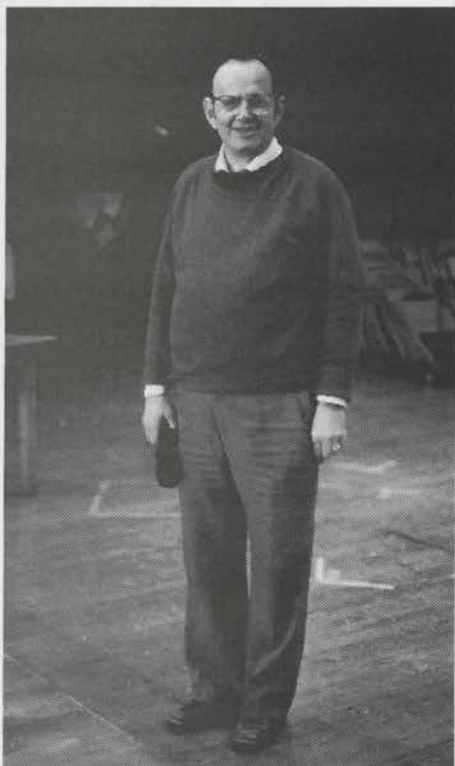


A Miracle For Manual High School

by J. Kevin Aikman



Auditorium manager Carl E. Wright.

Don is packing up the empty Tupperware containers which he has brought full of baked goods every Saturday morning for the past three years. Jim is putting away the coffee pots (two, since someone mentioned decaf). Carl reminds me to call Security when I leave. "Thanks, guys," I say. "Ooo-kay," they say. Another work session has ended. I walk back across the stage and down into the 1178-seat house to rest for a few minutes in my favorite seat. It feels great to sit down with only the whirr of the fan motors on the lighting panel disturbing the otherwise glorious silence of the empty auditorium.

As I sit quietly in Row M, my mind drifts back to the time when the \$3200 solid-state relay installation on the old Louisville Uniphone began to rocket to the three-year, all-volunteer, \$100,000 project to purchase, restore and install a concert-class, 3/26 Wurlitzer in this same auditorium. I thought about the goals of our chapter as they relate to this project, about the individuals who are particularly important to the success of this venture and about how our experience can help others who may contemplate a similar effort or who just share our love of the theatre organ.

Go back with me to 1972 when Carl E. Wright was manager of the auditorium. His dream was to see an organ in Manual High School, and he began work to prepare for an installation. There were no organ chambers, so Wright and a few students built ceilings and floors in the empty space between walls in the building. A room was built for the relays, and Wright knocked holes in the concrete blocks for tone openings. A Louisville Uniphone organ was purchased in late 1972, and on January 22, 1977, the dedication concert was played by Lee Erwin.

Ten years later, in 1987, major work was needed to keep the instrument playing. A solid-state relay was purchased and its installation begun in the summer of '87. Before long, however, it became apparent that more was needed for this organ than just a relay. The litany of troubles included ceilings that were sagging from being wet, swell openings that were too small, chests that were causing many problems and one set of swell shades that was warped. Interest in the project grew, and bit-by-bit the Uniphone

has been replaced with a Wurlitzer. Most of the original organ has gone to another Uniphone owner in the area.

Central Indiana Chapter had never undertaken an organ project, so we began modestly with the purchase of a used solid-state relay, \$1000 for its installation and no organ crew. I remember vaguely the notes made for our first crew meeting, but I recall with some clarity that no one came that first week! However, not too many weeks passed before we had a good crew of five men who are still with us in 1990.



(L to R) Mark, Andy, Steve, Jim and John Catellier. Not pictured are Dan, Dave, Jim and Ken.

Here is where our miracle begins to take place. The chapter voted to rebuild the Main chamber, and gifts began to come in from our members and friends. Subsequently, we were able to acquire almost all Wurlitzer pipework and components for a 13-rank Main chamber. The old ceiling was replaced and new light fixtures added. We also learned that the school was willing to enlarge the tone openings. The installation of the relay and the rebuilding of the Main continued in the basement of the school on a once-a-week basis through 1988.

