

Behind The Scenes . . .



June Coffman (left) and Bette Underwood, VTOS hostesses at Organ Stop. TL



Registration chairman Madeline LiVolsi answers questions. GJ



Bill Brown readies pipes in his chamber. TL



Standing - Don Story, Cliff Golden, Tom Lind. Seated - Ed Wolfe, Jud Murphy. DVS



Above: Sue McLean served refreshments at Brown's. TL



Irene Bray at registration. TL



◀ L to R: Walt Strony, Alden Stockebrand, Tom Lind, Michael Crozien. DVS

Below: Tom Lind, Sue McLean and Linda Mallon manned the Hospitality Room. cv



Judy Shortt at registration. TL

PHOENIX FESTIVAL II

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by Grace McGinnis

For anyone who may have wondered whether Walt Strony and Valley of The Sun Chapter could ever top the first Phoenix Festival, all doubts were removed last Thanksgiving weekend. From the Friday morning howdies and hugs in the hotel lobby to the Sunday night see ya's and write-to-me's, we experienced a phantasmagoria of music, laughter, fellowship and fun!

A stroll through the tropical atrium brought us to the Registration Room where genial hosts handed us our packets. As usual, we pulled out the Convention Program first. This one was most intriguing. Pictured on the cover was a misty, time-worn keydesk, and inside were photos, which had been taken some years ago, of the scheduled artists. Rather than the usual well-known biographies, there were descriptions of the artists' homes which gave us a glimpse of their lives we might not otherwise see. Kudos to Richard Sklenar for this imaginative presentation.

The morning socializing and packet inspection gave us an appetite, and we elected to lunch in the Embassy Suites coffee shop. Afterwards we talked our way back across the pools of goldfish to where the busses were lined up and, yes, there was our stalwart friend, Alden Stockebrand, directing the dispersion of the 400 to Mike Everitt's Organ Stop in nearby Mesa. Since Phoenix I this instrument has doubled in ranks and is now a stunning 4/42 on a lift!

As soon as Ron Rhode struck his opening chord we were off and running. Ron's music is so consistently smooth and sensitive that no further comment is necessary. We were, however, somewhat puzzled when he took the console down in the middle of a rousing march and then, with only a subtle change in the rhythm, it came back up with Clark Wilson on the bench. People love the unexpected, and the audience acknowledged this with their response. Ron and Clark further delighted the 400 with a smashing version of the *Warsaw Concerto* with Ron at the piano. We knew this was going to be "one of those weekends!"

The schedule enabled us to truly enjoy the cocktail/dinner hour before Alden's well-drilled drivers and VTOS Captains shepherded us aboard the busses for a short ride to the First Methodist Church.



Opening artist Ron Rhode. GJ

A unique arrangement at the front of the sanctuary caught our attention, and we were pleased to be told by emcee Ray Danford that this was a television screen on which we would see Lew Williams as the console of the 3/58 Casavant was not easily seen from the pews. We salute this creative innovation. Lew was at his whimsical, delightful best in this program. We particularly liked his anecdotes *in re* each selection. His artistry, like that of Ron Rhode, does not require explication. Mark Gifford served competently as his page-turner.

Friday night's capper was a jam session/pizza feed at Mesa Organ Stop, specially planned for those with insatiable appetites. Musical desserts were provided by Clark Wilson, Patti Simon, Ron Rhode, Lew Williams and Martin Ellis. Who can imagine a more satisfying menu!

We also appreciated the fact that the hotel's lounge area was available to conventioners for as late as they wished to visit.

Another plus at the Embassy Suites was the free buffet breakfast which could be carried outdoors and eaten beside the pool — in November??

Because the 400 were divided into three groups for Saturday's activities, we found ourselves with a free morning and, as we sauntered through the atrium the sound of organ music drew us, like a magnet, into a ballroom where we found Charlie Balogh, seated at an Allen organ, holding an enthusiastic audience spellbound with some terrific jazzy arrangements.



