

# "TOES" BECOME "SIERRA CHAPTER" IN A BLAZE OF GLORY

HEAR DUNSTEDTER,  
JAMES and NOURSE

by H. A. SOMMER

*Any meeting of organ enthusiasts that is fortunate enough to have an Honorary ATOE Organist present is bound to be rewarded with lingering memories, but then to have two such personages present, is almost beyond description.*

AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING of the Theatre Organ Enthusiasts of Sacramento (TOES) at the Carl Greer Inn, both Tiny James and Eddie Dunstedter were in attendance. Eddie was in town for one of several week-end stints on the 4/16 Morton and Tiny was the featured concert artist for the event. Don and Cathy Zeller had just finished tuning the beast when Tiny and John Gallagher arrived and immediately started setting combinations. While they were doing so, and later when Tiny practiced, Eddie kibitzed and supervised the operation, all in good fun. After Tiny had practiced, Eddie played several selections and seemed to be pleased with the instrument, although between cigar smoke, crashing dishes and ice clinking in glasses, I thought I heard a comment which sounded like, "the combinations aren't loused up too badly". The concert was attended by more than 125, some coming over 100 miles. Eddie was introduced and then stepped aside while Tiny, the featured organist, was presented. Tiny was at his best and played the full range of the theatre organ spectrum. His technique was flawless, the selections delightful and the members exuberant over the fine renditions. Although the club was highly appreciative of Tiny's concert, the high point was when Eddie complimented him afterwards. George Seavers played a few selections after the business meeting and several new members signed up.

A highly successful concert sponsored by the brand new Sierra Chapter ATOE (formerly TOES), was held at Grant Union High School on March 5, 1967. Everett Nourse was the guest organist and presented a two hour concert that will be remembered for some time. Playing the Wurli 4-22 to an audience of 400, he offered some of the most meticulous and flawless renditions of music, from the theatre organ spectrum, that has been pre-



THE OLD MAESTRO APPROVES — Eddie Dunstedter (left) introduces the TOES concert artist, Tiny James.

sented in this area. The organ was in top condition, thanks to the efforts of Bob Baese, many commenting that it never sounded better. Everett's imaginative technique captivated the audience and he was treated to enthusiastic applause at the intermission, before and after the encore. An interesting note on Everett is that this was the first time he ever played the instrument although he had attended George Wright's dedication concert in 1939. The audience was divided between Sacramento enthusiasts and those from the Bay Area. After the concert a short business meeting of the members was held, the highlight being the announcement of the National ATOE organization acceptance of TOES as the Sierra Chapter of ATOE. Members then took turns at the organ. Many of the enthusiasts later journeyed to the Carl Greer Inn for din-



Everett Nourse at the Wurli 4-22. After 27 years he was pleased to make its acquaintance.

ner and to hear Eddie Dunstedter at the Morton 4-16.



From Mich., Carl Elliott writes glumly that when "urban renewal" cut a path through Grand Rapids, it wiped out five theatres, three of them operating and two with operating organs. An attempt to secure the Regent 3-7 Robert Morton for installation in the civic auditorium fell by the wayside for lack of support and went to a private party in Lansing. Which leaves only the Majestic with an organ which, Carl writes, is used occasionally. In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, it's a more pleasant story. Howard A. Burton, long a stalwart in the organ hobby, continues pushing pipe organ music with Saturday morning open sessions at the Paramount with its lone 3-11 Wurlitzer, and uncovering new talent. One recent discovery is Richard Neighbor (16) with whom Burton shared a pre-Christmas concert at the theatre. Burton, who has a 2-9 Geneva installed in his home basement studio, was a student of the Knauss School of Theatre Organ Playing in Allentown, Penna., in the late '20s. Wonder if there are other Knauss students among our readers? There's a story there . . . Seeing the list of long gone NBC radio "soap operas" which Rosa Rio supplied Hammond themes and incidental music for in these pages brought a tinge of nostalgia to Ann Leaf who was playing for CBS (New York) during the same top broadcasting years. Among Ann's "soapers" were *Ma Perkins*, *Pretty Kitty Kelly* and *Front Page Farrell*. She also backgrounded a pair of well remembered evening shows, *Easy Aces* and *Mr. Keen*, *Tracer of Lost Persons* which were supplied a few bars theme music, respectively, of *Manhattan Serenade* and *Someday I'll Find You*. . . . Bill Coffman, the organist with a quite long stretch at the Panama Hilton Bombarde Room 3-27 Wurlitzer behind

## VOX POP, continued

him will have to go some to beat a previous record—13 years playing a Hammond at the Sirrocco Club in Wilmington, Calif. Already homesick, he has no such intention. . . . In Holywood, organist Paul Mickelson bought Ray Bonner's 6-rank Morton to install in his home because the much larger former NBC studio organ which Paul has had stashed for many years is too large. But he isn't thinking of parting with the instrument veteran radio listeners associate with *One Man's Family* and *I Love a Mystery*. Paul, whose forte is recording religious music with theatre organ registration, still hopes to find a willing hall to put it in. . . .