Work started in the Solo, Percussion/Bombard and blower room in 1989 with only dim prospects for finding the needed components to complete this part of the



Don Newswanger (left) and Jim Catellier.



Miracle workers replacing magnet dags and cleaning regulator ribs. (L to R) Kay Lupu, John Jones, Barb Johnson, Eleanor Nold, Dennis Grove, George Nold.



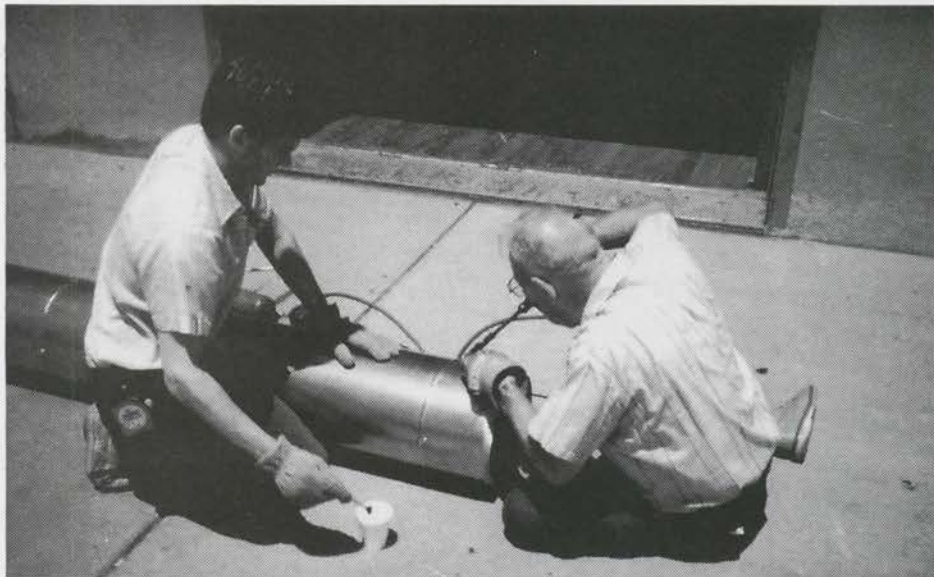
Tuesday night work crew.

organ. Many of the ranks we wanted were only "wish-list" items as the price tag was over \$20,000 and they were seldom available for sale. It looked as if we would have to go through the slow process of traveling around the country looking at components (This represented about 5,000 miles of driving for the Main). It was not long, though, until we found ourselves another golden opportunity. A large number of organ parts were offered to us if we could raise the necessary money. Imagine — all the components and pipework needed to complete the organ in one place!

We immediately composed a letter telling our members of this great opportunity. We included a list of the components we wished to purchase and the price of each. Members were asked to respond by buying a specific item or by contributing toward its purchase. Until this point, we had financed the organ project from the chapter treasury and from other grants we received. This was the first time we had asked members to contribute from their own pockets. As always, our members came through in full force. The goal of \$20,000 was met, and we put one more hurdle behind us.

Restoration work is being done in the shop facilities of the J.K. Aikman Company. Crews work three nights a week, one crew works every weekday, and another works on Saturdays. With a dedication concert date set for June 22, it is full steam ahead.

What has developed here is a tremendous cooperative effort to put together something that will serve as a monument to the appreciation of theatre organ. This has been possible here in Indiana only because of the efforts of many individuals.



