

January 14, 1917 (LP) ...

At Rochester's Piccadilly, NORMAN NAIRN plays a Photoplayer for the Paramount picture, *Betty to the Rescue*, starring Fannie Ward. Next week, Mr. Nairn plays for *Lost and Won* with Marie Doro, also a Paramount epic.

April 1919 b(M) ...

J. ARTHUR "HIGH C" GEIS most truly can be called "eight feet of harmony" because he is nearly that tall. When he sits at a Wurlitzer-Hope-Jones console and his long, agile fingers travel over the manuals, sometimes playing on two manuals with the same hand; when his long left leg punches out the heavy bass notes, as well as the drums and cymbals; and when his right leg gets to fooling around with the traps — such as bird calls, thunder pedal, etc. — if you heard and saw him do all this, you would agree that when we say "eight feet of harmony," we don't say enough.

Arthur has had quite a career as an organist. He was famous in Cincinnati where he was associated with the Rudolph Wurlitzer Co. in the earlier days of its celebrated Hope-Jones instrument, and later came to Chicago where he acted as demonstrator for the firm while playing an engagement at the Mandarin Inn. He is now playing one of the largest Wurlitzers in Canada.

July 29, 1922 (LP) ...

Fire last night completely destroyed the National Theatre in Marysville, California. Organist HARRY J. PROBAT, despite crackling flames, stayed at the console and played until every patron left. The organ, less than a year old, had been installed at a cost of \$25,000.

September 2, 1923 (LP) ...

Rochester's Eastman Theatre is observing its first anniversary with the film *Why Worry?* with Harold Lloyd & Jobyna Ralston. Organist are JOHN HAMMOND and ROBERT J. BERENTSEN. After one year of operation, the theatre had 1,820,480 patrons, averaging 35,000 a week. Grand opera drew 26,568; concerts 62,374.

September 28, 1923 (LP) ...

Rochester's Strand Theatre (originally a church) has been refurbished. Improvements include new wiring and fixtures, and a four-color lighting system. One of the most important changes is a new addition to the Marr & Colton 4/18 organ. TOM GRIERSON, who has presided at the console for the past year, will continue as organist.

December 8, 1923 (LP) ...

WHAM, Rochester, is presenting an organ recital by ROBERT J. BERENTSEN at 3:00 p.m., direct from the Eastman Theatre, using the 4/155 Austin.

NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



How about another "potluck" column with items from all over? Sources were *Around the Town* (ATT), *Jacobs* (J), *Local Press* (LP), and *Melody* (M).

February 15, 1924 (LP) ...

WJZ, New York, is presenting a two-hour organ recital tonight from the Hotel Astor. LEO RIGGS is the artist.

November 7, 1925 (LP) ...

At a cost of \$50,000, the interior of Fay's Theatre in Rochester has been modernized and newly decorated. Under the stage is the new two-manual Kimball organ. It supplements the orchestra under Arthur Monk, playing from noon until two p.m., and from five until eight. FOREST GREGORY is the organist.

April 1926 (M) ...

RALPH SCOTT of Milwaukee has been furnishing photoplay music since 1906, at which time the only instrument used was the piano. When theatres began installing pipe organs, Mr. Scott immediately took up the study with prominent teachers in the Chicago area, and transferred his talents to that instrument.

He has played organ in Chicago area theatres for the past 12 years. At present, he is with the Iris Theatre in Milwaukee where he is musical director. He includes songologues and special features on each program.

October 3, 1926 (LP) ...

Balaban & Katz announces today its Sunday noon grand organ concert featuring BASEL CRISTOL with soprano Clara Taylor. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. with Gilda Gray in *Aloma of the South Seas*.

October 1926 (J) ...

WALTER FAWCETT, organist at Warner Brothers' State Theatre in Pittsburgh, is a native of that city. He studied under Professor Charles Gernert, Dr. C.N. Boyd and William K. Steiner. A very competent musician, he has been successful in concert, church and theatre work.

