

ANNUAL MEETING

"GREATEST WEEKEND IN THEATRE ORGAN HISTORY"

By Tom B'Hend

"The greatest weekend in theatre organ history!" Thus did Ben Hall, author of theatredom's popular book, "The Best Remaining Seats", describe ATOE's annual Meeting held in Los Angeles last July 6th, 7th and 8th. His statement was substantiated by three undeniable facts: 1) the tremendous amount of empty film cartons and burned out flash bulbs left by shutter-happy conventionites at every location where a concert was presented; 2) the need to literally push music-hungry buffs from one recital to the next to maintain some semblance of a schedule; 3) vocal and written expressions of appreciation and praise by many ATOE'rs who attended the three day festivities. Few members who trekked to Los Angeles had little idea as to what they would see and hear - - To their astounded pleasure, they heard 11 artists playing on six different organs.

So fast did the meet move that there was little, if any, time for shop talk and 'noodling' sessions. Though some were slightly disappointed in the latter regard, the overwhelming flow of organ music seemed to more than offset the lack of such sessions. All in all, the meeting was one of artists and organ buffs who entered into the spirit of the fete and made it one great happy time, long to be remembered.

Opening officially on Friday afternoon, July 6th, with registration at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, a total of 238 ATOE members signed up and secured banquet reservations. Dick Loderhose, ATOE Vice-president, and head of Renwick Records, played host to early registrants with his refreshment stand in the hotel's Redwood Room.

Noted among the early registrants passing through the registration line were Reiny Delzer, Charles Welch, Robert Kagy, Don and Mary Borden, Bill Brown, Walt Hanlon, Jim and Sheila Connor, Ron Downer, Erwin Young, Ben Hall, Stu Green, Jay Quinby (who declared that the *Delta Queen* was docked "somewhere in the East"), and many others. Between registration and theatre party time, members had several hours to meet old friends, have dinner and then start for mid-town Los Angeles and the Stanley Warner Wiltern Theatre for the evening's festivities.

The ATOE-AGO Wiltern Theatre Party served as the opener for ATOE and closed the week-long AGO Convention. Members arriving close to opening time were greeted with a sight seldom seen these days (except at a George Wright Theatre Concert-Ed.), an impressive crowd three and four abreast forming a line from the theatre box office and extending south beyond the end of the building, over three-quarters of a block away.

The crowd did not have long to wait; Theatre Manager Jim Polidoris broke the

regular performance early, and his efficient staff cleared the house in rapid order. The doors were then reopened to the party throng for the late-late show.

ATOE and AGO members quickly filled about two-thirds of the 2400 seat Wiltern and were treated to hearing the results of almost 9 months effort on the part of many members of the Los Angeles Chapter of ATOE.

Following a short introduction, Gaylord Carter brought up the huge four manual Kimball console in a rousing fanfare. "I hope that you are as thrilled as I am in hearing a great theatre organ in a theatre", he said. Judging from the applause, the audience agreed with Carter.

Before he opened the Harold Lloyd film, Carter told the first-nighters, "I have a wonderful surprise for you. When I first started in the theatres in Los Angeles there was a very wonderful young lady who was playing at the Metropolitan Theatre. . . in downtown Los Angeles. . . I admired her greatly then - - I admire her now. She's had a marvelous career in the theatre, in radio, in television, in records, and I'd like to present to you now my favorite organist, Ann Leaf!" The "mity mite" of the Mighty WurliTzer fame then presented her concert.

Gaylord Carter's masterful accompaniment for the silent film "*The Kid Brother*" was an outstanding achievement, and he was tendered a standing ovation that all but overwhelmed him. Following the film



Leonard MacClain is congratulated by ATOE President W. 'Tiny' James following announcement of MacClain being nominated as Honorary Member for 1962-63. Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.

SEE MORE ANNUAL
MEETING PHOTOS ON
PAGES 14 and 15

presentation, the "*Cavalcade of Organists*" featured Billy Wright, Buddy Nolan, Raymond Shelley and Leonard MacClain.

John Ledwon of Canoga Park led off the volunteer 'jam session' that followed until time ran out well after three a.m.

Saturday's activities opened with the famed Eddie Dunstedter playing the R. C. Simonton WurliTzer. Despite the oppressive heat, the Simonton Bijou Theatre and the patio area immediately outside were jammed to where even standing room was hard to find. To accommodate the waiting crowd, Dunstedter played a second performance, as did Johnny Seng, the second artist of the afternoon. Both men were acclaimed by their respective audiences.

