

A Pre-Convention Overture Safari

by A. Beck Parsons

Early one morning Maurice and Nina Adamson called to inform me of the British "invasion" plans. It appeared that a rather large contingent of our friends from Great Britain would be coming to the States a few days in advance of the ATOS Convention in Seattle. It was the Adamson's idea to show them a bit of western hospitality. After a few frantic phone calls a mini-tour of Oregon theatre pipe organ installations was arranged. As only two days would be available, the Adamsons arranged for a mini-bus for transportation. I could go on about this unusual event, but what could be better than having a Britisher talk about his visit. Beck Parsons, long-time and well-known member of the London Chapter, narrates the "invasion" in typical British fashion.

— Joe Gray

A party of some thirty English people arrived in Seattle to take part in the 26th ATOS Convention. This is an account of the pre-convention activities of a small group of them.

On arrival in Seattle in the afternoon of Saturday, June 27, we were met at the airport by our long-time dear friends from Oregon, Nina and Maurice Adamson. Terry (my wife) and I had been previously warned that there was a plan to spirit us away for a tour of Oregon, but the full magnitude of the event was still on the secret list. However, we did know that the party was to include, apart from ourselves, Les and Edith

Rawle, Vera Crook, Janice Morton and Patrick Shotton. Maurice arranged to meet us at lunchtime on Sunday when all would be revealed. After a morning spent visiting the Space Needle, we returned to the Mayflower Park Hotel, and in due course Maurice and Nina arrived and revealed the basic contents of their surprise which was, to say the least, quite breathtaking.

We were to take off from Boeing Field at 2 p.m. in two Cessna aircraft, whose young pilots had been briefed to fly alongside the mountain ranges as far as Mt. St. Helens and virtually over the crater there, plus a tour around the vicinity to see some of the havoc caused during the 1980 eruption. All those on board couldn't fail to be impressed with what they had seen, and many photos were taken during this stage of the flight. The first part of our journey ended at a beautiful leisure resort aptly named Sun River, and after we had landed we were driven to the lovely timbered clubhouse which I suppose is the hub of the complex. Our hosts, who I forgot to mention are members of the London Chapter in addition to their own Oregon activities, had pre-arranged a magnificent meal which we ate in these idyllic surroundings in company with the two young pilots. They became quite interested in the group and as a gesture we made one of them an Honorary Member of the London Chapter.

Back to the Cessnas to continue our journey, and we experienced a

little trauma at this second takeoff. The aircraft I was in taxied to the end of the runway, only to find that we hadn't been joined by the second aircraft, so, of course, we waited for several minutes until at long last it appeared. Our pilot asked his colleague if he had troubles. His laconic reply was "No, just slow loading." I realized immediately what had happened. Anyhow, airborne once more we continued with our very scenic ride, flying along part of the Columbia River with the pilot highlighting many interesting spots, finally alighting at McMinnville aerodrome, which I suppose is some twenty miles from Sheridan and our ultimate destination.

Two cars met us to take us on to the last stage of our journey to the Adamson's home. We finally arrived very happy, if a little tired. Janice and Vera were to sleep at a close friend and neighbor's house. Terry and I, Les and Edith and Patrick were all to stay in Maurice and Nina's lovely home, which houses a magnificent Rodgers organ, a beautiful Steinway grand piano and a smaller Hammond, all of which Nina placed at our disposal.

As is my normal practice, I arose early the next morning and went for a walk before breakfast, to look around Sheridan. I was joined by Patrick, another early riser. We were obviously marked down as strangers in the town, so even the local policeman slowed his car to bid us a cheery "Good morning." After breakfast



Off to Oregon: Les Rawle (l), Beck Parsons (r).



The infamous mini-bus and crew, (left to right): Janice Morton, Beck Parsons, Patrick Shotton, Terry Parsons, George the driver, Maurice Adamson, Stan Whittington, Edith Rawle, Fern Eberhart, Vera Crook, Gladys Whittington. Kneeling: Rolland Miller and Les Rawle.

we were joined by Rolly Miller from Salem with his house guests, well-known English organist Stan Whittington and his wife Gladys and local ATOS Chapter Chairman Joe Gray.

After a little light music, we all set off in a mini-bus for a pre-arranged organ crawl in Oregon, starting on the outskirts of Salem at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ron Hamer, which houses a beautifully-installed semi-classical pipe organ at which Stan presided for the first cameo, followed by Joe Gray. Refreshments were served, which included some mouth-watering strawberry cakes. When we continued on our way, Mr. and Mrs. Hamer joined our party for the rest of the day.

