

The Windline

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Austin Organs official newsletter to our representatives and friends
Windline Staff: K. J. Austin, A.Q. Isaacson, N. J. Sansone

March 1999

Opus 2778 Oxford, Mississippi

The first new instrument sale of 1999 is a two manual, 28 rank instrument for Oxford University United Methodist Church of Oxford, Mississippi. The credit for closing this one goes to none other than **DAVID FINCH** - a man who has been responsible for several recent projects! Happy New Year to you, too, David!!

The Oxford job is a modified "Choral Series" instrument. It replaces a Wicks Pipe Organ of the 1950s. Five ranks will be reused.

The Great will be divided and exposed each side of the chancel, "flower box" style. Console to be stopkey. Delivery is expected to run 24 to 28 months.

CONGRATULATIONS DAVID!!!

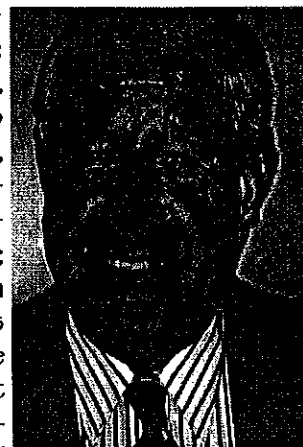
Note: This opus number was formerly assigned to Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, who opted out of a new organ and went with the rebuild of their extant Opus 279 instead.



Burton Yeager Retires

After an illustrious 46 years with Austin, Burton Yeager has decided to slow down a bit and turn over the territory to Jim Gruber. (See all the details in this *Windline*.)

Burton's association with the company started in 1953. Certainly he has witnessed changes in the business over his career, and has been involved in some of the most noteworthy projects, among them: Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga, TN (two Austins); Christ Church, Winnetka, IL; Luther Memorial and University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI; Manchester College, North Manchester, IN; and has also been involved with the great "civic" organs at Medinah Temple and Soldiers and Sailors Memorial



in Chattanooga. His accomplishments in the sales department are too numerous to list here. Burt has friends all over the country, made during his years as "traveling salesman", and earned due to his sincerity, honesty, and just plain good business sense. . . not to mention the fact that he is one of the nicest guys you ever met!

Of course, some projects remain which Burton has a hand in, so we do not have to bid him a farewell quite yet . . . but for now, just best wishes, and a world of thanks!!!

Welcome Michal Leutsch!

A most welcome addition to the design staff is now on board. Michal has joined us after a long, two year immigration process which nearly drove us all insane! We think it was worth it, and sure you will too!

Michal's experience and knowledge are truly remarkable. He served an apprenticeship in Switzerland at Kuhn, after leaving his homeland of Germany. It was then off to Canada where he learned at the hands of legendary organbuilders such as Kney, Brunzema, and most recently, Le Tourneau.

We are pleased as punch to welcome Michal and his charming wife Visiliki to the United States, where they are making their home right here in Hartford.

OUR GOAL IN 1999...

★★ 2788★★

(2779 THE NEWEST OPUS
NOW SIGNED)

Happy Easter &
Spring !!!!!

Two of a Kind

We are delighted to announce the two newest members of the team!

Following the retirement of Burton Yeager, taking over the Midwest territories is **James Gruber** of Illinois (Chicago area). Jim might be familiar to some of you due to his long association with the Peterson Electro-Musical Products Company. Jim also has had a service/tuning business, having taken care of one of Austin's landmarks - the big girl at Medinah Temple in Chicago. Jim's most recent venture is International Organ Supply, Inc., which trades in stainless steel slide tuners and Czechoslovakian pipework as well as most other organ components.

Jim, wife Dian and children reside in the suburban Chicago town of Riverside. We are pleased as punch to have him... Burt's shoes will be formidable to fill, but we think Jim is just the man for the job. Territory will be identical to Burton's.

Secondly, **Joseph Rotella** has been assigned the Northern New England territory. This will be the same territory formerly held by Leonard Harris.

Joe is the President of Spencer Organ Company in Newton, Massachusetts which specializes in (but not limited to) high-end restoration of Skinner and other pitman actions.

Joe is a familiar face to those who attend AIO conventions or Skinner Restoration seminars.

Joe and his wife Gerry reside outside Bean Town in Newton, Massachusetts.

