

Closing Chord

Stillman H. Rice, past National President of ATOS, died on April 29 in New Haven, Connecticut, after a long illness. Born in 1902, he would have been 80 on August 11. He remained active as Connecticut Valley Concert Chairman until about a year ago, when a serious heart condition forced him to curtail his activities.

Mr. Rice was the Executive Manager of the Rice Sand and Gravel Company of North Haven and had resided in that community for the past thirty years. He is survived by his wife, Claire Ross Rice; one son, Stillman H. Rice III; a brother, Jesse Rice; three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

He was a member of Corinthian Lodge No. 103, Trumbull Chapter; past president of the New Haven Lions Club; past president of the Wurlitzer Organ Guild; and past president of Connecticut Valley Theatre Organ Society as well as past national ATOS president. A major force in forming the New Haven Wurlitzer Organ Guild in 1960, he was its first president. Stillman joined the Connecticut Valley Chapter in 1962, soon after its organization by Allen Miller. In 1964, he served as program chairman for the chapter,

became vice-chairman in 1966, and began a four-year term as chairman in 1967. Among landmark events of his administration was the chartering of the society as a non-profit educational and charitable corporation. Connecticut Valley became the first in ATOS to obtain IRS tax-exempt status. In addition, under Mr. Rice's chairmanship, the society rebuilt the New Haven Paramount organ and held its first public concert, negotiated an agreement to install a theatre organ in the Thomaston Opera House, and initiated scholarship awards for organ students.

His progressive and imaginative leadership of Connecticut Valley Theatre Organ Society attracted national attention, and he was elected president of the American Theatre Organ Society at the 1970 National Convention in New York City. The following year, he was elected to a second term at the Seattle convention. During his tenure of office, he was instrumental in securing tax-exempt status for the national organization, an important step for ATOS and all its chapters.

Melody Hill, the Rices' North Haven home, and its three-manual Allen Digital Computer Theatre Organ became nationally famous, and Still-

man and Claire's generous hospitality renown among organ buffs. Stillman delighted in entertaining fellow music lovers, and organists from all over the country were always welcomed at Melody Hill. It wasn't unusual for the Rices to host a busload from New York or New Jersey.

It became an annual tradition for Connecticut Valley Chapter to meet at Melody Hill in August to help Stillman celebrate his birthday. It was always a special occasion with an outstanding artist in concert at the Allen. Part of the fun was trying to guess the identity of the day's "virtuoso myste-rioso," whose name Stillman liked to keep secret until concert time. Birthday cake and coffee, often followed by a silent Laurel and Hardy comedy as a special treat, topped off the day's activities.

Because he usually deferred to his guests, it wasn't often that he took a turn at the console. His playing was most often for his own enjoyment, and occasionally he agreed to a guest appearance as church organist. All too infrequently, Stillman teamed up with his brother, Jesse, and friend, Ed Pass, and entertained as a combo known as "The Three Squares." With Stillman on organ, Jesse on saxophone, and Ed on piano, their sweet and swinging repertoire of vintage music always gained them a standing ovation from those fortunate enough to be their audience.

Stillman Rice's genial presence will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Those whose lives touched his responded in kind to his unflinching and youthful enthusiasm and his genuine love for people. Theatre organ, and organ music in general, has lost a great friend.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. James Episcopal Church Memorial Fund, the church of which he was a lifetime member, 62 East Grand Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut.

Glen Shelley died April 30, 1982, in Portland, Oregon, at the age of 81. Truly a musician's musician as well as a popular one, Glen's long career included concert piano, classical and theatre organ.

Glen started piano at the age of four, and as a young organist opened several major theatres in Oregon. He continually held top jobs playing the largest organs in the Portland area. In



Stillman Rice.

silent picture accompaniment his enormous repertoire, inspired improvisation, and clever sound effects brought him renown throughout the Northwest. So great was his popularity that when talkies replaced the organ in theatres, continuous demand kept him working in radio, TV, and special events until 1971, when he retired because of failing health and eyesight.

Except for coast to coast radio shows such as *Truth or Consequences*, his activities were best known in the Northwest. Out of consideration for his wife and daughter, Glen turned down many offers to go on national tours or to move to other cities. Had he done so, he would surely have become one of the nation's most famous theatre organists.

BUD ABEL

Lawrence C. (Larry) Bray passed away on July 4, 1982, in Salt Lake City. Larry, who was fifty-nine at the time of his death, was nationally known as the builder and owner of the Organ Loft in Salt Lake City.

The story of Larry Bray is the story of the Organ Loft, the story of one man's dedication to the restoration and preservation of theatre organs. His living memorial is an awesome hybrid organ installation in what was once a chicken coop and is today one of America's theatre organ showplaces.

Larry Bray's passion for pipe organs began when he was a young man in the navy stationed in San Francisco, where he heard and met George Wright and Gaylord Carter. Following his discharge, his first project as a civilian was to search for and purchase old theatre organs in Utah. The next two years were spent reconstructing two totally demolished Robert-Mortons and installing them in his uncle's chicken coop. In 1948, he bought the organ from the Egyptian Theatre in Ogden and, in 1953, the Wurlitzer from the Gem Theatre in Salt Lake City. During this time he gained some technical knowledge by working as an apprentice helper on the removal job of the immense 1915 four-manual Austin from the Mormon Tabernacle and its installation at Brigham Young University in Provo.

Larry's dream was temporarily interrupted by a return to active duty during the Korean conflict, but he

kept his musical interest alive by wiring his ship, the USS Menard, for a complete sound system and entertaining the marines going to Korea with recorded music around the clock.

