



Robert-Morton console. Chamber is behind the drape.

Leonard Vernon's Robert-Morton #2981

by Jerry Ruby
(photos by Blaine Vernon)

On a chilly, late December evening, looking over the gray waters of the Columbia River, strange vibrations are felt. In the distance, a lighted flotilla becomes visible through the mist and strains of "Silent Night" can be heard. As the waterborne parade nears, Leonard Vernon's air calliope can be heard from one of the boats; it is being played by local artist Betty Phillips. Leonard was once a member of the Astoria Clowns and his calliope was used in all of the local parades, but now it is only heard at Christmastime and in the Columbia River Maritime Museum.

Leonard Vernon's love of the pipe organ goes back to his childhood when he used to attend the Mickey Mouse Club Show at the Liberty Theatre in Astoria on Saturday mornings. He obtained his first organ in 1950, a single-rank Compensating pipe organ from a local church. In the mid-fifties he bought the 2/4 Kilgen from

the Blue Mouse Theatre in Portland which was then owned by Ted Marks. Leonard became a Charter Member of ATOS and was one of the founders of Oregon Chapter.

In 1959, a tragic explosion of a truck in Roseburg, Oregon, leveled several city blocks, and one of the casualties was a Robert-Morton pipe organ which was damaged when the roof collapsed on the Methodist church. Leonard bid on the salvage job and, when he was awarded the job, he spent two weekends hauling the organ to Astoria, a round trip of 600 miles.

After a lengthy battle with the local authorities for a remodeling permit, Leonard began to install the organ in his home. The first step required that a hole be cut in the living room wall (it is now a picture window) to get the console into the 17 x 40-foot room. To enhance the sound from the chamber, 12 x 24 x 15

feet, Leonard did not put in parallel walls. On Christmas Eve 1960 Bill Blunk played the Robert-Morton for the first time in its new home.

Opus 2891 was first installed in 1924 in the Indian Theatre in Roseburg. It had two manuals and five ranks consisting of: Concert Flute, Tibia, Trumpet, Violin and Vox Humana plus Xylophone, Glockenspiel, a five-note chime set and percussions. A Diapason and Dulciana had been added when it was in the Methodist church. Leonard added three Gottfried ranks, Clarinet, Kinura, and Post Horn, plus the toy counter and 18-note chimes which had been part of the Billy Woods Organ in the Oaks Park Roller Rink in Portland. He also included the Viol d'Orchestra from his Kilgen organ and a chrysoglott from the Hollywood Theatre Wurlitzer in Portland.

Through the years many organists have visited Leonard's home and played



Leonard Vernon and chamber-cat Mitzi check the Robert-Morton.



Ranks from left front to back: tops of 8' Tibia, 8' Concert Flute, Gottfried Kinura, Kilgen VDO, Gottfried Post Horn. Backwall: 16' Bourdon, Gottfried Clarinet, Morton Trumpet, Morton Salicional, Morton Concert Flute, Diapason, Morton Vox Humana.

"My home is always open to anyone who enjoys pipe organs . . ."

opus 2891 in its now comfortable surroundings. Among those who have enjoyed this experience were Don Baker, "Tiny" James, Leonard MacClain, Richard Simonton, Ben Hall, Fred Pillsbury, Everett Nourse, Paul Quarino and Dick Schrum. Leonard has conducted tours for the local schools and held open house many times for the people of Astoria. Pipe organ enthusiasts from Seattle and Portland, Puget Sound Chapter and Oregon Chapter have trekked to this remote corner of the state on numerous occasions for fun and fellowship at the Vernon home.

Leonard has always been a craftsman. In addition to his restoration and repair

of pipe organs and his calliope, he has fully restored a 1916 Oldsmobile truck. He continues to build steam-powered, radio-controlled boats ranging from three to five-feet in length. His current project is a scale replica of a steam schooner which is 84-inches long. Now that he has retired from his job with the Astoria schools, Leonard is actively involved in two museums, runs a small organ repair service and finds time to serve on the board of directors of Oregon Chapter ATOS. He loves to have visitors come and see or play his Robert-Morton. "My home is always open to anyone who enjoys pipe organs," he says.

STOP LIST

PEDAL

- 16 Trumpet
- 16 Tibia
- 16 Bourdon
- 8 Trumpet
- 8 Concert Flute
- 8 Tibia
- 8 Diapason
- 8 Cello
- 4 Tibia
- Bass drum
- Cymbal
- Tympani

SOLO

- 16 Trumpet
- 16 Bourdon
- 16 Cello (Tenor C)
- 8 Trumpet
- 8 Diapason
- 8 Tibia
- 8 Concert Flute
- 8 Salicional
- 8 Viol d'Orchestra
- 8 Clarinet
- 8 Vox Humana
- 8 Kinura
- 8 English Post Horn
- 4 Octave
- 4 Tibia
- 4 Flute
- 4 Salicet
- 4 Viol d'Orchestra
- 4 Clarion
- 4 Clarinet
- 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ Twelfth
- 2 Piccolo
- 1-3/5 Tierce
- Xylophone
- Glockenspiel
- Chrysoglott
- Chimes

ACCOMPANIMENT

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| 8 Trumpet | Xylophone |
| 8 Diapason | Glockenspiel |
| 8 Tibia | Chrysoglott |
| 8 Concert Flute | Snare Drum |
| 8 Salicional | Chinese Block |
| 8 Viol d'Orchestra | Castanets |
| 8 Dulciana | Tambourine |
| 8 Clarinet | |
| 8 Vox Humana | |
| 8 Kinura | |
| 4 Flute | |
| 4 Salicet | |
| 4 Dulcet | |
| 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ Twelfth | |
| 2 Piccolo | |

Pedal also has five toe studs: Klaxon (Oogahorn), Crash Cymbal, Siren, Sleigh Bells and Bird Whistle. There are four presets on each manual and three tremolos. Blower is a 3hp, 3 phase Spencer running on single phase with a capacity bank.