

NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



This time, we bring you another "pot luck" column which includes items from all over the lode. References were *Etude (E)*, *Local Press (LP)*, *Metronome (M)*, *Motion Picture Herald (MPH)* and *Radio Daily (RD)*.

January 1921 (M) LEON E. IDOINE was born in Birmingham, England, and began his musical education at five, making his first public appearance as pianist the following year. The same year, he commenced training as a church musician by joining a choir, eventually becoming soloist and singing all the principal soprano arias from the standard oratorios. He began the study of organ at ten, and three years later was appointed assistant organist. About this time he performed the feat of singing at sight the tenor solos of Sir John Stainer's "Crucifixion."

During the ensuing eight years he studied under prominent English organists. Coming to America about 13 years ago, Idoine accepted the posts of choirmaster and organist at St. Luke's Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and three years later was appointed to St. Mark's Episcopal in Toledo, Ohio.

Since then he has taught piano, organ and voice and directed music for various organizations. Some five or six years ago he became interested in the theatre organ and played in several theatres. For the past year he has been organist at Loew's Valentine Theatre, Toledo's finest movie house.

August 29, 1923 (LP) WGR, Buffalo, at 6:30 p.m., presents organ music from the Hotel Statler on the dining room's Wurlitzer.

November 2, 1925 (LP) ALEX F. TAYLOR opened the two-manual Marr & Colton during dedication ceremonies today at the Zaring Theatre in Indianapolis. (Later, B. B. Burkette played here.)

September 15, 1926 (LP) CHESTER BEEBE, who presides at the console of the Wurlitzer organ Tuesday and Friday nights at station WOR, Newark, will be heard tonight at nine. Such a responsive reaction has been attained through these programs that Mr. Beebe has had considerable difficulty in fulfilling the many requests which have come in to the station. His programs contain the works of the most classical composers as well as the lighter songs of the day.

June 7, 1929 (LP) A new song, "Go-Grow-

Chicago," whose words have appeared in the *Chicago Herald & Examiner*, will be heard over the radio and in the leading motion picture theatres the next few days.

Station KWW will air it at specific times with four Balaban & Katz theatres featuring the song at every show during the organ program. It will be played at the Oriental by PRESTON SELLERS, at the Norshore by RUTH GORMAN FARLEY, at the Senate by MYRTLE PLATT and at the Tower by BASEL CRISTOL.

January 1931 (LP) Rochester, New York's Liberty Theatre is advertising its "new wonder pipe organ which disappears." It is a Style E Wurlitzer, installed in early 1927.

November 7, 1931 (MPH) JACK MARTIN at Milwaukee's Wisconsin Theatre plays "College Daze," which includes "Collegiate," "Betty Co-ed," "Notre Dame Victory Song," "Ring Out Ahoy," "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" and "On Wisconsin."

February 13, 1932 (MPH) GEORGE EPSTEIN at the Bayside, Long Island, Victory Theatre, with the able assistance of Fred Weiler, manager and former theatre organist, presented an unusual organ-piano duet this past week. "Eppy," as he is popularly known in the neighborhood, is in the habit of offering community singing fests. To many in the audience, the idea of Eppy and Mr. Weiler being a duo comes as a distinct surprise. Their concert opened with a piano duet of the overture "Poet & Peasant," beautifully played and very well received.

Please vote.

Your **BALLOT** is
in this issue.

Mr. Weiler surprised them by playing on the organ the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana* as Mr. Epstein accompanied him on the grand piano. Very good applause greeted them at the finish of this entertaining presentation.

March 1934 (E) Question: Why is it that the consoles of most theatre organs have been placed on the left side of the stage when they are not on elevators?

Answer: We know of no special reason for the placing of consoles on the left-hand side.

June 1934 (E) By Harvey Gaul. Remarkable it is how abominable Tin Pan Alley sounds on an organ or transmitted over the air. Of course, we hear it constantly. The cinema palaces broadcast it daily. But did you ever hear on radio a single jazz piece which sounded decent?

Every work we hear sounds as if it were being played upon a huge mouth organ, jerky, gassy, wrong in color, and most frightfully wrong in idiom. Not alone is the everlasting um-pa so annoying. The very structure of the piece is inorganic.

Then when the organists set the ditties

whirring with ever-shaking Vox Humanas, the whole business becomes a ridiculous performance. You have only to think of movie players and such popular tunes as "River, Stay 'Way from My Door," "Goodnight, Sweetheart," "My Silent Love" (it is never silent along Broadway), "Lonesome Melody," "Stop the Sun, Stop the Moon," and so on, far into the night, and you know exactly what pieces should be abjured.

