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# CLOSING CHORD

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## Thomas O. Landrum

by Buddy Boyd

I heard a news story about the revival of the Theatre Organ broadcast on National Public Radio's *Monitor* news program, and thought that they had missed the larger story. That of the unsung heroes who have kept these instruments in the public eye.

Tommy Landrum was one of these people, who took up the torch when Harold Warner died and extended the life of the organs in Richmond, Virginia's, Mosque and Byrd and Loews Theatres. Tommy had learned that the organ builders, with over 300 years of experience, knew what they were doing and did not try to improve on these instruments, but he did make enhancements in the tools used to restore them. He worked by a simple rule, when you played in his backyard you played by his rules, and when he worked in yours he took your direction willingly. Like most technicians, he did not play the organ but he did know one tune that he would perform for his own enjoyment. In 1978 Tommy was made president of the ATOS to fill the remaining term of a retiring officer. He formed a close relationship with organist Eddie Weaver and traveled with him as his organ technician. Besides the organs in Richmond, he would travel to North Carolina to help the chapter there with its many organ projects and served as one of the chapter's officers.

Tommy Landrum was no different than the rest of us, but I owe him a debt which will take the rest of my life to repay. For it was his dedication to the Theatre organ which made it possible for me and other Virginians to grow up with those wonderful sounds.

Thomas O. Landrum died in Richmond, Virginia on April 2, 1991, after battling cancer for the last five years.



## Erwin A. "Cap" Young

by George R. Johnson

"Cap" Young, a founder and early chairman of Potomac Valley Chapter (1959-60) and president of ATOS from July 1972 to July 1974, passed away in Sarasota, Florida, on February 25. He was 71. Cap is survived by his wife, Joyce, one son and a daughter who provided him with two grandchildren.

Cap was awarded an ATOS Honorary Membership in 1967. For several years following his service as ATOS president, he served as office manager and treasurer for ATOS. He served in the Army Air Corps during WWII, but it wasn't until he became a pilot for Capitol Airlines that he was nicknamed "Cap." Capitol was subsequently absorbed into United Airlines and, for the last several years before his retirement, he flew 747s from Dulles Airport.

The Youngs had lived near Mount Vernon, Virginia, where Cap added a connecting wing to his home to provide a studio for his 2/7 style E divided Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ. Many early Potomac Valley meetings were held there, within a stone's throw of Mt. Vernon Estate. Later he moved to Middleburg, Virginia, to his farm, to be more convenient to Dulles Airport.

In his capacity as a pilot, Cap was able to get around freely, and with his enthusiasm for theatre pipe organs he helped to form a number of new ATOS chapters around the country. He also helped Judd Walton search out the current locations of more than 1000 remaining Wurlitzers of the 2240 instruments produced by the company.

Cap was a founder and shareholder of the Maryland Midland Railroad, now headquartered in Union Bridge, Maryland, operating over trackage of the former

Western Maryland RR. He was also associated with the Winchester and Western RR for a short time.

In accordance with his wishes, Cap's remains were cremated and his ashes taken up in an airplane and dispersed into the prop wash! Some of his close friends in ATOS were: "Tiny" James, a founder of ATOS; George Thompson, a former editor of *THEATRE ORGAN*, Betty Mason and her late husband, Al; Tommy Landrum, a past president of ATOS, and many others. If ever a convention program might be considered dull, Cap and his friends might be seen riding a trolley or a railroad locomotive.

While Cap never had any serious problems as a pilot, after his retirement in 1982 he was on a northbound train in North Carolina that was hijacked.

Cap's widow, Mrs. Joyce Young, resides at 4388 Bowling Green Circle, Sarasota, Florida 34233.

## Joseph E. Elicker 1909 - 1991

by Grant I. Whitcomb

As a youth growing up in northeast Pennsylvania, Joe was already exhibiting some of the imaginative energy that would mold his lifestyle. He became a Page in the Pennsylvania Senate at the Capitol in Harrisburg. Here he was destined to make many friends and to observe first-hand the arts of persuasion and compromise which are not only the prime elements in politics, but in most activities involving human relations.

While still a youth, Joe commenced a divergent career as a publicist, manager of advertising, and a promoter, primarily in the field of show business. In the days of the silent motion pictures and presentations of live entertainment on the stages of the great motion picture palaces, Joe was the promoter of many acts in terms of both advance planning, advertising, and publicity. He also experienced the satisfaction of successful theatre management during the silent era when most theatres were equipped with organs. It was at this time that Joe, who was also musically talented, began a life-long love affair with the theatre organ.

In the late 1930s Joe temporarily left show business to become Public Relations Director for the Bahama Islands. This was at the time that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were in residence. As a result of this experience in promoting a semi-tropical

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resort area, Joe gained valuable knowledge and experience which would be of great help in promoting his own resort project at a much later date. Following the Bahama experience, Joe returned to the show business field.

During the next few years he would lay the foundation for the realization of a life-long dream — to create his own full-length color musical based on the surrounding of his youth. Thus was born the movie *Pocono*, starring the beautiful Jane Gray (Mrs. Elicker). Joe not only produced and directed the movie, but wrote the music as well — a feat usually reserved for personalities like Charles Chaplin or Noel Coward. The creation of this movie took just about all the time and money available during those years. Even though the film was not a commercial success, it was a major accomplishment both artistically and personally.