To Keep You Abreast!!! A Philly Update

A contract for the new four manual drawknob console has been signed, and the contract for the mechanical restoration is imminent. These two items on top of the "pipework contract" already in progress will completely refurbish (and upgrade), from harp to tuba, the famous Austin Sesquicentennial Exposition Organ at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

A word about the word 'upgrade'... a new console was chosen by the donor, and for practicality's sake it is the wisest decision. The whole monster will be multiplexed and switching to solid-state (there are enormous central stations in these ENORMOUS air boxes). The extant four manual stopkey console, for the time being, will be kept as a "museum piece".

The auditorium's restoration is proceeding apace - all authentically reproduced stenciling, etc., - very stunning!

The inside of the building (as well as the outside until very recently) is an engineering feat of scaffolding, - never will we see so much of it again! Every inch of the place is covered wall to ceiling.

Soon the large pipes will be reinstalled, along with 50 dummy facades (affront each Pedal chamber, left and right of the stage) - the largest approximately 27 feet long! The scaffolding will then be dismantled, which will take all of 30 days. Later, the trayed pipes will be delivered and put into storage until the console and other matters are settled, installed, etc.

Even the huge 25 horsepower dual outlet blower is being totally refurbished, and converted from two phase (yes, two phase!) to three phase. It is a tad unfortunate that the pages are being turned from the back of the book to the front, but we are simply delighted that the job is being done, being done thoroughly, and being done right!

The credit really goes to the Curtis Organ Restoration Society, whose publicity campaign and fundraising efforts absolutely proved to be the catalyst for this important work. Most worthy of mention are Executive Committee members:

Roger Allen, CORS Faculty Advisor, PENN

Ray Biswanger, Co-Founder of CORS and President of Friends of Wanamaker Organ

Bruce Shultz, Organist of Girard College, Philadelphia and Host of the big celebration in Philly!

Dr. Harry Wilkinson, Professor Emeritus, West Chester University.

ALSO:

Crossan-Savage, Inc., Austin's in charge men on the scene, and, of course, **Brant Duddy**

William Czelusniak, Consultant

Dr. Max King, Provost's Office liaison

BRAVO!

Deaths

Charles L. Neill

It is with regret that we inform *Windline* readers of the recent death of legendary AOI sales and service representative, Charlie Neill.

Born in Orange, New Jersey, Charlie made Northern New Jersey his home for his entire life. He became interested in organs while a teenager, went on to study engineering in college, and formed a rebuild/service/tuning business in 1948. In 1953 Charlie's association began with Austin, lasting until his retirement, due to illness.

Most of us remember Charlie as a tenacious, hard-working individual. Often he would sell the new instrument on behalf of Austin, and sell the chimes "on the side"... doubtless the installers/finishers meeting up with him somewhere along the line as he installed and wired them in. Sometimes Charlie would be doing this on the red-eye shift so not to interrupt work of the factory crew. He had his iron in many a fire and did a formidable job keeping up with them all. Charlie sold a very large amount of new organs, consoles, and rebuilds during his long association with our firm... jobs we will all continue to encounter indefinitely... including his "pet" service job in St. Croix.

Charles was predeceased by his wife Mary, and leaves a son and a daughter, as well as his loyal, longtime secretary, Nan Day.



Lawrence Phelps

Larry Phelps passed away after a short illness on Monday, February 22, 1999 at age 76.

One of the best tonal experts in the USA, he had worked at various times for Holtkamp, Allen, and Casavant, besides owning his own business.

At this unfortunate time of his death, he was deeply involved in the middle of the restoration of the big Aeolian Skinner Organ at The Mother Church in Boston. He entrusted Austin Organs, Inc. with voicing all of the reeds, the making and voicing of new Mixtures throughout the organ and the complete tonal finishing. Much of this work is still to be completed.

Our relationship with Larry was excellent, and I would have to consider him a leader in the organbuilding profession and also a very good friend.

There will be a memorial service for Larry on Saturday, April 17, 1999 at 2 p.m. at Trinity Church, Copley Square, Boston.
DAJB

Getting to Know You

a look at . . .

Kurt Kocur

The first pipe organ I set foot in some seven years ago was, yes, an Austin. The instrument was a rebuild at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, New York. The work was being done by Bill Feldhaus and crew. I was looking to get out of food management and into something different. Well, I guess I found it.

I worked with Bill for a while and then found an organ service man right in Brooklyn by the name of John Klauder, who was looking for help. I worked closely with John Tully, a long time service man who worked with Kevin Koffe and Frederico Worth, an old school organbuilder and pipe maker from Brazil. It is with these men that I learned many of my basic skills in organbuilding. We serviced several types of organs such as Moller, Skinner, Fisk, Fauser, Wicks, many organs of unknown origin and, yes, Austin. We did everything from soup to nuts; from rewiring, re-leathering and rebuilding the guts of an old tracker, to installing solid-state components. While I enjoyed my work, the rest of my life was not going as well and it began to affect my work and we parted company.