Buddy Cole was the next artist to be heard. A very thoughtful host, Cole had prepared refreshments for the ATOE group that traveled the four miles from the Simonton home. Again two concerts were necessary to enable everyone to hear the Cole 3/27 WurliTzer-Morton. Before playing the instrument, Cole gave a brief description of the organ and explained how it is used in his recording sessions. The organ is housed in a special studio adjacent to his North Hollywood home. He

Please turn to Page 16.

PHOTOS (Posed and Otherwise) taken during ATOE Annual Meeting in July



Head table at Annual Banquet in Elk's Club. Front row, l. to r., Leonard and Dottie MacClain, Director Bud Abel, National Secretary Ida James, Director Gaylord Carter, and Director-Editor George Thompson. Back row, l. to r., President W. "Tiny" James, Director Russ Nelson, Vice President Dick Loderhose, Chuck Baker, Don Wallace, Director Dick Simonson, and Phil Olsen.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



Gaylord Carter taking the tremendous ovation that followed his musical accompaniment of Harold Lloyd's comedy "The Kid Brother" at the Wiltern Kimball.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



The Buddy Cole WurliTzler, a highlight of the Annual Meeting.

--Photo by Fred Myers, Belfair, Washington.



ATOE President W. "Tiny" James seems to be enjoying himself at the Beautiful Joe Kearns WurliTzler. Sheila Connor of El Paso, Texas, at right.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



The waiting crowd outside the Wiltern Theatre.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



Ann Leaf and Ben Hall pose at the Los Angeles Elk's Club 4/61 Robert Morton.

--Photo by Fred Myers, Belfair, Wash.



Leonard MacClain during his concert at the Lorin Whitney Robert Morton.

--Photo by Fred Myers, Belfair, Washington.



A group pose at the Joe Kearns residence.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



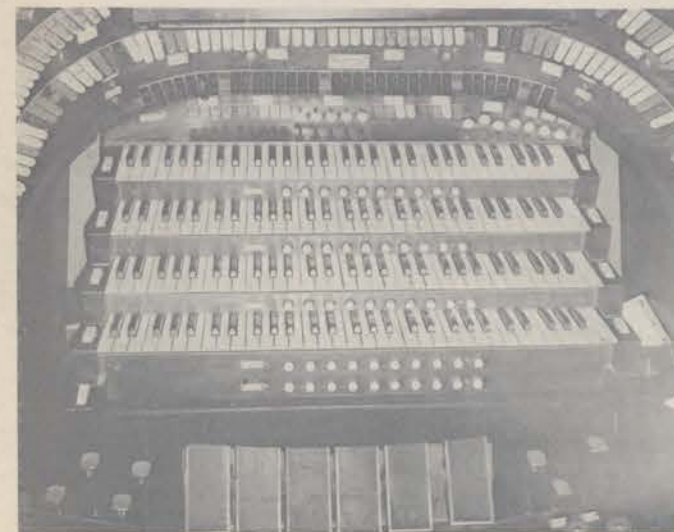
Left to right: Henry Pope, Don Gorman, Reiny Delzer, Bill Brown, and Dave Schutt, following the technical session at the Los Angeles Elk's Club.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



A scene during the registration at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. Glen, Ida and Janice James in foreground. "Tiny" James, Sheila Connor, Pete Sweeney, Frank Aschenbrenner, a member whose name we did not get, Walt Hanlon, and Claude Cansler, in the background.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.



Closeup of 4/61 Robert Morton in Los Angeles Elk's Club.

--Photo by Fred Myers, Belfair, Washington.



Representing four organ publications: left to right, Dewey Cagle, TABS AND DRAWBARS; Walt Hanlon, THE RELAY ROOM; Stu Green, THE POSTHORN, all meet at the Joe Kearns residence.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso.

ANNUAL MEETING

(continued)

also told each group of the work that went into the installation and cited the excellent assistance given him by ATOE member Don Kohles. A relatively young man, Kohles has established a name for himself in Los Angeles in the organ rebuilding and maintenance field.

From the Cole recitals, activities moved into the Los Angeles Elks Temple No. 99. Don Gorman, an engineer with Pacific Telephone in Spokane, Washington, presented an illustrated lecture on the physical phenomenon of the speech in organ pipes. He had on display various pipes, wave analysis harmonic filters, oscilloscopes and charts that were used during his talk.

Henry Pope, leading West Coast organ man, then took the floor for a question and answer period which proved most interesting and enlightening.