Mr. Fawcett has appeared in recitals in the east. For over 10 years, he was official organist for the Choral Societies of Pittsburgh, and is now organist and director of music in one of the largest churches in this vicinity. Mr. Fawcett rejected a professorship in a well-known conservatory, preferring the possibilities in the field of theatrical work.

November 13, 1926 (LP) ...

The quiet village of Ocean Park, hidden among the tall pines of the Maine woods, figures prominently in the discovery of a musical genius, now entertaining the fans of WBZ in Springfield, Mass.

Last year, ARTHUR CLIFTON, 16-year-old musician, came from the South for a rest. He had been studying organ and continued practicing for his own enjoyment. One morning, Gordon Swan, WBZ announcer, also in Ocean Park for a rest, heard Clifton and enticed the organist to try his talents on the WBZ organ. His success was immediate, following his first program last fall. The "Dreamland Organ Recitals" of that station have been a weekly feature since.

October 9, 1927 (LP) ...

The Coronado Theatre in Rockford, Illinois, opened today. At the 4/17 Barton was RALPH BRIGHAM of this city. (He played the instrument into the thirties).

April 1928 (LP) ...

BILLY WRIGHT is packing them in at Loew's Midland Theatre in Kansas City where he plays a 4/19 Robert-Morton.

April 29, 1928 (LP) ...

WINKEL, "the Whiteman of the Wurlitzer," opens the Riverside Theatre's 3/13 Wurlitzer in Milwaukee today.

December 1928 (ATT) ...

A sure bet in the musical world is HAYES WATSON, formerly an associate of Lew White and Karl Bonawitz in Philadelphia. Hayes has been engaged at the Stanley Theatre in Atlantic City for two years. He features solos and is very successful with community singing.

December 1928 (ATT) ...

JESSIE G. STOUDET, featured organist at Philadelphia's Keystone Theatre, has found favor with his patrons during his two-year reign. His artistic arrangement of his featured overtures, novelties and slides is indeed unique and worthy of much consideration. He was formerly at the Overbrook Theatre.

December 1928 (ATT) ...

One of the very youngest solo organists is doing remarkably well at Philadelphia's Germantown Theatre where he has been for four years. GEIBEL FALCONER has a brilliant future which his very fine personality will help him attain. He broadcasts over WIP and is very well liked by his listeners.

GOLD DUST: Organists on radio: 5/26 R.C. HYDE, WRVA, Richmond ... 6/26 MORRILL MOORE, WHB, Kansas City ... 7/26 EDWIN SEDER, WAHG, Richmond Hill, NY; ROBERT BEADIES, WRVA, Richmond; ERWIN SWINDELL, WHQ, Des Moines; HAROLD SCHWAB, WBZ, Springfield; ARTHUR SCOTT BROOK, WPG, Atlantic City; Dr. SHELDON, WSB, Atlanta; RALPH WALDO EMERSON, WLS, Chicago; OTTO F. BECK, WRC, Washington; DON BAKER, WOR, Newark ... 8/26 EUGENE PERAZZO, WKRC, Cincinnati; HARRIS SHAW, WBS, Springfield ... 9/26 ARTHUR KAYS, WCCO, Minneapolis-St. Paul; LAWSON REID, KTHS, Hot Springs ... 11/26 STEPHEN BOISCLAIR, WGY, Schenectady; Capt. MILTON HOWELL RALEY, WBZ, Springfield; TOM GEIERSON, Riviera Theatre, Rochester, NY ... 1/27 WINCENT PERCY, WTAM, Cleveland; HOWARD THATCHER, WBAL, Baltimore ... 2/27 FIRMIN SWINNEN, WPG, Atlantic City ... 4/27 BIRGER PETERSON, WBZ, Springfield ... 5/27 BEATRICE RYAN, WHAM, Rochester ... 10/27 FLOYD WALTER, WGY, Schenectady; ADRIAN SALESSES, WBZ.