Lew Williams and Mark Gifford at Organ Stop. MLV



Clark Wilson at Organ Stop. GJ

Patti Simon at jam session. GJ



Bill Brown introduces Walt Strony.

TL



Lyn Larsen. RR



Lyn Larsen and Jack Bethard's Orchestra. GJ



Convention chairman, concert artist, genial host, Walt Strony. TL



Jonas Nordwall ...



Jonas Nordwall. MLV



Charlie Balogh. MA

Saturday afternoon our group went to the Bill Brown residence where Bill's 5/28 Wurlitzer and virtuoso Walt Strony combined to create an idyllic mood in a setting that echoed the feeling. It was most rewarding to relax in the yard and contemplate the oranges ripening while the power of the pipes permeated the entire area. We certainly owe our thanks to Bill Brown for promoting theatre organs throughout the Southwest and for opening his sanctuary to our convention.

That night the 400 boarded busses again for the Valley of The Sun Religious Science Center in Scottsdale where Lyn Larsen had readied the 3/17 Wurlitzer to meld with the Big Band music of Jack Bethards' orchestra. We could swear that the ghost of Glenn Miller was sitting on top of the console — smiling.

The euphoria of this concert carried back to the hotel, and the lounge rapidly transformed into an ATOS party that lasted well into Sunday morning.

Sunday morning was reserved for the only non-Phoenixian on the program. Jonas Nordwall told us he felt like he belonged to a Dixieland band — the Phoenix Five Plus One. His performance, as always, left us searching for superlatives. Jonas continues to amaze us.

The First Christian Church Fellowship Hall and its 2/11 Wurlitzer plus the fifth Phoenix organist was our group's treat on Sunday afternoon. Rob Richards has developed a style that bridges the past several decades and drops into the 1990s with a "Fusion." His presentation was enhanced by the "vox humana" of John Giardina, a gifted young tenor. We were fascinated by Rob's futuristic orientation and feel encouraged that his music may reach out to a new audience for theatre organ music.



John Giardina (left) and Rob Richards. TL

Out In Front . . .



Line for pizza at Organ Stop. GJ



Patti Simon and Paul VanDerMolen. TL



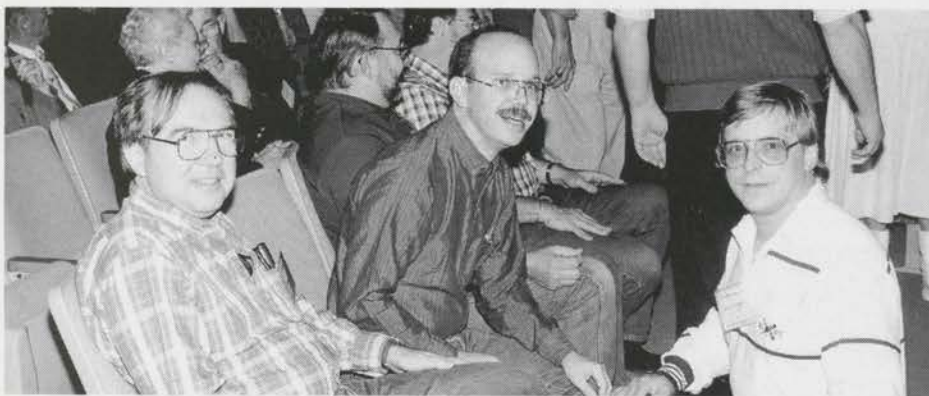
Paul Quarino and Gracie McGinnis. MLV



Corrie and Mark Renwick



L to R: John Ledwon, Lowell Ayars, Frances Morehead. DVS



Above: Richard Neidich, Ed Horjath, and Pat Lajko. GJ

► L to R: Anita Dwarin, Lew Williams, Milton Dwarin. DVS



Chuck Wiltch



Frances Morehead



Front row: Vera McDaniel, Joylynn Huebner, Marion Thompson. Back: Bob Aaker, C. Davis. *dvs*



Intermission at Brown residence. *dvs*



L to R: John Pietramale, Fennell Lee, Ed Zollman, Bill Schlotter, Patti Simon, Ed Wolfe, Jud Murphy, Tom Wolfe. *dvs*



Ardis Johnson. *tl*



Tom Crosier. *tl*



L to R: John Gogle, Mickey Gogle, Katherine Auten, Irene Gardner. *dvs*



At Bill Browns. *gj*



At Mesa Organ Stop. *dvs*

PHOENIX FESTIVAL II

Yesterday's . . .