Upon returning again to civilian life, Larry continued to add to his collection of organs, remodeling and enlarging the chicken house at the same time until, in 1956, he sold the entire installation and purchased a twin-console 3/19 Wurlitzer from the Staten Island Paramount. Larry com-

bined the twin consoles into one five-manual console, added five Morton strings, and continued to remodel his chicken coop. He began to present concerts in those years, by invitation only, which were usually played by either Gus Farney or Emma Street. He could seat 200 then, and his chicken coop became known as the Organ Loft.

In 1960, Larry was host for the second annual ATOE Convention. Gaylord Carter, Leonard Leigh and Gus



Young Lawrence Bray stands between the two Staten Island Paramount consoles from which came the five-manual "Colossus."



Lawrence Bray, right, explains arrangement of stop tabs to nephew Larry Bray.

Farney were the featured performers, and a young student of Farney's, Scott Gillespie, entertained during dinner. This young artist has since become a staff organist for the Organ Loft. Open console at that meeting continued until six the next morning, an indication that the participants at that convention must have found the great 5/19 Wurlitzer to be an exciting instrument.

Over the years many famous organists have played and/or recorded this unique organ. Artists Lyn Larsen, Tony Wilson, David Reese and Gus Farney are among those who have recorded albums at the Organ Loft.

Larry Bray's interests ranged beyond his Organ Loft to civic projects in the Salt Lake City area. In addition to hosting frequent visits by school groups to see and hear the great theatre organ, Larry was involved in the attempt to save Saltair, the famous amusement park on the shore of Salt Lake. He also helped to maintain the organ in the Capitol Theatre in Salt Lake City.

The dream of Larry Bray will not end with his death; his nephew, also named Larry Bray, plans to continue to operate the Organ Loft and to expand the present 5/34 Wurlitzer as time and money allow. Staff organists JoAnn Harmon, Scott Gillespie, and Linda Carlisle will continue to entertain during the Saturday night dinner shows, and organ lovers from across the continent will continue to honor one man's vision of a living memorial to that unique twentieth century phenomenon, the theatre organ. □

Magazine problems?

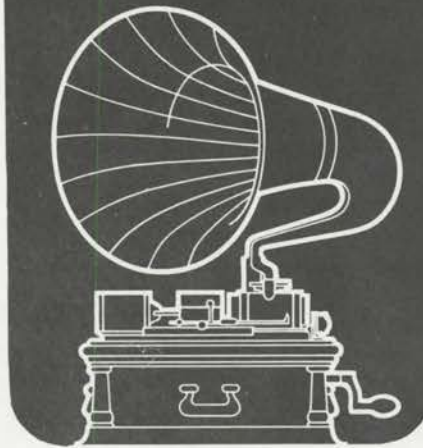
If you are not receiving your magazines, write to:

ATOS Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 3487
Irving, Texas 75061

For back issues and binders, write to:

ATOS Back Issues & Binders
1393 Don Carlos Court
Chula Vista, California 92010

For The Records



Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information (post-paid price, ordering address,) if applicable, and a black and white photo of the artist which need not be returned.

ROSEMARY BAILEY AT THE MIGHTY WURLITZER. Wallyn label No. WE 101 (stereo). \$8.98 post-paid from Wallyn Enterprises, 2736 Hollyridge Drive, Hollywood, Calif. 90068.

College professor Alfred Ehrhardt started his organ project about the time ATOS was founded. He purchased the Style 235 Special Wurlitzer from the doomed Dome Theatre, removed it to storage and started looking for a residence large enough to house a 3/15. He found one and moved in — but not for long. It was the era of burgeoning super highways, or Freeways, as they are called in the West. Before long the "eminent domain" boys stopped by and told Al he'd have to move — or have a freeway running through his living room. So, Al moved.

Al's troubles were not over; he was also evicted from the next place he rented. This time oil was discovered under the house. Evicted by a developing gusher! In all, Al moved the organ five times.

To guard against proliferating thoroughfares and spouting oil wells, Al started looking for a high spot, an eagles' nest well above the areas eyed by road builders and other land grabbers. All of this took time and the years passed.

Al retired from teaching and devoted his full energy to his organ project. He finally located an ideal home in the Eagle Rock area of Los Angeles. Perched high on a hillside it has a spacious living room with a picture window overlooking a verdant, tree-covered residential area.

Ehrhardt is a perfectionist. He must have invested ten years in the installation of his instrument. Every part was cleaned, sanded, polished or varnished, as the case may be. The result is an immaculate display of pipe-work, with chests and regulators looking factory fresh. Al's story spans twenty years of dedication and work, but the end result is something to be proud of. The organ was first played for Los Angeles ATOS conventioners by Ann Leaf in the late '70s; Ann praised it. So much for history.

We first heard Rosemary Bailey playing a promotional concert on a Hammond at one of those regional electronic organ gatherings sponsored by the commercial magazines which plug the instruments. When she broke into a jazz improvisation she was simply magnificent. Jazz improvisation can't be faked; the player "has it" or he doesn't. Experts in the field who come to mind would include Benny Goodman, Al Hirt, Ella Fitzgerald and the late Louis Armstrong. From what we have heard from Ms. Bailey, she belongs to this rather exclusive club.

Until she played a concert on the San Gabriel (California) 3/16 Wurlitzer for the Los Angeles Chapter last November we didn't know she had any interest in pipes (although her bio states she studied classical pipes some years ago). For one reason, jazz is difficult on pipes, compared to the fast attack electronics. Not many organists' names have been associated with jazz. Fats Waller, perhaps. And Rex Koury. And maybe Helen Crawford. Milt Herth left us many recordings of his trio playing jazz but his instrument was the lightning-fast Hammond. The field isn't overcrowded and Rosemary is very welcome. With all this discussion of jazz playing one