Our spies in the great NorthWest report that it's true about ATOE Prez. Dick Schrum. Everyone suspected that he was hoarding a pipe organ somewhere but it took some super-sleuthing to find it stashed in the loft of the Tacoma Roller Bowl, a 3-10 Morton which played originally (understage) in the Portland Orpheum theatre prior to its rink job. Our shamus had been tailing Dick for some time and finally the Prez led him to the cache, which had to be moved because the rink was being renovated prior to a big roller skating regional competition. Our footpad got so inquisitive that Dick put him to work helping carry out the main chests and regulators. In the course of the blood, sweat and tears involved in any organ moving session our "Fosdick" learned that Schrum plans a 13-rank installation for which he has acquired a rare Wurlitzer Tibia Plena and the Kimball Trumpet and Posthorn from the late, lamented Stanton theatre in Baltimore, plus the full Orpheum Morton. But we haven't been able to learn where the installation will be and probably won't until our 007 is sprung from the plaster cast in which he was incarcerated after the main chest conked him.

Speaking of the president, he's been seen on Seattle TV recently, playing a Rodgers plug-in. Wonder what the sponsor thinks when it comes time for a commercial and Dick plumps for ATOE instead of transistors?

*Ever wonder what got Carl Greer so hepped on theatre organs that he built his Sacramento beanery around one? Carl advises that he learned to love organ music when he used to take his girl, Jay, to the Chicago Marbro to hear the 5-manual Wurlitzer which Byron Carlson is now installing in his Minneapolis home. Now, with a 4-16 Morton in his own restaurant, it would seem that Carl and Jay (long Mr. and Mrs.) could have a diet of organ music with meals nightly by just eating at the family inn. But it isn't that easy; the Greers live in Los Angeles where dining to pipe organ music has been in eclipse since Clifton's Cafeteria*

*sold its 2-8 Moller to Jim Gaines. Its a drive of several hours to reach the state Capital and Carl's very special Inn.*

What do professional organ people do on their days off? A group which gathered in San Francisco, consisting of Ed Stout, Richard Purvis, Buzz Lindhardt, Don Micholetti and Lyn Larsen, drove to Sacramento on March 5th to mainline some Eddie Dunstedter at the Greer Inn. It figures.

**Anyone remember "Wild Oscar," that zany of the console whose musical antics at consoles across the land left echoes of laughter as his monument? We've been trying to nail down some solid info on Oscar as the basis for a future article but his memory is most evasive. Outside of being listed in the Motion Picture Herald we're sure of only one showplace where he was seen in person, an unnamed Akron theatre. There really was a "Wild Oscar" wasn't there?**

. . . Bob Baese, the man who did so much to restore the Grant Union High School Wurlti to sound the way George Wright designed it many years ago, has a 2-7 Wurlitzer in his Sacramento, Calif., home. . . . Speaking of 2-7s, there's a fine example in the California theatre, Santa Rosa, Calif. On a recent Saturday morning a bunch of ATOEs gathered to hear some impromptu playing by several fine organists (after the formal program), including Larry Vannucci at the organ and a "pit orchestra" consisting of Banjo and Piano, with veteran silent movie organist Alice Blue supplying the obligatos on the latter. . . . From the Management of the newly rebuilt Minneapolis Auditorium, we learn that plans to import Eddie Dunstedter for a rededication concert had to be dropped because the huge twin-console Kimball won't be ready in time for the formal opening. However, manager Atwood Olson writes, "I hope at some convenient future date to have Eddie return to Minneapolis and allow a free night for the Organ Club to be present." The Organ Company is readying the Kimball.

Chicago Chapterites can be proud of their restoration job on the 3-10 Wurlti in the Indiana theatre in East Chicago if letters we've received praising the fall concert played there by John Muri are a fair indicator. For Muri it was something of a return; he played the instrument before it was retired by "talkies" more than 39 years ago. Organist Muri sure gets around. On Feb. 11 he put on a fine silent movie era spectacle for Indianapolis, playing Tom Ferree's 3-10 Uniphone at the Rivoli.