Our next port of call was Corvallis. The university campus there includes a great hall which seats several thousand people. Many basketball practice games were in progress, but our interest centered on a little two-manual Wurlitzer on a platform at one end of the stadium-type seating area. The chambers were in two boxes attached to the back wall, and

although the instrument was sweet enough, it would need to be somewhat larger to adequately fill that hall.

Our next stop was the home of retired railway engineer Ed Maas and his wife Ruth. Ed not only has a railroad track around his garden, but three or four hand-built, scale model steam engines which are capable of pulling him along on a flat truck. These have all been built by himself and, just for good measure, when you descend into the basement there is a three-manual Wurlitzer in perfect working order. Once again Stan Whittington was the first on. During our stay, Ruth Maas served lunch to all the guests, plus a very welcome punch. All too soon, in order to maintain our schedule, it was necessary to say farewell.

We then headed for the Pacific Coast which has much scenic beauty. In due course we arrived at the Newport home of Mary Pitts, which is virtually at the waters edge of lovely Newport Bay. The centre-piece of the lounge is a beautiful 12-rank

Billy Woods console, installed by Mary's late husband. The chambers are in a corner of the lounge and the whole effect is quite eye-catching, as well as being very pleasant to hear. Maurice understood that Mary would only serve light refreshments and a glass of wine, and had therefore pre-booked a meal for the party at Salishan, a few miles up the coast. However, on seeing Mary's idea of light refreshment, which was a veritable feast of seafood of all types, beautifully arranged under the flags of both our countries, Maurice made the only possible decision which was to cancel the pre-booked meal. Mary, we think that your table looked superb and thank you for making us so welcome in your lovely home. What a beautiful thought to present each of us with a memento package of the multi-colored agate stones with a write-up on their origins, which I am sure we will all treasure.

Reluctantly taking our leave, we moved along the coast and arrived at the Coronado Shores home of Henry and Elfriede Wuckert, which actual-

Mary Pitts residence, Newport, Oregon. 4/12 Billy Woods formerly in the Oaks Park skating rink, Portland. At the console: Stan Whittington.

Gill Coliseum, Corvallis, Oregon. From left to right: Les Rawle, Rolland Miller, Patrick Shotton, Stan Whittington, Joe Gray, Beck Parsons, Nina Adamson, Fern Eberhart.





Paul Quarino and Les Rawle in the chambers at Alpenrose Dairy's 4/50 Skinner.



Paul Quarino and Stan Whittington at the console of the 4/50 Skinner Organ: Alpenrose Dairy.

ly overlooks the sea and is virtually on the beach. They were already entertaining organ friends from Bend, Oregon, but an additional sixteen people made no difference and we were all readily accepted as friends. Stan was prevailed upon to play the immaculate Conn organ, complete with pipes, then Joe had a stint on it, and a very happy hour or so was spent in extremely congenial company. Afterwards we headed back to Sheridan to relax and listen to a little music played by Nina and others and to talk over the activities of this most exciting day.

On Tuesday, after my pre-breakfast stroll, once again the mini-bus arrived bringing more friends who were to join us for breakfast and to travel with us for the day, which Maurice assured me would be less arduous than the previous day. Leaving at around 9:30 a.m. we made our

"Where are the pipes?" Stan Whittington at the Alpenrose Dairy musical instrument museum.



way leisurely to the summit of Mt. Hood, which is the mecca for many skiers and other mountain sport fans. Sadly, the weather closed in on us at Timberline Lodge, and the intention was to close the mountain at 1 p.m., because of the poor visibility and possible dangers to the many youngsters waiting to practice their sport.

After leaving the mountain, we came across a little Swiss Village and eatery called Heidi's, where we stopped for lunch. The weather had turned to light rain and this precluded us from inspecting the other interesting facets of this complex. We then moved on to the Alpenrose Dairy Estate in Portland, containing a lovely fantasy village which children must have enjoyed for many years. It has miniature shops of every description, including a blacksmith's forge and even a sheriff's office. There is a magnificent collection of dolls, covering most parts of the world, which delighted everyone present. Paul Quarino, who hosted us for this visit along with Joe Gray, obviously spends much of his spare time at this location, and with the David Newman collection of musical machines, toys and automobiles I am sure that his many talents are put to good use.

Perhaps the personal highlight was a visit to the Alpenrose Opera House which houses a beautifully-installed concert organ, a large four-manual Skinner with the chambers at the rear of the stage and the console on a lift in the orchestra pit, side by side with a two-manual Kimball. The concert organ was quite magnificent and Paul Quarino delighted us all with his playing. Once again Stan Whittington was called on and after

a short spell looking round this intricate console proved yet again what a complete professional he surely is. The visit ended with Joe Gray playing with great fluency and most of the party inspecting the well-laid-out chambers.

