



Chris Gorsuch not only helped rebuild the instrument, he played the dedication concert in San Diego. (Photo by Bob Lee)

This Could Be The Start . . .

by R. D. Lee

"Ladies and gentlemen, Chris Gorsuch!"

With that brief introduction by Vice Chairman Connie Reardon, the culmination of months of preparation was about to take place. The concert presented by Chris Gorsuch marked a very high moment for members of the San Diego Chapter on that evening of April 17, 1982.

For several years the Chapter had enjoyed working on the 2/13 Wurlitzer donated by member Sandy Fleet. The organ crew had built wind lines, releathered parts, and held their breaths hoping all would go well during concerts. In general, the group had done all that every organ crew throughout the country had done: sweated, muttered, . . . and prayed.

As the instrument increased in size with later additions and as the group became more sophisticated, a desire to go "first class" developed. More stops were required for better registration possibilities. The old relay, which was frequently given "band-aid" treatment just before a concert, was overdue to be replaced. Several

ranks of pipes did not speak quite right and needed to be revoiced a bit. And a console with a third keyboard was voted a real necessity. Changes were in order and were approved by the Chapter.

Spearheaded by then-Chapter Chairman, Tim Kreifels, a drive was launched to locate a three-manual Wurlitzer console. At last, through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas C. Maxwell of San Mateo, California, a three-decker was donated to

the San Diego group. The console had originally been installed in the Manos Theatre in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. The instrument, Opus 1391, with a Style H console, had been completed in July of 1926. It was a long, round-about trip by way of Maryland (Dick Kline) and San Mateo (Bill and Dick Taylor — then Doug Maxwell), and it took many years to make the journey, but the console was finally given a permanent home in San Diego.

Many hands make . . . not so light . . . work as the console is eased into a moving truck on its way to the California Theatre in San Diego.



NOTE: The photos and story about the ATOS Convention in Detroit will appear in the next issue of THEATRE ORGAN. *The Editor*

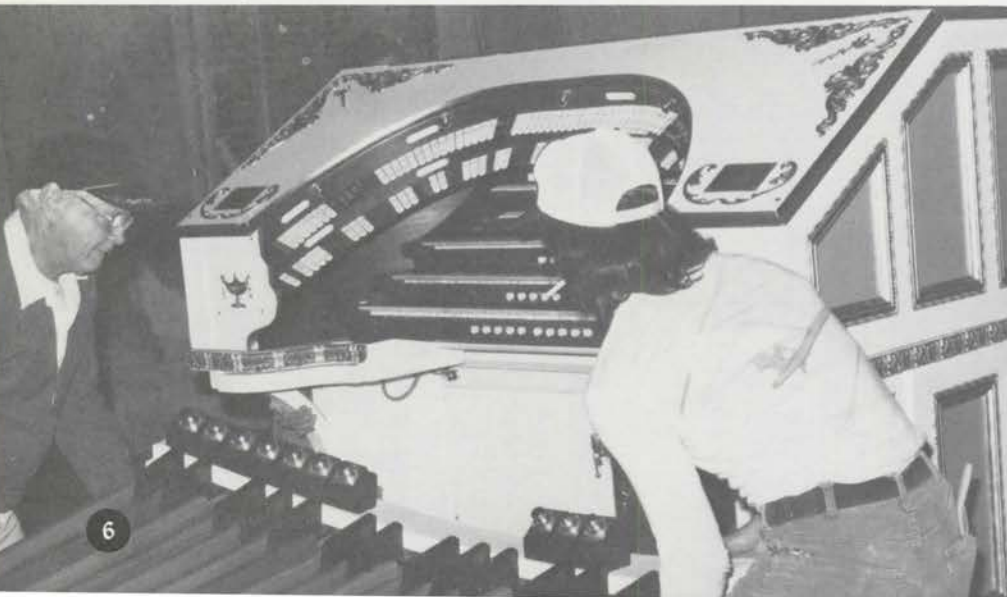


Just before leaving the shop the console is given a final dusting by Steve Lee.



Outside the theatre, the console and wood-bar harp are unloaded from the moving truck. Crew Chief Charlie Porter, right, supervises.

Bob Brooks and Steve Lee slide the pedal board up to the console inside the theatre. Pedals are keyed by reed switches and magnets, instead of the usual contact blocks which often malfunction.



No two consoles are ever refinished in quite the same way. Differences of opinion are always going to occur, but with members who have a common resolve to move ahead for the improvement of the Chapter and its goals, these minor differences were resolved amicably. The consensus was in favor of an off-white finish with gold trim. The old finish was stripped, each part was carefully sanded, everything was primed, and the new finish was applied. A few words explain what was done, but the metamorphosis from caterpillar to lovely butterfly took countless hours and the concerted efforts of many dedicated members.

The results were worth all the sore muscles and time. What emerged is the console seen on the front cover. The slight, off-white color shows up well under theatre lights and lacks the sterile, laboratory look of a pure white "box." The panels of this Style H (235) console were painted in warm tan color that reflects differing hues of stage lighting in a very pleasing manner. Hours of time were spent in applying gold leaf and silver leaf trim. *Real* gold was used in the leafing through the generous donation of stacks of the valuable sheets by members Coulter Cunningham and his wife, Mildred. The gold-leafed, wood ormolu was provided by member Bob Brooks.

