

# Roxy Finds A Home

by Terry Robson

I know many of you are thinking, "Just what we need — another story about another mediocre home installation." Well, you're half right. Yes, it is about another home installation, but an exceptionally good one. Observation of the techniques used in this installation may be of great help to others contemplating the installation of a pipe organ in their own homes.

This Wurlitzer, style EX (2/7, divided chambers), opus 1885, was installed in the early spring of 1928 in the Roxy Theatre in Irvington, New Jersey, where it entertained audiences in a grand fashion for only a few short years.

1937 saw a new home for "Roxy" when it was moved to St. Andrews Catholic Church in nearby Union City, New Jersey. It made this transplant virtually unchanged; only the traps and percussions were removed and a Dulciana added.

In 1974 Dennis Hedberg was sent to St. Andrews Church to service their newly acquired Rodgers organ. Upon entering the sanctuary, he set down his tool kit, looked around and saw what appeared to be a pipe organ in the choir loft. In short order he discovered that Roxy was intact and still functioning. Dennis knew that Milt Kieffer of Vancouver, Washington, was looking for an organ of this size for his home, so arrangements were made to have the organ removed from the church while preparations were begun for its installation in its third home on the other side of the continent.

Roxy occupied the major part of Milt's garage and, with shutter openings in the dining room wall the sound was more than ample to fill the combined living-dining room area. Roxy was enlarged at this time to 11 ranks as she acquired another set of strings, an Orchestral Oboe and a Clarinet.

A few years later, Milt opened Uncle Milt's Pipe Organ Pizza Company in Vancouver, which houses a beautiful 3/18 Wurlitzer and featured his daughter, Wendy, at the console. When Wendy married and moved from home, Roxy was no longer needed.

Oregon Chapter members John and MaryJo Olsen had a long-range dream of owning their own theatre organ, but that was to be years in the future. The Fates had other plans! When Roxy became available, the Olsens discovered that she was ideal for John's musical needs and was simply "too good to pass up."



Roxy sits proudly in front of shutter opening grille of former bedroom.

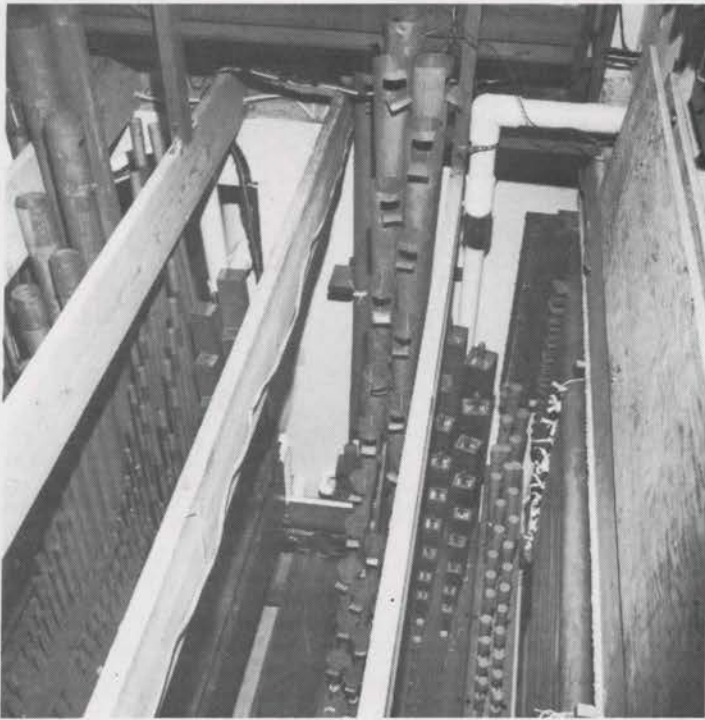
(All photographs by Claude Nueffer.)

This is where the problems began. There was no proper place in the Olsens' home to install the organ, and Milt was anxious to have it removed from his garage. The solution: quickly begin looking for a new, larger home and, in the meantime, put the organ in storage. Not so simple. Yes, the organ was put in storage, but it took nearly four years to find the ideal home for their new baby. Building was even considered. The Olsens were aware that these instruments were designed with enough power to fill large auditoriums and, for the organ to sound its best, adequate speaking space was a must.