A short time later I began working with John Randolph who was also from Brooklyn and a very good technician. With John I had the privilege of working on some popular organs. The organs at The Julliard School, Columbia University and Fifth Avenue Presbyterian were of particular interest to me. John wanted to return to New Jersey and set up shop in Leonia. At the time I was using public transportation and found that it would have been impractical to commute that distance.

Since I enjoyed working with wood, I found work in furniture refinishing and repair at Pasquale wood finishing in South Norwalk. There I learned about wood, how to fix it, how to restore it and how to finish it. Some of these skills have been helpful to me even at home and have save some expenses.

It was now my turn to move, so I found myself living in Monroe, Connecticut and working at a gas station. Then an organist friend of mine told me about the Austin factory. I responded, "Austin, as in Austin Organs?" "Well, yes," she said. I quickly responded, "I'll get right on it." About two months later I found myself assembling swell and expression shoes.

NEWS FLASH!

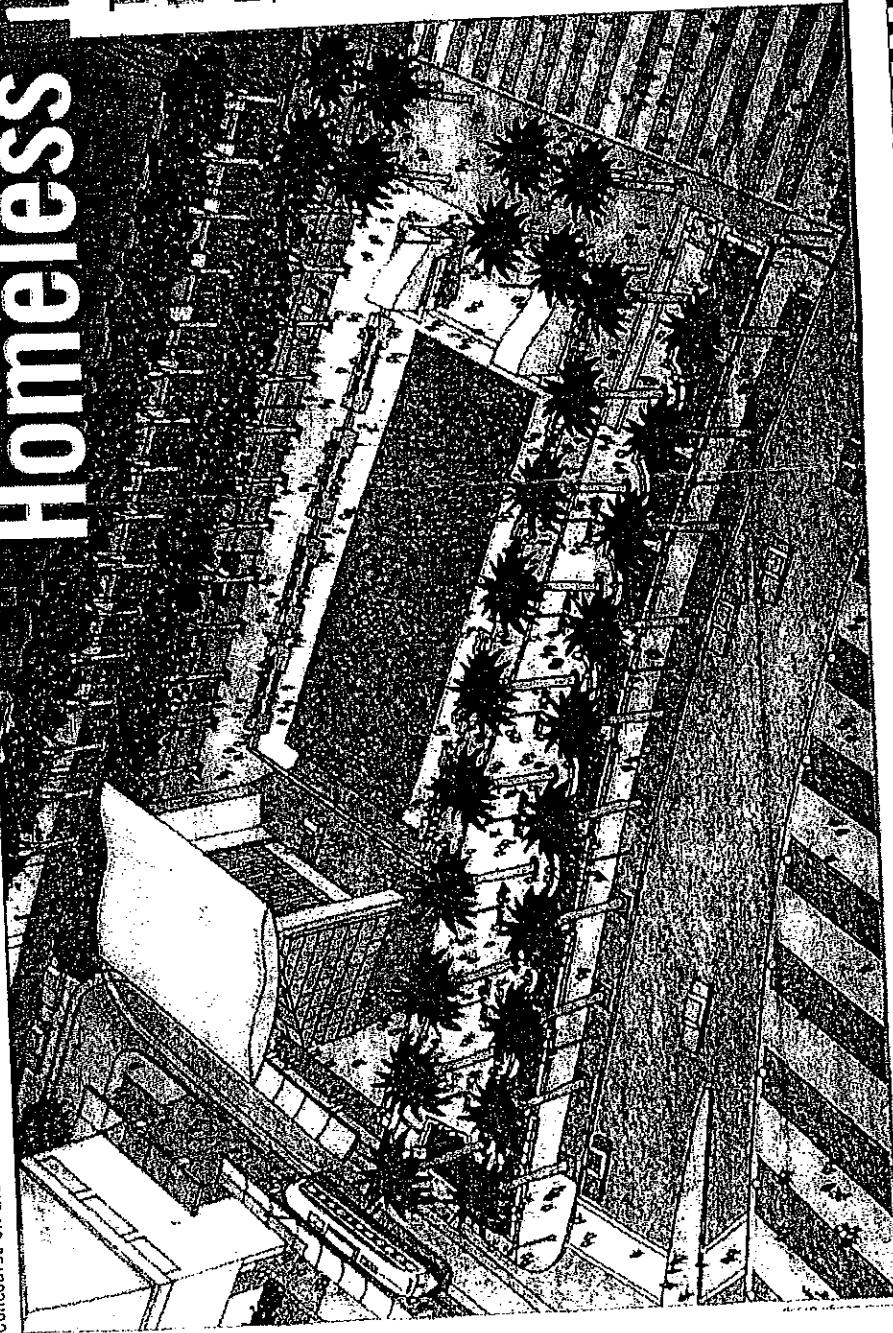
Austin Organs, Inc is pleased to announce the appointment of Kimberlee J. Austin as President of the firm. Bruce Buchanan has also been appointed Vice President (as well as being Tonal Director).