After many years involving much travel and promotional functions in many locations, Joe and his family put down roots in suburban Philadelphia where he became Manager of Advertising for the Goldman Theatre chain, holding this position until his retirement less than twenty years ago. It was during those years that Joe became an active and valuable member of the Delaware Valley Theatre Organ Society involving two stints as President plus services on the Board and Publicity Chairman for the 1976 ATOS Convention in the Philadelphia area.

Joe and Jane Elicker had always been interested in archeology, particularly studies of the ancient Mayan ruins in the Yucatan area of Mexico. After many visits to this area over the years, it was decided that Joe's golden years would be devoted to establishing a resort Inn near the famed Mayan Pyramid in Yucatan. Thus, in the small community of Chichen Itza, these plans materialized in the form of the Piramide Inn, ultimately owned and operated by Joe and his family. In a flurry of activity the Inn grew from the status of a plan to an occupied reality with constant improvements being made ranging from modernization of the telephone service to installing an organ in the dining area. Throughout all this were Joe's creation of brochures, publicity filming featuring excursions to the Mayan Pyramids, and other promotional functions too numerous to mention. Suddenly without warning or prelude the end came in the form of a fatal bee sting, making us all painfully aware of the fragility of Life and the inexplicability of Death. This great spinner of tales, teller of clever jokes and relator of anecdotes involving the rich and famous whom he knew "when" will be sorely missed by his many friends.



## Jerome Markowitz

Jerome Markowitz, founder and Chairman of the Board of the Allen Organ Company, died February 13 at Lehigh Valley Hospital Center in Allentown, Pennsylvania, after a lengthy illness. He was 73.

Markowitz started Allen Organ in 1937 while a student at Muhlenberg College in Allentown. He named the company for the city of its origin. Two year later, the first Allen organ was produced and sold to St. Catharine of Siena Church in Allentown. From a small operation that began in Markowitz's basement with two other employees, Allen Organ grew to a more than 240,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in nearby Macungie with a subsidiary in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and a combined work force of more than 450.

Markowitz was at the forefront of digital technology. Beginning in the late 1960s, working with researchers at North American Rockwell, he developed the Allen Digital Computer Organ. Unveiled in 1971, this new Allen Organ was not only the

world's first digital music instrument but also one of the first commercially available digital products of any kind. The Digital Computer Organ represented a vast improvement over the analog technology previously used throughout the pipeless organ industry, which had been based on the stable audio oscillator invented and patented by Jerome Markowitz in the late 1930s.

One of many accolades for Markowitz and Allen Organ came in 1972, when the Digital Computer Organ was selected by the Industrial Research Society as one of the 100 most significant technical products of the year. As digital technology has gradually permeated the music industry, Allen has remained at the forefront of development, introducing numerous patented refinements to the science of digital tone generation.

Well-known organist and conductors such as Virgil Fox, William Whitehead, E. Power Biggs and Leonard Bernstein have performed and recorded on the Allen Organ; in fact, the Allen was the first electronic organ recorded with a major symphony orchestra: in 1962, Biggs used the instrument at a recording session with Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic at the then new Lincoln Center.

When the Allen Organ Company turned 50 years old in 1987, Markowitz decided to put his thoughts about the organ business into words. The result was *Triumphs and Trials of an Organ Builder*, a hard-bound 240-page book published in 1989.

Markowitz served as president of Allen Organ from its inception until May 1990, when he became Chairman of the Board. He was succeeded as president by his son, Steven, and remained Chairman of the Board until his death. (continued ...)

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## Lowell B. Wendell

Nov. 24, 1935 - Feb. 26, 1991

*Lowell Wendell was Chairman of NorCal from 1984 through 1987*

*A Tribute by Rudy Frey*

Lowell was Publicity Chairman of the 1983 Convention, producing a printed convention program which became a model for other chapters. He and his wife, Janice, were appointed Co-Chairman of the 1991 Convention. They organized the present convention committee and set the

convention on course, before his illness from cancer forced their resignations in January 1991.

In 1985, Lowell read Mr. Gary Brookins' obscure advertisement in THEATRE ORGAN for the Toledo Paramount Publix 1 Wurlitzer, and immediately followed up on it. As a result of his negotiations with Mr. Brookins, a donation was arranged in December of that year, and for the first time in its then 30-year history, NorCal became the owner of its own pipe organ. Lowell was the inspiration to the crew which traveled to Ohio to pack and ship the organ, and to those who have worked on it since. At the time when this large organ (20 ranks, since grown to 33 ranks) project was undertaken, none of the other crew members had enough technical experiences for such an undertaking. As Chapter Chairman and Chairman of the Organ Technical Committee, Lowell provided the guidance and training necessary for the success of the organ restoration and installation.

The tremendous effort Lowell invested in NorCal, however, was only one of the avenues of his accomplishment. After ac-

tive duty in the Navy, he continued in the Reserve as a Flight Engineer. In addition to his regular position as an electronics supervisor with the National Laboratory at Livermore, he operated an organ maintenance business with NorCal member Jack Oliver. Prior to his demanding involvement with NorCal, Lowell and Janice raised three children, two of whom are now married with children of their own, and started a Christian youth group in St. Augustine's Parish in Pleasanton, where they were active members.

NorCal is one of several groups and individuals whose lives have been enriched by his acquaintanceship. We will always be indebted to him for originating our organ project, and instilling in us the knowledge and confidence to fulfill our purpose as an organization dedicated to preserving instruments. In addition to preserving a significant artifact, those involved have learned how to appreciate and work with each other. Because of Lowell's strength of purpose and dedication to life, many who knew him were not aware of his illness. For all these characteristics, we respect him.

*When music and courtesy are better understood and appreciated, there will be no war.*

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