a real, air-breathing pipe organ.

In his professional capacity, Bill Newton traveled quite a bit. Two good things happened while on assignment in Hawaii: He met his wife, Donna, and he had a chance to

help with the restoration of a Robert Morton pipe organ. While working on the Robert Morton, the Dream kept coming back. Maybe, someday . . . just maybe . . .

Some time later, Bill noticed an ad in THEATRE ORGAN for a 2/6 Wurlitzer for sale in Ventura, California. The trip west from St. Louis paid off. The organ was in reasonably good condition and worth shipping back to Missouri.

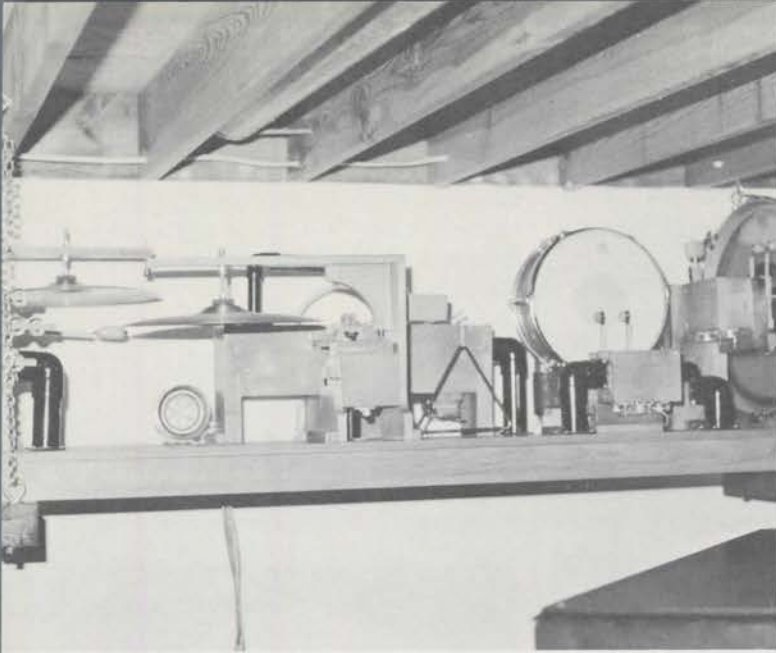
At this point, the Newton's weren't sure whether this was still a dream or whether it might better be called a nightmare! First, the blower wouldn't go through the door. Even after taking off the motor, the blower case barely squeezed through. With parts here and parts there, it was a mess to say the least. Not an organ technician by any means, Bill had only an inkling of where to start and what was needed to get the whole thing put together and in playing condition. And Bill had not yet learned to play the organ!

To the rescue came Marlin Mackley, former chairman of the St. Louis Chapter of ATOS. In six days they had the Vox playing. The Dream was taking shape. About 900 hours of work later, after many cuts, bumps and aches, the job was nearly complete. Altogether, there were now eight ranks with the two that had been added. Included were a Flute, Diapason, Vox Humana, Tibia, String, String Celeste, Oboe, Trumpet and Bourdon.

Over the period of weeks and months, all of the parts had been carefully cleaned and restored to like-new condition. A set of Wicks shutters were installed. A 37-note Robert Morton Glockenspiel was hung on one wall. A 37-note Kimball Xylophone made its way into the chamber. A new toy counter was ordered from Gorsuch Enterprises in

Bill and Donna Newton's pipe organ represents the fulfillment of a long-time dream. The console is a Wurlitzer Model D, Opus 18.





San Diego. When family business took the Newtons to Southern California, they dropped into the Gorsuch shops and saw their toy counter being assembled.

At last the BIG DAY came. The organ was complete, and it was time for the world to hear it. On April 26, 1981, a Chapter concert was scheduled for the instrument. Appropriately enough, Marlin Mackley was asked to be the featured artist at the dedication. It was a marvelous evening with a well-received performance, followed by an extended period of open console. Everyone enjoyed themselves so much that the evening almost became morning!

Even Bill was amazed at the performance of the organ. There wasn't a single cipher all evening. Everything worked! "In short," Bill said later, "it really sounded neat!" Were there any regrets? How about the hundreds of hours of time spent? What about the cost? How about the

Top Left — Although not original Wurlitzer, the toy counter looks and functions much like those made years ago. Made by Gorsuch Enterprises, it was ordered "with room to grow."

Top Right — Robert Morton 37-note Glockenspiel, Reisner relay board, Moller Vox Humana, Kilgen Trumpet and String Diapason.

Right — Home-built Solo relay, equipped with 15-point Reisner note relays and Organ Supply switches.

Bottom Left — With these pipes, Bill Newton's Dream has learned to speak. Partly Wurlitzer, partly Morton, partly Kilgen, the ancestry is mixed but well accepted.

Bottom Right — Kimball 37-note Xylophone, Dennison Oboe, Kilgen Flute.

need for all those Band-Aids? "No, I have no regrets," says a very satisfied Bill Newton. "Furthermore, I can now play a few songs!"

Twenty-five years *is* a long time to nurture a dream. Call it that or call it a fantasy or a goal or an ambition. For Bill Newton, the dream has come true.

And how is *your* dream coming along? □

