

# U.S. ORGAN, 53, BLOOMS AGAIN

On Saturday evening, October 3, 1981, Andy Kasparian and Bob Lent played the opening concert on the 3/11 United States Pipe Organ Opus 101 installed in Sunnybrook Ballroom, Pottstown, Pennsylvania. About 500 theatre organ buffs were present for cocktails, buffet dinner, and the gala evening. Among the guests were Roger and Dorothy Bloom, former owners of the organ, who returned from their new home in Florida for the occasion, and Bill and Helen Hellyer, of Pottstown. Helen, a theatre and church organist since the '20s, was "house" organist

while Opus 101 was in the Bloom's home, and Bill was a member of the organ work crew.

Opus 101 was built in 1928 by the United States Pipe Organ Company, of Crum Lynne, Pennsylvania, for the Lansdale Theatre in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. On opening night, March 5, 1928, the overture was played by John Christ. Following the newsreel and comedy an organ solo was presented by John K. Glasner, after which the first staff organist, Miss Jessie Price, accompanied the feature picture.

In 1942 the organ was purchased by the Baptist Church of Phoenixville, where it was installed and used for thirty years. The tuned percus-

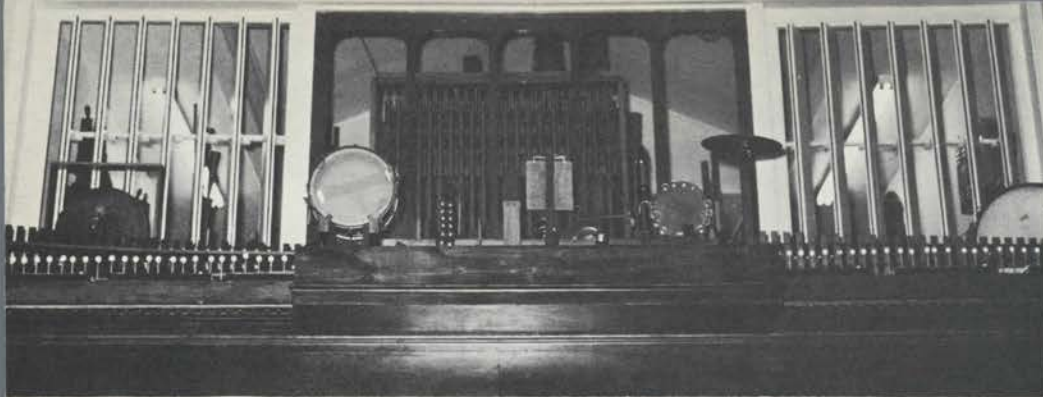
sions and toy counter were not used in the church installation, but were carefully stored for the thirty years at the home of a member of the church.

Early in 1972 the church decided to replace the United States Pipe Organ with a new instrument, and the Blooms purchased the old organ. The move to their residence in Downingtown was begun on February 14. By Easter the first sounds from the organ in its new home were heard, powered by a vacuum cleaner. A portable blower replaced the vacuum cleaner as more ranks were added, until the regular organ blower with a new single-phase motor was installed. The original percussions and toy counter were

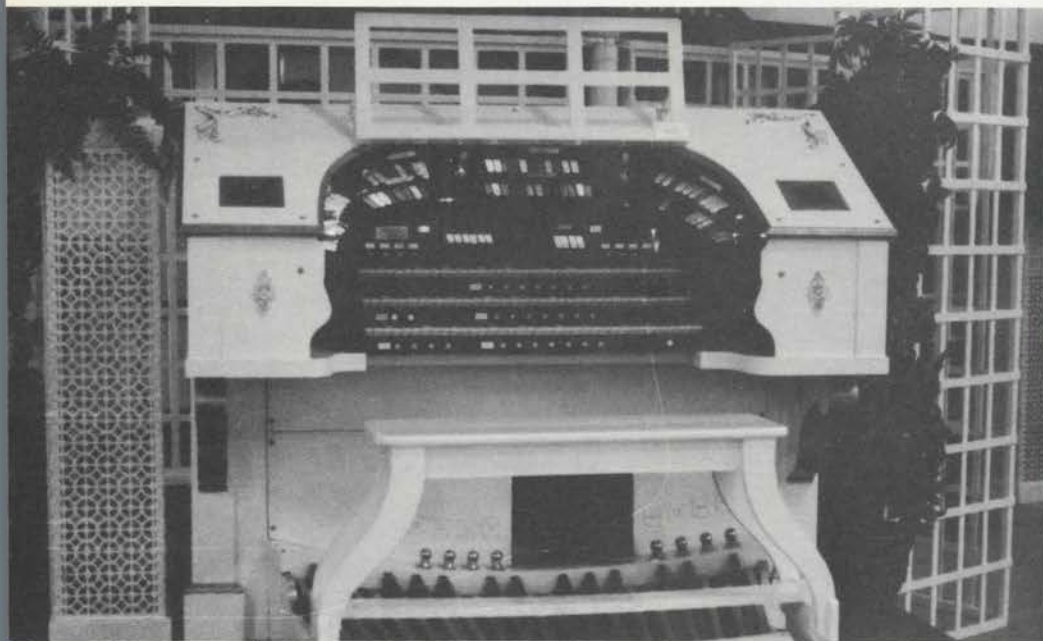
Sunnybrook Ballroom set up for a banquet. Organ console at rear, right of center.







Single pipe chamber over ballroom entrance.



Console of Opus 101.

Helen Hellyer at the console of the "U.S. Pipes" organ in its new home in Sunnybrook, Pottstown, Pennsylvania. This veteran was staff organist at the Grove Theatre in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania from the mid-1920s to the early '30s. She still presents silent movie benefits, and was "house" organist for six years on this "U.S. Pipes" organ at its last location in the Bloom residence near Downingtown, Pennsylvania.



given to the Blooms, and were added to their home installation.

Later, all air-operated switches in the console were replaced, as were the stop tabs, toe studs, and expression pedals. New direct electric relays were installed, with color-coded wiring replacing the old. The setter board was removed from the console, repaired and enlarged, and installed near the relay.

The Bloom home was on the Home Organ Visitation list for the 1976 ATOS Convention in Philadelphia. Bill Taber, later president of Western Reserve Chapter, was the featured artist.

In March 1981 Roger and Dorothy Bloom sold their home in preparation for moving to Florida. Bill Hellyer introduced them to Bob and Ray Hartenstine, owners of the Sunnybrook Ballroom. The brothers saw and heard the organ and liked it so well that they bought it.

Under the direction of Bob Lent the organ was removed in a couple of weeks and transported to its fourth home in Pottstown (about twenty miles from Downingtown and nearly the same distance from Lansdale, its original home).

The Sunnybrook Ballroom is a part of a complex which includes a fine restaurant and catering business, cocktail lounge, outdoor dining pavilion, swimming pool and tennis court. The Hartenstine brothers, and their father before them, have presented many of the well-known "big bands" for over fifty years. They handle everything from a dinner for two to a banquet for 2,000.

The organ is installed in a single chamber on the mezzanine above the entrance to the ballroom, with the toy counter across the front of the mezzanine. The console is placed on the main floor at one side of the entrance. Sounds were produced in May. Helen Hellyer played the first public performance in early September.

Since its dedication Opus 101 has been used every weekend for private parties and the like. On Sunday mornings "open console" is featured during brunch (restricted, however, to artists or would-be artists selected in advance). A special Christmas program was presented by Bob Lent on December 20.

Present plans are to add five or six ranks to the organ early in 1982. □