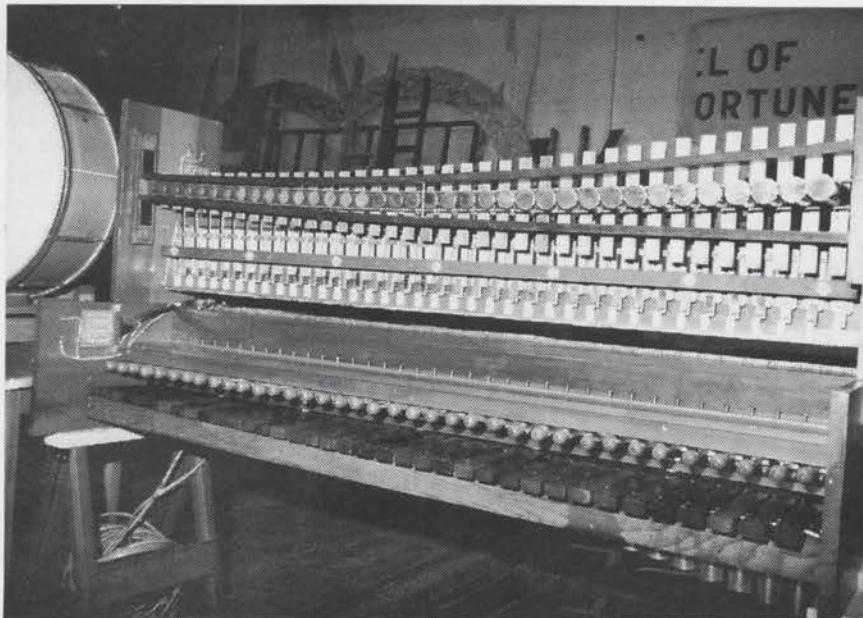
Kevin Aikman (left) and Jim Catellier.



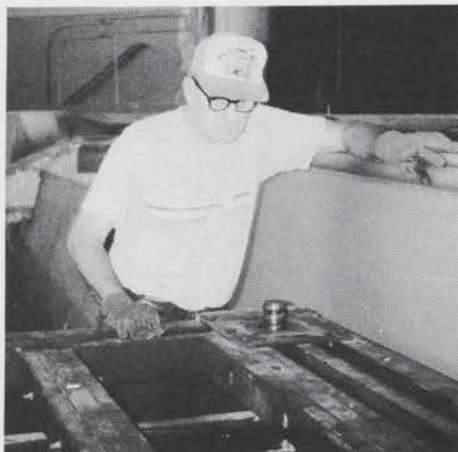
Hubert Griffy.



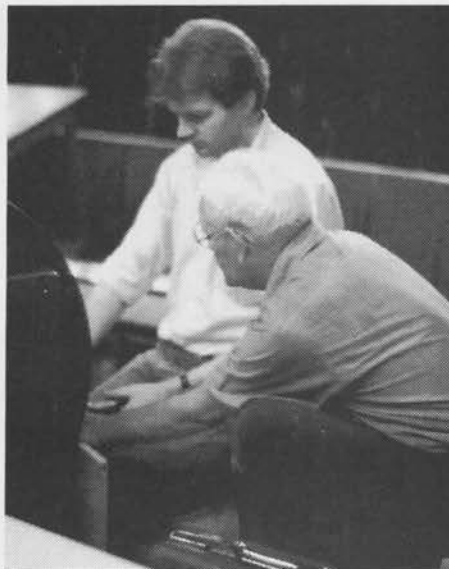
Carlton Smith and console.