January 24th was a great day for students at the Utah School for the Blind. On that day they heard a dual dedication concert, classics played by Wayne Deveaux and pops played by Leland Lay. The occasion was the preeming of a new Thomas organ which materialized chief-

ly through the efforts of a Salt Lake City journalist named Dan Valentine who campaigned for it via his Tribune column, "Nothing Serious." The good citizens responded and provided an early "Valentine day" for the sightless students of all ages. As stated many times previously, we meet the nicest people through the organ hobby. . . .

We sure learned a lot about the various makes of Brass Trumpet ranks by displaying a smattering of ignorance. Having never experienced another brand, we mistakenly assumed that Wurlitzer was the sole maker—in print. No so, writes Kenneth H. Knepper from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who states that large Barton organs were equipped not only with Brass Trumpets but also Brass Saxophones which Barton purchased from Gottfried. The famed pipe maker made all but the brass bells which were purchased from a band instrument manufacturer, says Ken. He adds that Moller also had a Brass Trumpet of a scale somewhat smaller than Wurlitzers (he has part of a Moller set and would like some measurements from someone who has a complete one so he can make the missing pipes). Now we are wondering—how about Kimball, Marr & Colton, Robert Morton, Wicks and others? Any more brass?

**Although their articles had often appeared in print on adjacent pages of *The Hammond Times*, former theatre organists Randy Sauls and Mildred Alexander had never met. When it finally happened this spring, the two tried to "out-South" one another via their respective draws:**

**Millie:**

**Cun'l Rayandy—whar yew-all from?**

**Randy:**

**Ahm fum Miz-sip — way daown Saouth. Whar yewall from, honey chile?**

**Millie:**

**Ahm from Saouth Car'linuh, a teenie-weenie bit Nawth of yewall.**

**Randy:**

**Dayamn Yang-kee!**

*In Thousand Oaks, Calif, organist Jack Loren had almost enough parts gathered to go about assembling a long-planned theatre organ, about 8 ranks played from a style D Wurlti console he has acquired. Jack built a 10 ranker into his Berkeley, Calif., home while he was still in high school in the mid-30s, so he knows the ropes.*

Ann Leaf's sister, Esther, who used to sit in for Ann during vacations from CBS "Nocturne" broadcasts, is still very much involved with organs back home in Omaha. Esther now plays in church on an electronic.

. . . Despite the deep snowdrifts more than 800 attended the grand opening con-

*(Continued on next page)*

## VOX POP, continued

concert on Feb. 25 to hear the former Palace 4-21 Wurlitzer in the new home provided by the Rochester Theatre Organ Society, the Auditorium theatre. But none of those who didn't hear the Eddie Weaver bash was newshen Rita Becker. She was really "snowed."

The Chicago (CATOE) cats sure offer a lot for only \$1.50 (kids 50 cents!). On April 6 CATOE staged a show at the Patio theatre with Hal Pearl (remember him at the Aragon Ballroom?) at the 3-17 Barton which was restored mainly by Bill Reiger. In addition to the concert there was a silent feature film, barbershop quartet, two-reel comedy and a sing-along—and 12 bits was the most one could pay to get in. In contrast, there's a feeling in some areas that the upward creeping cost of concert admissions—two, three and even four dollars—may be dampening enthusiasm.

The Aragon Ballroom? It's now a go-go joint called "The Cheetah." We understand the most of the Wurli which Hal Pearl once recorded for Replica is gathering dust there.

That livewire Theatre Organ Productions crew (Pat Chambers, Mark Noller and Dick Sklenar) which has been staging a theatre organ type of program in the Chicago area but with a plug-in in lieu of pipes, will soon have a pipe organ to add authenticity to their efforts. The group has arranged to refurbish the 2-11 Kimball in the Parthenon theatre, Hammond, Indiana (near Chi) and in-theatre presentations are planned for fall. They have the full backing of Parthenon owner William Kleige and house manager Edna Peterson. Our most recent mention of the Parthenon was at the house John Muri played in during the '30s in our February article about Milt Herth.

**Niagara Frontier's program chairman Bob Sieben informs us that the Chapter's own 2-6 Wurli in Klauder Hall sounded great at the Dean Robinson concert on March 10, its second airing for Chapter members.**

Ever hear of a Steere and Turner brand of organ? We didn't until one turned up in an ancient Wisconsin theatre. Installed in 1891, the instrument was recently given a



WAIKIKI MORTON — The hands belong to John DeMello.

much-needed overhaul by Lawrence Richardson. It will be the subject of a future article.