With radio getting a foothold in the twenties, organ music was a big factor. See you next time!

Jason & The Old Prospector

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CLOSING CHORDS

REBA M. AYARS

Reba M. Ayars, wife of internationally known organist Lowell Ayars, passed into eternal life on January 15 after a valiant fight against cancer.

She attended many ATOS National Conventions with her husband and was well known as hostess to the many groups which visited the 2/8 Wurlitzer installed in their home.

In addition to her husband, she is survived by a sister and two nephews.

Martin Wiegand

GEORGE L. KIRCHMYER

George L. Kirchmyer, organist and teacher of piano and voice, in Buffalo, New York, died on December 18. He was 94.

A graduate of Canisus High School and Chicago's Sherwood Music School, he played organs in Buffalo's downtown theatres: Shea's Buffalo, Fox Great Lakes and Shea's Hippodrome. He accompanied silent movies, vaudeville and musical comedy shows.

With the coming of talking pictures, Kirchmyer became organist in churches, taught, performed on radio, and played organ at one of Buffalo's first roller-skating rinks.

Burial was in Cheektowaga, New York. He is survived by his wife, a daughter, a son, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Lloyd Klos

PHILIP C. UNDERWOOD

Mention in *USA TODAY* seems to stamp the passing of Philip C. Underwood as a newsworthy event for theatre organ buffs. Phil was a member of the Ohio Valley chapter, and among his contributions to the chapter was soldering thousands of wires and connections in the 3/29 Wurlitzer in Emery Theatre.

Born in Muncie, Indiana, he had come to Cincinnati in 1934 and worked at radio stations WASI and WLW until moving into TV in 1946 on WLWT. For organ buffs, Phil was best known for handling the studio engineering on WLS's famous *Moon River* show. After retirement he worked for the Cincinnati Natural History Museum, helping to assemble their planetarium.

In Cincinnati's catastrophic 1937 flood, Phil, after taking the station off the air, was the last person to leave the WLW studios as oil fires on flood waters near the building came closer and closer. The

building held both the Crosley radio factory and WLW studios.

The Ohio Valley chapter has staged re-creations of *Moon River* almost biennially since the installation of the Emery organ. Many "behind the scenes" stories have been told about *Moon River*, and one of these involved Phil since he was "at the controls" when it happened. During one show the announcer began reading the poem "The Shooting of Dan McGrew." Phil quickly sensed this was a thoroughly inappropriate poem for a show made up of organ music, vocal solos, and love poems. Phil debated to himself whether to cut the announcer off in mid-poem and possibly save his job, or let him talk on in the hope he knew what he was doing. He finally chose the latter.

It must be remembered *Moon River* was a special favorite of Powell Crosley, Jr., owner of WLW, who had first suggested the midnight program. Anything other than soft poems was considered a capital crime.

The next morning the announcer and Phil were summoned to the office of the station manager who, in a rage, demanded to know why the announcer would read such a poem. His defense was that it had been requested by the Duchess of Luxembourg. It must be remembered that WLW operated after midnight on 500,000 watts — the only U.S. station ever allowed this power. So reaching Europe was no problem; actually routine.

With his job hanging by a slender thread and the manager terming the story a very unlikely one, the announcer took from his pocket the letter. It indeed was from the Duchess of Luxembourg and she truly wanted to hear "The Shooting of Dan McGrew." Obviously the announcer and Phil were "off the hook," but it clearly indicated to management how far the station's signal was reaching.

Phil died December 26, 1987, after a long illness. It was the genius of such "pros" as Phil Underwood that made possible the complete rebuilding of the former RKO Albee Wurlitzer, the installation of it in Emery Theatre, and its maintenance.

Phil's wife Blanche is secretary of Ohio Valley Chapter and worked with Phil every Saturday morning on organ reconstruction and installation. She remains a member of the organ crew.

Hubert S. Shearin