Fortunately, only the movie cathedrals want jazz to play their wares. All other commercial subscribers are letting it alone. So, you will never hear "Was That the Human Thing to Do?" advertising high-grade merchandise.

September 1934 (E) Question: Where may I obtain plans and information on blowers?

Answer: Builders of blowers who may help are Spencer Turbine Co., Hartford, Connecticut; Kinetic Eng. Co., Lansdowne, Pennsylvania; Zephyr Electric Organ Blower Co., Orville, Ohio; and B. F. Blower Co., Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin.

November 16, 1945 (RD) The DOLPH GOEBEL Trio, heard mornings on the American Network, is a musical pepper-upper these chilly ante meridiems.

That should do it until next time. So long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector □

Closing Chord

Frank Killinger, the man who fathered Doric Records, passed away on September 1, 1985. He was 77. Born in Alameda, California, he spent most of his life in the Bay Area. Death was due to heart failure.

Frank was a charter member of ATOS and is survived by his wife of 35 years, Theodora, and a brother, Richard Penberthy.

He was a recording engineer and an assignment from Fantasy Records for some pipe organ cuts in the late '50s led to his founding Doric Records. Frank and Dick Penberthy were the whole staff of Doric Records and they produced high quality pressings and tapes played by such artists as Tiny James, Everett Nourse, Paul Quarino, Bill Langford, Vic Hammett, Warren Lubich, George Blackmore and Reginald Foort, to name a few. In addition, Doric re-issued organ recordings played by Jesse Crawford, Sidney Torch, George Wright and Frank Denke (pianist). Doric also stocked a large supply of pressings of existing organ recordings, especially the work of British organists recorded by Amberlee Records of London. Frank made several trips to England to record artists and instruments not ordinarily heard in the United States. Thus we were able to hear such organists as Doreen Chadwick and Vic Hammett playing British installations. Among the memorable organs Frank recorded were San Francisco's Avenue Theatre Wurlitzer, the

Orpheum's Robert-Morton and the huge Fox Theatre Wurlitzer. In San Diego, California, he recorded the five-manual Möller organ (played by its originator, Reginald Foort). In England he taped the Manchester Gaumont Theatre Wurlitzer. One of his last and greatest projects was the release of a recording by Buddy Cole many years after the organist's death. He hunted down unreleased tapes of Cole playing his 3/26 "dream organ," edited and equalized the sound and released "Buddy Cole Remembered," one of Frank Killinger's best.

To Frank, producing organ recordings was a hobby, often an expensive one. He never made any money from Doric. In fact, it finally became such a financial burden that he ceased production and sold remaining stocks to the Organ Literature Foundation. Frank Killinger left an enviable mark on the organ hobby in the form of many recordings of organs now vanished. He was one of a kind.

Jack Skelly, whose theatre organ credits included a stint at the New York Paramount, died on December 19, 1985.

A native of White Plains, New York, Jack began music study at eight. After hearing the newly installed Wurlitzer in White Plains' Strand Theatre in 1922, he was determined to become a theatre organist. His principal teacher in this idiom was Don Baker at the New York Wurlitzer store. Others were Sig-mund Krumgold and Egon Putz.

Successive engagements for Jack included the Rye, New York, Playhouse, the RKO Theatre in White Plains, and finally the New York Paramount. His contemporaries there were Krumgold, Putz, Fred Feible and Jesse Crawford whom he described as a "nonpareil" soloist.

After the Paramount days, Jack toured as pianist and musical director for Jack Powell. One year, Powell had an engagement at Radio City Music Hall, so Skelly played exit music during the gig. He was organist for 20 years at Madison Square Garden, was with Harry Reser's Orchestra, and served on Arthur Godfrey's TV ice shows over two years. Until he retired from the Playland Casino a couple of years ago, Jack had an 18-year stint there.

The writer is proud to have had a long correspondence with Jack Skelly and the opportunity of talking with him during the Atlanta ATOS Convention in 1978. It all began with the preparation of Jack's biography, which appeared in THEATRE ORGAN for February/March 1977.

Jack leaves a daughter, Mrs. Sharon Plattner of Rye, New York.

LLOYD E. KLOS

Howard Vollum, age 72, died of a massive stroke on February 3. He was co-founder of the world's largest manufacturer of precision oscilloscopes and other electronic instruments, Tektronix, Inc. His influence and contributions in and to the field of high-technology manufacturing and research made him an internationally known and respected figure. His philanthropic contributions to research, education, art, medicine and the poor were

legendary throughout Oregon. He was one of the original investors in the Rodgers Organ Company.