After twenty-six remarkable years as President of the firm, and a total of 50 years of employment, Donald B. Austin remains active in the daily business of the firm, and will stay on as Chairman of the Board.



The people's organ: Homeless no more

Artist's illustration of the Music Concourse on the Embarcadero.



The Opus 500 on the Embarcadero

by Erin Blackwell

You probably don't know it, but you are the proud owner (along with 699,999 other San Franciscans) of the Opus 500, a concert organ the city commissioned from the Austin Organ Company for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. Since relocated to the Civic Auditorium, where it was damaged in the 1989 earthquake and relegated to the basement, the 7,000-pipe colossus will soon be encased in glory at the foot of the Ferry Building, as part of the ambitious mid-Embarcadero project.

Seen all that rubble at the downtown end of Market Street? That's where the organ's going to go, at the head of a strip of lawn called the

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Opus 500 organ

◀ Arts cover

Music Concourse, facing the south wing of the Ferry Building. The Opus 500 will have its own stylish hangar, with a roll-down door on one side and a café on the other. The city will pay \$1 million for the landscaping; \$3.5 million in private funds must be found to erect the pavilion and install the organ.

These things don't just happen; they're planned years, even decades in advance. And they are not the work of elected officials. Civic-minded gay man James Haas, recently recognized by the Board of Supervisors for 10 years' work undoing the urban blight of the elevated Embarcadero Freeway; architect Boris Dramov, who has been redesigning the waterfront for 20 years; and organist Cheryl Arnold, board member of the American Guild of Organists, have been instrumental in bringing the people's organ back to the center of civic life.

Urban warrior

Haas, a dapper but soft-spoken native, describes himself as an "urban warrior" who has overcome a lot of resistance. We meet at the corner of the Union Pacific Building, our view of the Ferry Building interrupted only by the intervening roadwork, and he shares his vision of a renewed urban hub. Not only can he visualize what will be created by the current confusion of the construction site; he brings the past back to life.

"In the '20s," Haas says, "this was the second busiest transit hub in the world, outside of Charing Cross Station in London. You had all these ferryboats coming from all points of the Bay Area, and this was the only point to come and go into San Francisco. You didn't have a Bay Bridge or Golden Gate Bridge. There were thousands of people who every day came back and forth through here."

Not only ferries, but streetcar lines and freight trains converged in what Haas calls "this busy, very utilitarian kind of place." The produce market, with its sheds and warehouses, was just to the north.

Haas goes on to explain the blight of the elevated Embarcadero Freeway, built in 1958: "The freeway cut off the water and particularly the Ferry Building from the rest of the city. It created this enormous, ugly, almost

impenetrable barrier between the citizens and the Bay."

As chairman of the Committee for a Safe Embarcadero, Haas lobbied for the removal of the freeway. Only after it was damaged in the 1989 earthquake did voters finally agree to have the freeway torn down, in 1991.

"It was kind of an epiphany for me to come down here and see the freeway down," he admits. "It really was quite an emotional experience to see it gone. I'm looking forward to having a similar, maybe not quite as intense experience when it's all done."

By "all done," Haas means the completion of the mid-Embarcadero project, scheduled for spring 2000. In addition to the music concourse, this includes the redesign of all open space between the Ferry Building and

At the time of its construction, perhaps the high point of concert organ popularity in the US, the Opus 500 was built beyond even the opulent specifications of the Austin Organ Company. Think 'Titanic.'

Steuart Street, and the extension of Muni lines north to Fisherman's Wharf and south to the Caltrain station.

Designer delivers

Boris Dramov, the project's lead designer, is Bulgarian by birth, but cosmopolitan by character. He came to San Francisco via Sweden, Brazil and Los Angeles; his accentless *sotto voce* delivery exudes deep patience. At the ROMA Design Group in North Beach, he gestures over a past-board replica of the mid-Embarcadero project.