This resume does scant justice to the original thinking behind the Toy-town Village and the pleasure it must have given and still is giving to thousands of young people. We of the English group who were fortunate enough to be present are greatly indebted to all those who made this visit possible. In this respect I must mention Paul Quarino, who made us all so welcome, Joe Gray, and the lady from Alpenrose whose name I think is Jessie — there no doubt will be others whose names I cannot recall — but thank you all anyway.

We were due back in Sheridan at 6:30 but were some thirty minutes behind schedule. When we did arrive we were greeted by Nina and Maurice's family — son Val, his wife Gloria and their daughter Melissa, daughter Diane with husband Larry and their sons Kyle and Ryan, and Maurice's colleague, Larry Tennant and his family. Gloria had prepared a superb meal for the whole party,

"I thought you were playing Nola!" Stan Whittington and Nina Adamson at the Adamson's home.



with help from the other family members. The table was quite beautiful. My big regret is that in the excitement I forgot to take a photograph of it before we all moved in. Whenever I think of Oregon I am sure that I will be able to taste the wonderful strawberry cakes. After the meal everyone socialised and of course we had some organ music from Nina, Joe, Rolly, Stan and Paul. This was to be our final night in Sheridan and it certainly was a night to remember.

The convention was due to start in Seattle on the Wednesday and Maurice planned to drive the 200 miles there in time for the registration. Edith, Les and I wanted to be at Seattle in time for the Chapter Reps. meeting scheduled for around midday. Maurice came up with the answer by hiring a Piper Cherokee at McMinnville and getting a pilot friend to fly us back. We took off at about 9:30 a.m. and although it was slightly misty over the mountain ranges, Ray, the pilot flew alongside the Columbia River at a height that made for magnificent viewing and we finally landed at Boeing Field in plenty of time to get us back to the hotel for our meeting. Maurice and Nina, in company with Terry, Vera, Janice and Pat, arrived by car later in the day, well in time for registration and the start of the convention.

This, then was our overture safari. I am at a loss for words on how best to say thank you to our dear friends Maurice and Nina Adamson and their family for making it such a wonderful three days, so perhaps on behalf of seven English people, sorry, "British" (Les and Edith are Welsh), may I offer this completely unoriginal toast: "To music and the friends it brings." □

MUMBRUE'S MUSICAL MONSTER

by John Lauter

The late 1950s and early 1960s were a transitory period for theatres and their pipe organs. Television became the major entertainment medium, luring a great many patrons from the large screen to the small screen. Some of the theatres were razed and converted into parking lots. Developers bought and razed theatres to build office structures claiming that it was a more efficient use of land. It seems even organ chambers had become endangered due to "modern air conditioning" installed in organ lofts or wide screen modifications rendered to the proscenium and/or organ grilles. It was at this time that theatre organ enthusiasts found it possible to acquire an entire instrument for a modest price.

Many of the home installations we see today came about as a result of this period. The Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, home of Roger and Sue Mumbroe houses one of the finest examples of this type of installation in the country. What evolved into a

dynamic 3/28 Marr & Colton hybrid started out as a 3/16 Wurlitzer installed in his mother's Royal Oak, Michigan, home. In 1958 Roger assembled his first home installation, using a Wurlitzer Style D console he had modified to accept a third manual and another stop rail. He had a small collection of pipes gathered to complement the Style D ranks. Not long after this, Roger obtained the Tuxedo Theatre's 3/13 Morton, the Oriole Theatre's 3/17 Marr & Colton, and the Olympia Stadium's 3/14 Barton-Gottfried. The acquisition of these instruments allowed for selection of ranks for the future hybrid organ. In 1965 construction of the new Mumbroe home began with particular attention to organ chamber design and listening area. The 19 original ranks were comfortably installed in the 40' x 20' chamber at the beginning of 1966. The 3/17 Marr & Colton console from the Oriole Theatre has controlled the instrument since that time, as it had the best potential for expansion of its three stop rails. The single chamber adds a spacious sound to the organ and yet there is a pronounced separation between sides. As the house was built for the organ, the chamber placement and rank location were easy to dictate. A five-foot pit in the rear of the chamber allowed all pedal offsets to go in without any mitering of the pipes. Trying to impress the builder with the importance of this excavation proved rather difficult. After much head scratching, Roger told the builder that the pit was to be used for

View of listening area. The large bird above the console is rigged to a section of chime pneumatics a la pizza parlor.