An informal cocktail hour in the banquet hall preceded the Annual Banquet and Meeting which started about 8 p.m. Highlights of the banquet and meeting were the introduction of well known ATOE members, with particular honor being given to the Los Angeles Chapter members who performed the labor of love in the Wiltern rehabilitation, and the super highlighted event of naming Leonard MacClain 'Honorary ATOE Member of the Year'. In accepting the award, MacClain disclosed that he had also been presented with a Gold Card by his Musician's Union local. He told his audience that he is a Scotchman and appreciated the fact that he would not be required to pay dues on either membership. During the meeting the re-election of W. "Tiny" James to serve another term as ATOE President was announced. "Tiny" gave a report of ATOE finances and plans for the coming year as well as his thanks for being so honored.

Adjournment of the meeting was held to schedule so that the evening concerts on the Elks Club 4/61 Robert Morton could begin on time. Harold Henry, who served as standby organist for the Annual Meeting, opened the recital period. This 20 year-old young man is active in both AGO and ATOE affairs. A pupil of Gaylord Carter, he is fast developing into an accomplished organist, both in classic-concert and theatrical styles.

Raymond Shelley had been announced as the feature artist for the evening, but was called to his Wichita home early Saturday morning due to the sudden death of his mother. Richard Ellsasser, prominent concert organist, who had appeared for the AGO Convention, was contacted by Harold Henry and graciously accepted the invitation to play in place of Shelley. His concert prompted one of the greatest demonstrations of appreciation shown any artist. The thrilled audience twice stood up in prolonged applause to honor him.

(Editor's Note - Ellsasser's program started with the playing of Widor's *Tocatta and Fugue* and it was thought that a classical concert was in the making, until - - - something in the Pedal sounded different to the ear. Lo and behold, while

the Fugue figuration was being continued on the manuals, the pedals were pouring forth *Tea for Two*, and it was on this popular note that the rest of his program was placed.)

It was later said of Ellsasser and the Elks Morton that this concert was truly a musical wedding of a great concert-theatre artist and a great theatre-concert organ. He played several encores before finally leaving the console.

In appreciation of Ellsasser's magnificent music, the audience was asked if they would forego the customary 'noodling' session. Instant approval was given and the second day of the Meeting came to a happy close.

Sunday, the final day of scheduled events, opened with Ann Leaf presiding at the console of the Simonton WurliTzer. She was introduced by Ben Hall, who gave a brief accounting of her very successful career in the theatre organ world. Again it was the same story - the applause registered nothing but hearty, sincere approval of the entertaining and lilting Ann Leaf style of playing.

Leonard MacClain's concert on the Lorin Whitney 4/24 Morton-WurliTzer was next on the afternoon program. His excellent theatre style of playing is well established and known world-wide through his Epic label recordings made on the Tower Theatre WurliTzer in Upper Derby, Pennsylvania. He was anything but parsimonious in his presentation and took rather a dim view of having to conclude just when he was getting started, but the schedule had to be maintained. MacClain's playing is always well thought out and the close listener can hear all kinds of subtle little goings-on between pedal and manuals. There is also no doubt that Leonard has played one or two 'burlesque' shows in his 50 years of entertaining as evidenced by an occasional 'bump' in some of his rhythm numbers. But on the other side you can detect the fine musicianship that is required for his church and concert work. This man is an all-round musician.



L to R - Gaylord Carter, Ann Leaf, Leonard MacClain, Don Wallace, AGO Chairman Gene Driskill, Dottie MacClain, backstage at the Wiltern Theatre.

--Photo by Theatre Organ Club of El Paso

Artist Buddy Nolan wound up the scheduled program with his musical arrangements on the Coffman and Field WurliTzer in Los Angeles. This was the first time the WurliTzer in the Woodcarver's Shop was opened for a public recital. The 3/17 instrument formerly installed in the West Coast Theatre, Long Beach, had only recently been rehabilitated by Bill Coffman and Bill Field. Previously, the two had declined to open their installation until they were satisfied that it was ready to be heard. Buddy Nolan's concert satisfied the duo that the organ was indeed ready.

Although the 1962 Annual Meeting officially came to a close with the final presentation at the Coffman-Field WurliTzer, a tour of some of the many other installations in the Los Angeles area was arranged for the following day. ATOE members were invited to visit the John Ledwon WurliTzer, the Roosevelt Memorial Park WurliTzer, Russell Nelson's 4/20 WurliTzer and the late Joe Kearns WurliTzer.

Thus another fine ATOE Annual Meeting came to an end.



W. Stu Green and Erwin Young, Eastern Regional Vice-President, stop talking shop to pose for roving camera.
theatre organ