Dramov's overarching goal, as agreed upon by innumerable city departments, is to bring the waterfront and the city closer together. More specifically, the area is to be a multi-modal transportation corridor, meaning that cars will cohabitate with streetcars, buses, bikes and pedestrians. Second, a public space suitable for major ceremonial events (like the Gay Pride parade) would be created. And third, open space would be reoriented to include the waterfront, in ways that would enhance its use by the community. Eventually, the redesign will include an enlarged ferry terminal and a renovated, retrofitted Ferry Building.

Dramov is equally concerned with making visible the underlying features of the Embarcadero: the historic sea wall and the watershed. The parallel lines formed by the roadway in front of the Ferry Building suggest the series of protective sea walls that reclaimed the land from the Bay. The manner in which Market Street will open out into park space is symbolic of the water that runs down from the hills.

Dramov took inspiration from the "malecon" of Latin America, which serves as "both a sea wall and a promenade at the same time." As in Puerto Vallarta, "The malecon is a way of preventing wave action from coming in and of stabilizing the shoreline, but instead of just an engineering improvement, [it makes the water-

a very large door, like an aircraft hangar," which stacks, like an accordion, inside the cave.

"This is a perfect building, where form follows function," he says, without a hint of vanity. "It's an expression of what's inside it." The roof expresses acoustics; the enveloping brickwork bespeaks rooms which support the main function. "One of the problems I was struggling with was, how do you deal with the top? Because you don't want birds sitting on top of it! So this is composed of thin slats of metal that look solid, but actually, the water falls through, and sheds out."

And that's not all. "The face of the door is going to be painted by an artist," says Dramov. "There also is a screen in here for silent movies, with the organ playing behind it."



front] also a recreational area."

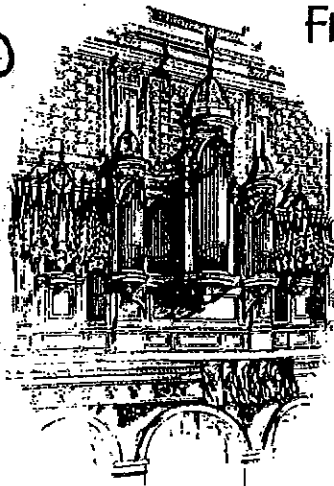
The final major piece of the puzzle was the Opus 500. Like the Embarcadero Freeway, the organ was damaged by the Loma Prieta earthquake. It sat unused until 1994, when its Connecticut makers sent technicians out to dismantle and ship it back home for repairs. When the organ was returned to the city, it landed in the Civic Center basement. Offers came in from places as far-flung as Florida and Argentina to buy it.

But some people didn't want to sell. The San Francisco chapter of the American Guild of Organists was stumping for a new site worthy of the 40-ton solo-orchestra. When James Haas got wind of an up-and-running outdoor organ (also built by Austin in 1915) in Balboa Park, San Diego, two projects became one.

Horn of plenty

Dramov's work on behalf of the Opus 500 is characteristically thoughtful. Picking up the four-inch-wide model of the organ pavilion, he explains the genesis of the distinctive swooping roof. A consultant conversant with the outdoor Balboa Park organ "really wanted a shape like a horn, so that the music would come out," he says. "But then we had to have

TWO MAJOR PHILADELPHIA EVENTS



Friends of the
Wanamaker Organ
Grand Court
Organ Day
at Lord & Taylor

13th and Market Streets
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Informal Concerts held throughout the day at
10:30 am; 12:30 pm; 2:30 pm, and 5:00 pm.

Including Mass Choir and Brass Ensemble

Featuring:

Peter Richard Conte
Grand Court Organist
Ken Cowan
Dennis Elwell
Rudy Lucente
Donald Mackenzie
Lorenz Maycher
Michael Stairs
and other
Special Guests



Saturday, June 12, 1999

from
Scotland,
Donald Mackenzie
and other Special Guests
and Surprises

A
Sonic
Spectacular
at
Girard College Chapel

(EM Skinner Masterpiece - Opus 872, 1931, IV/106)

for the benefit of
Curtis Organ Restoration Society
(OPEN - Austin Opus 1416 - IV/161)

8:00 PM - Admission: \$10,
Admission payable at the Chapel entrance door.

Girard College is located just north of Center City at Girard and Corinthian Avenues
Free, secure, on-campus parking available.



DON'T MISS THIS DAY-LONG SPECTACULAR