Mr. Vollum was best known to the theatre organ community as owner of the former San Francisco Paramount Wurlitzer. He built a studio building on his Portland estate to house the Paramount Wurlitzer which he had increased to 49 ranks. The Vollum studio was the scene of several ATOS activities including Oregon Chapter meetings, National Convention programs, and concerts by George Wright and other theatre organ personalities. A little known fact is that the Organ Grinder Pizza restaurants in both Portland, Oregon, and Denver, Colorado, owe their very existence to Mr. Vollum's influence.

To those who knew Howard Vollum personally, he will best be remembered for his humility, love of God, family and friends. The lives of all with whom he came into contact have been immeasurably enriched.

DENNIS HEDBERG

Hubert Selby, founder and first president of Britain's Cinema Organ Society, died at his home in Perth, Western Australia, on December 17, 1985, aged 74. A serious operation for a suspected ulcer a little over a year ago had revealed the presence of cancer.

His parents were both teachers in Ipswich, Suffolk (in East Anglia, England — known to art lovers as Constable Country). He was born there in 1911, the eldest of three children. His younger brother Alan recalls: "I took it as read that at 11 years I should pedal frantically after Hubert along country lanes around Ipswich in search of church organs he hoped to play. Since most were hand-pumped my own role was self-evident — and you may be sure occasional lapses of 'bellows-efficiency' would result in that sighing gasp which heralded a dwindling of pitch."

Sandy MacPherson inspired Hubert Selby to switch his allegiance to theatre organs and when Frank Newman went from Lozelle Picture House, Birmingham, to open the Wurlitzer 3/6 in the new Regent cinema in Ipswich in 1929 he taught him the techniques of the unit organ. A successful audition with one of the cinema circuits soon followed and he toured the country before becoming resident at the Surrey County Cinema, Sutton. In 1934-35 he was assistant to well-known British organist/composer Frederick Curzon, at the New Victoria, London, and in '36 (the year he married) he auditioned for the great Sidney Torch and was signed on for Union Cinemas. Torch, incidentally, tricked him slightly by suggesting he spend half an hour "warming up" and then standing in the darkness in the rear of the stalls before sauntering down at the end of 30 minutes to say: "That's fine — you're in."

Once again, he was touring the country and playing many makes of pipe instruments — Comptons and Wurlitzers, of course, but also Christies and the rarer Jardines. He followed Frank Gordon into the lovely Paramount, Manchester, with its 4/20 Wurlitzer in 1939 and began his broadcasting career there. A short spell of touring for the Granada circuit



Howard Vollum

followed before the war came and he was called up to serve with the Gunners (Royal Artillery). Following the normal rules of military logic, he was allowed to make music only in his spare time and his major posting was to India, where he did some broadcasts for All India Radio.

It was 1946 before he became a civilian again but then he enjoyed a residency in his home town of Ipswich, a trip to Australia which sowed the seeds of his later decision to adopt that country as his own, and a residency at the Ritz, Birkenhead. He rejoined the ABC circuit (which absorbed Union Cinemas before the war) in 1952 and it was on one of his visits to the Regal, Ilford, that he and Tony Moss (now editor of the COS Newsletter) talked of forming a new society to promote the organ as a means of entertainment.

ABC had a number of touring Hammonds and these introduced Hubert to electronic organs, which became important to him when the solo organist more or less vanished from the British cinema scene. He worked in retail music shops and demonstrated before emi-



Hubert Selby

(John Sharp photo)

grating to Australia in 1974. He returned to England briefly in 1977 and toured his native land again in 1983, but apart from that he put down firm roots in his new home.

It came as no surprise to me to learn that he was soon regarded as the best music teacher in Western Australia. The first time I met him, I went away glowing since he had somehow managed to find something nice to say about my playing and I was encouraged to continue.

And in those last ten years of his life he soon found himself in demand for concerts and TV. He leaves behind him four good commercial LPs (and highlights of his 1983 concert at Worthing are scheduled to be released in that form) and private tapes in many collections.

They show him to have been, in the words of COS Chairman Douglas Badham, one who "played with great style, frequently emulating Jesse Crawford and Harold Ramsay, whether it be a lively march or a smoochy ballad and was equally at home with the light classics."

Many theatre organ buffs are also Gilbert and Sullivan fans and will be familiar with the

ditty about the "very model of a modern Major-General": Hubert Selby was the very model of a British cinema organist who set out to entertain — and succeeded.

He is survived by his wife, Jill, and daughter Mandy.

