

Closing Chord

Don Baker

One of America's best known theatre organists, Don Baker lost a courageous battle with cancer on June 26. In spite of his illness, Don was on the concert circuit as recently as last May when he played for Motor City Chapter.

Born in Ontario, Canada, in 1903, Don became an American citizen in his early twenties and soon established a career in New York, playing the Rivoli and Rialto Theatres from 1923-1929. He played a number of other theatres, including the Granada Tooting in England, until 1935 when he began a fourteen-year stint as chief organist at the New York Paramount Times Square. He also made a number of recordings and films during his very successful career.

In 1948, Don moved west and played in a number of places such as Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas before he became a touring artist for the Conn Organ Company. Even after Don and his wife, Anne, "retired" to Florida, he continued to play concerts throughout the country, and the theatre organ world today is richer because he was willing to share his knowledge and talent with us.

Another theatre organ "Great" has left us a legacy of Love — love of the instrument and its music and of the era when life was not quite so frenetic and we had time to listen.

(Anne Baker, Don's widow, has asked that we print this message to all of our members, and we are pleased to do so. Ed.)



Don Baker

Alva Wilson

Alva Wilson, 87, passed away on June 9 in Roswell, New Mexico. Mr. Wilson had lived in Roswell since 1918. He was a professional musician and radio electronics expert. He played the pipe organ in silent movie theatres and traveled throughout the Southwest installing and repairing pipe organs. Alva had his own radio program of organ music for many years on KGFL, Roswell's first radio station.

In 1941 Alva Wilson installed the original Hillgreen-Lane organ from the Albuquerque Sunshine Theatre in the then new Pearson Auditorium at New Mexico Military Institute and one of the cadets, Bill Brown, now an organman himself, helped with the installation and maintenance of that organ. Bill Brown, who lives in Phoenix, remembers that Alva helped with the complete rebuild and replacement with Wurlitzer parts during the early 1980s and helped maintain the instrument right up to the end. Bill said Alva "was the one who got me started in theatre organ playing and building. He was a wonderful person and will be missed by all."

David N. Gellatly

David Gellatly passed away at his home in Wenatchee, Washington, on March 18. He was 73. A lifelong resident of Wenatchee, his corporation operated orchards and rental properties in Wenatchee and Seattle.

Mr. Gellatly was a 37-year member of the Wenatchee Downtown Rotary Club and a past exalted ruler of Elks Lodge No. 1186 where he served as their organist from 1959-1987. He was a long-time member of ATOS and Puget Sound Chapter.

In the early 1920s his corporation, Mann & Gellatly, installed a Wurlitzer pipe organ in the Liberty Theatre and David played it for the silent movies for many years. It has recently been donated to the North Central Washington Museum.

Mr. Gellatly is survived by his wife, "Brownie;" two sons, David C. and James of Wenatchee, and a stepson, Dave Case and two granddaughters.

Those who wish may send memorial contributions to the North Central Washington Museum Pipe Organ Restoration Fund, 1125 Cedar Street, Wenatchee, Washington 95801. *Thelma Barclay*

All A. P. O. S. Members

*Thank you for your
thoughtfulness*

*I can only say,
Don gave me the
most beautiful
15 years of my life,
husband, father,
friend, lover and
most outstanding
musician*

*God Bless! Love
Anne B*

*Music is the arithmetic of sounds
as optics is the geometry of light.*

CLAUDE DeBUSSY (1862-1918)



Keith Chapman

Keith Chapman

Keith Chapman, 44, and his wife, Sally, were killed when their twin-engine plane crashed at 13,400 feet in the Colorado Rockies. They were flying from Los Angeles en route to Omaha, Nebraska to visit their two-week-old grandson.

Keith was born in San Bruno, California, and at an early age became assistant to his organ teacher, Richard Purvis, at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. He moved to Philadelphia to accept a scholarship with Alexander McCurdy at the Curtis Institute and earned his Bachelor of Music there. While still a student, he became head organist of the Wanamaker Grand Court Organ, a post he held for 23 years. He earned his Master of Music Degree at Temple University and his Doctorate of Musical Arts at Combs College of Music. He appeared regularly with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Keith and Sally met at Grace Presbyterian Church in Abington where he was organist and she a member of the choir. They were married on February 7, 1966, and together they created the Stentorian Company on whose label his three major Wanamaker Organ records and cassettes were released. In recent years she was the managing director of the Rodgers Organ sales and installation company, Organ Design, Ltd.

The Chapmans lived in Chestnut Hill, a 120-year-old Victorian mansion which they restored and renovated. Keith and Sally are survived not only by dear family members but also by a host of friends whose lives have been enriched by their friendship, talents and love. At a memorial service at the Valley Forge Military Academy, a choir of friends sang a composition written by Keith entitled "Hearken All."

Earl G. Gilbert

Earl Gilbert passed away on May 9 at the home of his son in New Orleans, Louisiana. He leaves his dear wife, Stella, his son Edwin and a daughter, Joyce, and three granddaughters.

Earl joined ATOS in 1959 and was a member of Buffalo Area Chapter. He and his wife attended many ATOS conventions, and he helped prepare the Shea's Buffalo organ for the 1964 Convention. While he was still a student, Earl played organ in the roller rinks in the Buffalo area, later substituting as organist at his church.

In 1967, Earl had a dream come true when he installed a 1928 Wurlitzer, opus 1966, theatre organ (2/6 plus piano) in his home complete and in mint condition. The home was specially built to provide a natural reverberation and live stereo sound. A Wurlitzer Organette (Style W) which plays Organette rolls or 88-note piano rolls was also installed. Many professional organists from the East and West Coast have played it and have rated it one of the best theatre organ installations in a home.

One of his friends has said, "His talents, his keen ear, and his knowledge of theatre organs opened a new door of music appreciation and enjoyment for his friends." He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

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