Beth NiCastro captures Alden Stockebrand. RR

The bonus event for those who chose to stay over Sunday night was dinner at Yesterday's, a *sine qua non* in the realm of dining entertainment. Owner David Lindsay employs bright, talented young people to serve as waiters and waitresses and entertainers. He then emcees a continuous, captivating program while diners are served quietly and efficiently. We even found ourselves forgetting to eat (no mean feat) during the show.

This night the festivities began with a lusty birthday tribute to Alden Stockebrand by Beth NiCastro, a strikingly attractive young singer whose delivery of "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" reduced the diners (not to mention Alden) to jello. Lindsay then conducted auditions for new employees: Little Wally with his viola, Lewie as vocalist, Lyn singing "Lydia, The Tattooed Lady," and Charlie on the Allen. Of course, no one was surprised to learn that Yesterday's (all of a sudden) had no openings for waiters.

The show did not stop there, however, and birthday (or other) numbers were sung to VTOS members Tom Lind, by Nora Kelly, and Linda Mallon, by Bobby Sanfortello (the Italian Stallion). Other singers were Woody Norvell, Billy Walker and Todd Feltman. Todd singled out Jan VanDerMolen for a one-of-a-kind performance and then, accompanied by VTOS member Johnny Harris, sang a wild western, "Cow Patty." David Lindsay guaranteed our good digestion with a monologue on Arizona ("a giant litter box") and its inhabitants (natives vs "relocators"). His comments on the bridges with no water underneath ("when the water comes, they close them") and NO FISHING signs affixed should make him #1 target for the Arizona Chamber of Commerce. The man was outrageously funny.

And the dinner was good, too!

Let the faces on these pages tell the rest of the story. Let Walt Strony and Valley of The Sun Chapter rest in the assurance that they brightened the corner of their world for three unforgettable days and sent 400 people home with lighter spirits and renewed enthusiasm for all that theatre organ can be.



THANKS TO PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Tom Lind (TL)
 Madeline LiVolsi (MLV)
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 Gary Jones (GJ)
 Marjorie Allen (MA)



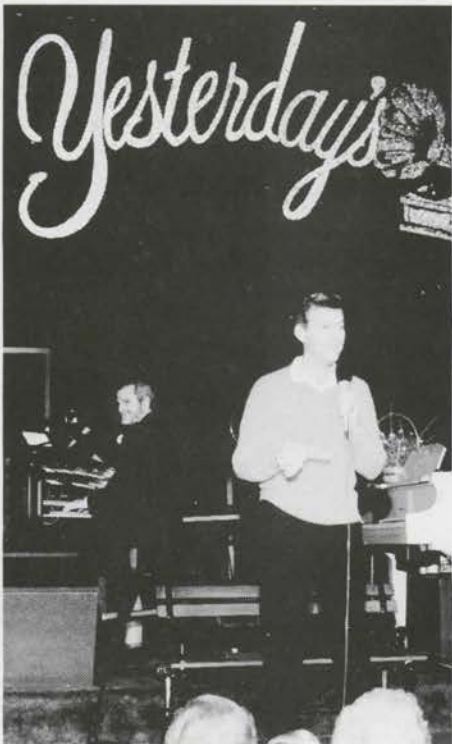
Little Wally — check the bow . . . RR



It's Alden's birthday. RR



Lewie tries out . . . RR



Lyn auditions. RR



Todd Feltman dances for Jan VanDerMolen. RR