TONY BERNARD SMITH

Kenneth Rosenboom, 66, died November 21, 1985, in Chatsworth, Illinois. He was a native and lifelong resident of Chatsworth, and had been a plumbing and heating contractor for 34 years before retiring in 1980. In addition to his work as a contractor he worked with the Shaklee organization for the past 13 years.

He installed a 27-rank organ in his home many years ago, and helped rebuild and restore 12 organs, including those in the Chicago and Oriental theatres in Chicago and the Rialto Theatre in Joliet. He also installed a larger organ from Wilmette in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chatsworth.

He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Arlene, by one son, two daughters, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. □

nay Film Co. stock company. So many familiar faces from the past. I noticed small white numbers by each one. There must have been an index at one time.

No. 25 looks familiar, but cannot name him. No. 17 is Bryant Washburn, a handsome dimple-chinned actor who played fine parts in light comedy — the type of story we seldom see today. The girl on the right, No. 11 in the high back chair, looks very familiar — Bessie Love? The children interested me most for they are possibly alive today. I think Swanson was not there, for she would have dominated the entire photo if she were. Unmistakable beauty and personality.

It was a very fine article by Eddy Ethwell Hanson and a real treasure. I remember back as far as Mr. and Mrs. John Drew's comedy playlets.

I wonder if No. 22 is Warren Kerrigan or Bronco Billy Anderson? No. 35 has the Swanson nose, but a more mature look than Gloria. My favorite stars were Alice Brady and Clara Kimball Young.

Thank you for the happy memories the photo gave me.

Sincerely,
Esther Higgins
Collingwood, New Jersey

Letters to the Editors

Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN.

Address: Editor, THEATRE ORGAN
3448 Cowper Court
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part.

Dear Editor:

Regarding Rosemary Bailey's comments via CATOE's activity report concerning more involvement of youth with our organization, I have to take issue.

Yes, in order to preserve our organization and its goals, we do need very much to bring in newer, younger members constantly. Every organization must to continue to exist. Theatre organ groups have a particular need, as there is an awful lot of physical labor and energy involved in installing and maintaining pipe organs and putting on programs with them.

However, the philosophy expressed by Ms. Bailey insofar as changing the traditional musical styling associated with theatre organ playing to attract younger people to the organization stinks, quite frankly. It doesn't show a very good understanding of today's youth and what determines their musical tastes and social habits. The rest of our American culture is already suffering from too much youth worship, to the point where we barely have any real culture left. Our infatuation with being "in," i.e. youthful goes hand in hand with the "newer is better" and "old must go," has been the cause of countless theatres and theatre organs being destroyed in the name of

"progress." ATOS, by its very nature, is never going to attract young people in mass, nor should it try to. Let's continue to strive for quality, not quantity, in our membership as well as our projects. We have had enough problems over the years with our professional and artistic standards and should not be lowering our standards just to try to gain a few young members.

As a step in the right direction, perhaps Ms. Bailey should do a little reading about what Jesse Crawford said about maintaining the clarity of the melody line!

Lastly, a big pat on the back to the Valley of the Sun Chapter convention organizers for putting on one of the best-ever conventions last November and for their generous donation to the Young Organist fund. Phoenix showed a lot of folks that a convention doesn't have to be long or complex to be good.

Sincerely,
D. Story
Tucson, Arizona

Dear Sir:

I was intrigued and delighted to see in the November/December 1985 THEATRE ORGAN the large group photograph of the Essa-

Dear Bob:

I'd like to comment on an important event that deserves attention: George Wright has released the first theatre organ compact disc (CD), "Red, Hot & Blue." For a number of reasons, every theatre organ fan who either has or is considering getting a CD player needs to buy this disc.

First, the sound quality is incredible. There's no surface noise, no pops — only music, along with an occasional panting trem in the background. In fact, you'll hear all sorts of subtle sounds that would normally be drowned out by tape hiss. This CD is your ticket to a private concert in George's home, a concert you can reprise thousands of times with no loss in sound quality.

Second, George's CD has five songs not included on the album, and they're not to be missed. Even if you have the album, you'll find the CD well worth the price just for these added goodies. In case you thought George might be beginning to slow down, spin this disc and hear a great musician at the height of his power, a man obviously having fun.

Finally, and most important, we need to support George's gutsy and risky decision to release a CD without knowing how many people would buy it. If we send a message that we want 21st-century reproduction of theatre organ music, we'll see more CDs. And believe me, once you hear the first one, you'll be anxiously awaiting the second.

Sincerely,
Gary Konas
Davis, California

Greetings:

Several times I have put pen to paper in response to Mr. Weisenberger's provocative articles. I have been able to restrain myself and