**Notice anything strange about the 4-18 Wurlitzer (it says) pictured on page 2 of the Feb. '67 TO/BB? Reader Eric Reeve did. The photo shows the interior of the Seattle 5th Avenue theatre and the text says the house is equipped with a 4-18. But the eagle-eyed Minot (No. Dakota) "fuzz" counted only the three manuals showing and, cop that he is, wants to know who stole the fourth keyboard?**

From Indianapolis, Tom Ferree writes that he's in the market for a set of 32' Diaphones and some solo reeds to add to his 3-10 "Giant Uniphone" organ in the Rivoli theatre. Tom chides us for stating that the Rivli's chambers once housed a Barton when the long-gone organ was actually a 2-6 Robert Morton. For shame!

From Montreal, Dr. Ray Lawson advises that he has his home-based Wurlitzer in top shape for the benefit of visitors in town for the World Fair. He adds that fellow Montreal enthusiast Rosiare Houle's Moller installation "is in fine shape and it sounds really good." In not-too-distant Plattsburgh, N. Y., Dick Weber's double Wurlitzer in the Strand was the main attraction at a Feb. 15 variety show. Billed as a "Musical Valentine," the presentation included variety acts, the Plattsburgh Male Chorus and "Canada's Hit Recording Artist," Leo Duplessis in *Pipe Organ Black Magic*—all for \$1.50! Proceeds went toward the purchase of band uniforms for local school kids.

*Dr. Art Sherman (Sacramento, Calif.) recently spent his vacation in Hawaii and managed to play both Princess and Waikiki theatre Mortons in Honolulu, thanks to manager John DeMello who does so much to keep pipes alive in our 50th state. (Photo: Waikiki Morton).*

The independent Detroit TOC continues with a parade of top talent playing its Senate theatre Wurlitzer month after month. The March concert, held on the 18th, starred talented Patti Germain, who is remembered for her performance at the Richmond Regional ATOE meet in 1966. Patti followed Ashley Miller who played DTOC's Feb. 25th program at the Senate. All of which can only whet the musical appetite of the Detroit-bound ATOE conventioneer come July.

### WELCOME

to the two newest chapters  
MID AMERICA CHAPTER  
based in Wichita, Kansas

and

SIERRA CHAPTER  
based in Sacramento, Calif.

# DISC SQUEALS

To avoid possible disappointment, Ann Leaf wants it known that Vol. II of her *Concert at the Los Angeles Theatre* is available in monaural only. However, "That Aint the Way I Heard It" (Robert Morton) and *Spectacular Organ* (Wurlimorton) may be bought by mail from Ann at \$4.35 mono and \$5.35 stereo, post-paid. Write to 1138 Hacienda Place, Los Angeles, Calif., 90069. With the San Francisco Fox 4-36 gone and Fantasy records running low on the tunes they recorded just before it was moved, Everett Nourse and Tiny James have been looking for an organ suitable for the continuation of their very successful *Farewell to the Fox* series. They may have found it in the 4-22 mostly Wurlitzer in Grant Union High School in Sacramento. If it jells, they'll need a new title; perhaps something very general, such as *Salute to Grant*, maybe?

**The major recording companies insist that organ records are too slow in sales for them to bother with.** Not so, says prexy Bill Johnson, the guiding talent behind the Organ of the Month Club. Not only has he had to move to larger quarters to meet nation-wide business demands but has also started to have his records pressed in Australia (stereo) and in England (monaural only) for local distribution. Wonder if Bill would mind having our Bombarde review copies sent over from England?

•The monkey wrapped his tail around the flagpole all right, as the old parody goes, but not to the "Washington Post" March as we credited Don French on his current Organ of the Month release. It should have been called out as "The National Emblem" March, and the monkey shown with his foot in his mouth. So impressed was Johnny Seng with the sounds and music which Billy Nalle produced on Johnny's Mundelein Seminary 4-23 recording organ during a brief visit early this year, that Seng invited the New Yorker (by adoption) to make his next recording at the one time Chicago theatre console which controls his hand-picked ranks, on the spot. Which is a switch because, as we understand it, Johnny intended to use it solely for his own recordings. But the artistry of the transplanted Floridian must have gotten through to him and he made the generous gesture. He'll never regret it.

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