Having as an active member the president of a pipe organ systems manufacturing company is a definite asset to any ATOS chapter. This was true for San Diego as Chris Gorsuch, of Gorsuch Enterprises, Inc., has been a contributing consultant for the Chapter for several years. It was only natural, then, that when members decided to replace the weary relays with an up-to-date, state-of-the-art electronic system, they turned to Chris. With the new relay now installed, performers can create pipe organ sounds with much greater ease than was ever possible before. One feature for example, melody touch, allows the organist to duplicate on the solo keyboard the top note of any chord being played on the great and accompaniment keyboards. (It's almost like having three hands!) Soon a Gorsuch rhythm unit is to be added.

Credit for much of the installation wiring must be given to John Van Rhyn, Bruce Burkett and Bob Naill, who climbed the chamber ladders so



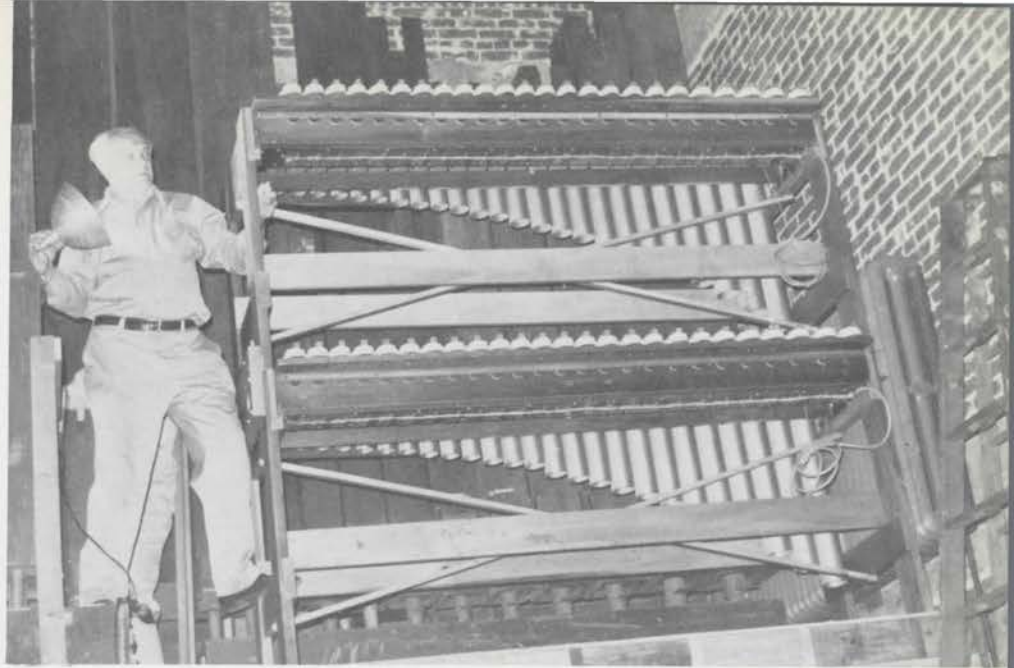
Manual key boards were carefully regulated by Chris Gorsuch, assisted by Steve Lee.

(Photo by Coulter Cunningham)

often they developed muscles not known to medical science! As the old relays were disposed of, space was made available for a more efficient use of chamber flooring. Joe Forand, Carroll Cunningham, Les Harlow and Coulter Cunningham moved regulators and tremos, rewinded chests, installed a borrowed wood-bar harp, and did countless other chores that made the installation a success. Another of these tasks was the re-leathering and installation of an open wood Diapason chest and pipes made available by the generous donation of member Bob Cochrane. To assist in all of this labor, teenager Steve Lee served as Head Gopher and was often asked by other crew members to "go-for this" or "go-for that." All of these details were carefully coordinated through the capable leadership of Crew Chief Charlie Porter.

But the ladies were not left out by any means! Connie Reardon was a valued member of the organ crew, holding wires, climbing the chamber ladders to help tune, and doing a myriad of tasks. Gold leaf was skillfully applied by Mildred Cunningham, Millie Crowe, Daphne Hoskins, Jeannine Lee, Evelyn Porter and others.

In short, the success of the whole undertaking was a Chapter-wide event. Only a few names have been mentioned, but many good-hearted folks participated. Each assignment was completed in a remarkable spirit of cooperation and good humor. Even as the tension built with the oncoming hour of the dedication con-



Les Harlow makes last-minute adjustments to the wood-bar harp perched high above the stage.

cert, and as one last minute problem after another was resolved, the group held together with exceptional tenacity.

While work was being done by others on the console and in the chambers, Stage Director Bob Brooks literally "set the stage." With his trio of high school hands, David Irwin, Jim Hauserman and Burke Stuchlik, preparations were made for a smooth operation of curtains, lighting and stage equipment.

The magic hour finally came. With Connie Reardon's introductory words, Chris Gorsuch, organ builder and performing artist, stepped on

stage. In that moment he shared the spotlight with the instrument he and many others had worked so hard to present. His opening number, "This Could Be the Start of Something Big," voiced the thinking of every active member of the Chapter. For each one, this really was . . . *Something Big!*

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Bob Lee is a former high school teacher and school administrator who has been working with the San Diego Chapter on its installation of the new console in the California Theatre. □



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