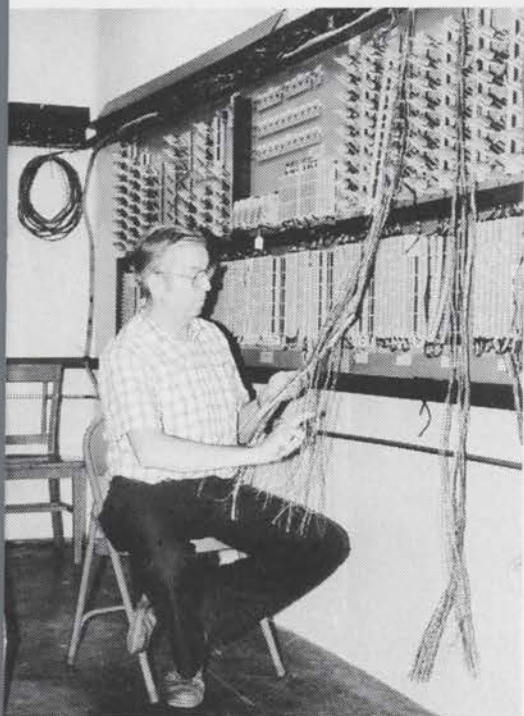
Rebuilt percussion on display at February 1990 meeting.



Jim Blande works on lift.



Kevin Alkman (left) and Henri Harrell.



Donald Newswanger in Relay room.



Barb Johnson re-leathers chest primaries.

The design and restoration of the console are in the capable hands of Carlton Smith. Carlton is one of the best console men in the country, and we are fortunate that he has donated his services to this project. By making the extra effort to fit this console to the architecture of the auditorium, Carlton has given us integrity and artistic harmony of that which will be displayed prominently in the auditorium.

Chapter President Tim Needler has given many hours and several thousand dollars to this project. His acute business sense has kept the project moving many times when it could have left the tracks. We have been the recipient of many thousands of dollars as a result of Tim's ability to write grant proposals and to sell our efforts in writing.

There are two men who have been with this project ever since the old relay was hauled out of the basement. James C. Catellier and Donald W. Newswanger, ages 71 and 66 respectively, are both retired. Jim was an Executive Manager with Indiana Bell, and Don served as a Deputy Superintendent of Building Inspection for the City of Los Angeles. These two men hold the record for the number of hours worked on the restoration of this organ and are largely responsible for keeping the project on schedule. Jim has enlisted eight of his nine sons to assist in the moving of blowers, building of chambers, soldering of windlines, hauling of diaphone resonators and anything else they are asked to do. Don has made breakfast muffins by the dozens and designed all sorts of switching devices for our console. Both men traveled to Atlanta for two days to help pack the components we had purchased.

We are most fortunate to have a chapter whose members are doers rather than directors. They have organized yard sales, concerts, and work crews and have given freely of their time to help build this organ.

The unassuming and straightforward nature of the theatre pipe organ and its music allows it to be approachable and understood by a great section of society. This music reaches all of us, when words and pictures cannot, in a setting that places us gently in another era. Indeed, for each of us, this instrument has a special place in our souls. Although the theatre pipe organs were probably built for fewer years than any other musical instrument, it is interesting to witness the universal appeal these instruments have when reinstalled in their original settings.

What We Have Learned From Our Miracle

The goal of the American Theatre Organ Society is to promote and encourage interest in the theatre pipe organ. We used the following criteria and philosophy for choosing Manual High School as our best opportunity to maximize the perpetuation of the theatre organ. Here are our reasons:

1) The organ must be placed directly in the path of young people. We cannot afford to assume that future students of theatre organ will, by chance, happen upon our instruments at club meetings or concerts. Remember when you were young the only things you noticed were the ones you tripped over?

2) The instrument must be placed where it is necessary for us to cooperate with others in order to assure the welcome tenure of the organ and its curators. Having our way 100% of the time does not encourage the overwhelmingly successful results that mutual support and co-habitation generate.

3) The building should be along a well-traveled route in a safe section of your town. Couple this with adequate parking, ample seating capacity and billboard space and you have a sure winner for drawing good crowds to your concerts and club events.

4) Place your instrument, if possible, in a building maintained by a stable group (such as a school system). By doing this, you may save the costs of building maintenance, utilities, insurance, etc., all of which can weaken the ongoing and long-term finances of your group.

While I realize that there are no absolutes where these directives are concerned, I do believe that the closer you can come to these objectives the greater your chances for achieving the stated goals of our organization.