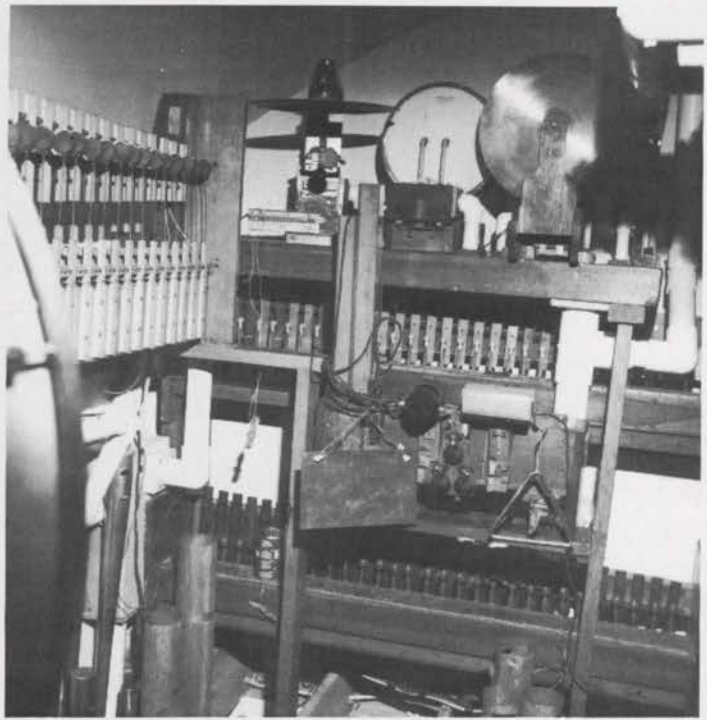
They finally found the ideal house, located in Tigard, Oregon, which had been custom designed in the 1960s for a LARGE family. Situated on the side of a hill, the house has an unusually large basement containing four bedrooms, a full bath, family room, study, laundry room and assorted closets and storage places. The main floor has three bedrooms, one of which is located directly

above a basement bedroom which, as you can see in the drawing, now houses the pipe chamber. The ceiling has been removed leaving only the support structures of the floor of the upper bedroom which is adjacent to the large, beamed-ceiling living room. (Note in the drawing the curved wall of the mixing chamber which helps project the sound.)

Dennis Hedberg was contacted for advice on the best possible chamber layout and shutter openings. He recommended that the main floor bedroom act as a mixing chamber as well as house the traps and percussions. The shutters would be in the living room wall. Mike DeSart, a long-time employee of the Organ Grinder Restaurant, was hired to re-leather the chests. The console had been re-leathered and beautifully refinished when installed in the Kieffer residence, but unfortunately, Perflex had been used in the console and was beginning to fail. Loren and Karen Minear were retained as the actual installers of Roxy, and Paul Quarino advised on console layout and specification changes.



Pipe chamber viewed through floor joists of former bedroom next to livingroom.



Traps and percussions viewed from former bedroom door. Note tops of pipes from chamber on lower floor and curvature of ceiling for optimal mixing of sound.

The blower was installed on the far side of the basement in an already existing closet, and 12" PVC windline was employed, insuring virtually no blower noise in the chamber or at the console.

Nearly two years after preparations had begun, Roxy was finally ready for her first public performance in her new home. This was on May 28, 1988, and, according to the tag found in the console, was exactly 60 years from the date she had been shipped from the factory. Roxy performed flawlessly (see Oregon Chapter notes in this issue).



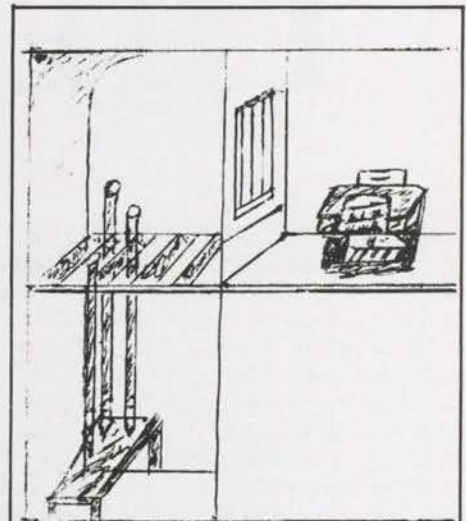
Roxy's proud parents John and MaryJo Olsen.



Installers Loren and Karen Minear. Note horizontally mounted pipes.

This is one of the most effective home installations I have ever heard! The wind has been returned to its original pressure and is now compatible with the listening area. I believe that the success of this installation is aided largely by the employment of the mixing chamber prior to the shutter opening.

John and MaryJo are terrific hosts, always eager to share Roxy with other organ "nuts." So, if you are going to be in the area, a phone call is certain to elicit a hearty welcome. They may be reached at 503/684-5597.



The curved wall of the mixing chamber helps project the sound.

**At the present time,  
Roxy boasts the following ranks:**

- 8' Trumpet
- 8' Oboe Horn
- 16' Diapason/Diaphone
- 8' Tibia Clausa
- 8' Kinura (prepared for)
- 8' Clarinet
- 8' Solo String
- 8' String
- 8' Celeste
- 16' Concert Flute/Bourdon
- 8' Vox Humana
- Traps and Tuned Percussions