Here are some of the details which need to be negotiated with the authorities of the building you have selected:

1) Have a written understanding concerning your club's access to the building for installation, practice, meetings or concerts and what fees, if any, you will be expected to pay. At Manual we have free and unlimited use of the organ so long as it does not interfere with school activities.

2) It is essential that you have free access to the building during the installation of the organ. This is especially important if any restoration or construction work takes place on site. At Manual, we are fortunate that member Carl Wright is also auditorium manager and allows us in as needed.

3) Find out how frequently the building is used. Some venues are so busy that you may find it difficult to schedule any substantive use of the organ. Meet and talk with the manager of the theatre or auditorium to ascertain whether or not he/she is open to sharing the "space" with a theatre organ.

A few other important questions which should be considered before work begins: Is there adequate space for the chambers, blowers and console? Who will pay for electrical service and structural work? To whom will the instrument belong? What will happen to it if, for any reason, it must be removed? At Manual, the school provided electric service to the blowers and the cutting of tone openings, and we provided preparation of all the chamber, blower and console spaces.

Now, as to the organ itself, you have several options. If your club is wealthy or has members who will donate funds to contract a competent professional firm to complete the entire installation, this may be your choice. If, however, your funds are limited, you may elect to attempt the acquisition, restoration and installation of the organ using the combined efforts of your members. If your club opts for the latter, it would still be an excellent idea to hire a professional theatre organ builder to guide your efforts. We have been fortunate in Indianapolis to have had professionals volunteer to help see the project to completion. Carlton Smith is overseeing the console restoration and Kevin Aikman is overall manager of the project.

The standards and sophistication of theatre organ building are rising constantly. It is no longer acceptable (nor should it be) to expect artists to perform on instruments that do not meet today's performance standards. Electronic switching, combination actions and computers have greatly enhanced the

capabilities of the instrument but require far more expertise in specification and installation than did their electro-pneumatic predecessors. The best way to protect the integrity of your installation is to hire the wise counsel of a theatre organ builder. If we want the public to take the theatre organ seriously as an art form, we must do the same.

Well, it is time for me to leave my comfortable seat in Row M and let Security know that I am leaving the building. It has been pleasant to sit and share our dream with you, and we are looking forward to meeting many of you at the 1990 National Convention when Ron Rhode will open the festivities at the console of the Manual High School Mighty Wurlitzer.

(The author wishes to thank the following for their photographs: Jim Catellier, Don Newswanger, John Ennis, Raymond Andrejasich.)

Analysis of Chambers Emmerich Manual High School 3/26 Wurlitzer

MAIN CHAMBER	#of pipes
16' Tuba Profunda	73
16' Diaphonic Horn	85
16' Double Oboe Horn	73
16' Bourdon	97
8' Clarinet	61
8' Vox Humana	61
8' Tibia Clausa	85
8' Violin (Kimball)	73
8' Violin Celeste (Kimball)	73
8' Salicional	73
8' Salicional Celeste	73
8' Flute Celeste (TC)	61
8' Quintadena (Kimball)	61
Toy Counter	
Marimba Harp	49 bars
SOLO CHAMBER	
16' Solo Tibia Clausa	97
8' Brass Trumpet	61
8' Kinura (Dennison)	61
8' Krumet (Trivo)	61
8' Orchestral Oboe	61
8' Brass Saxophone	61
8' Vox Humana	61
8' Horn Diapason	73
8' Viol D'Orchestre	85
8' Viol Celeste	73
PERCUSSION/BOMBARD CHAMBER	
8' Tuba Mirabilis	61
8' English Horn	61
8' Diaphonic Diapason	48
Chrysoglott	49 bars
Xylophone	37 bars
Glockenspiel	37 bars
Sleigh Bells	25 notes
DIAPHONE CHAMBER	
16' Wood Dipahone	18
Tower Chimes	