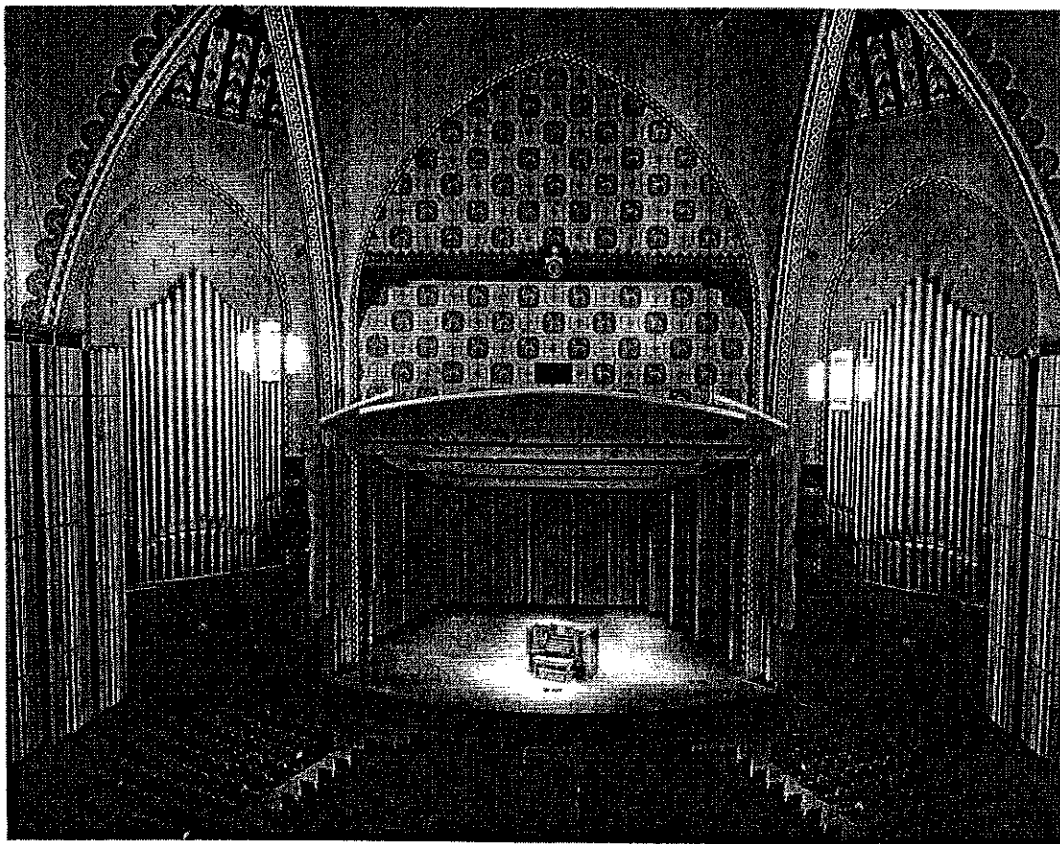


# The Windline

Volume 22 - Number 3 A Quarterly Issue  
Austin Organs official newsletter to our representatives and friends!

September 2002

## GALA RE-INAUGURATION University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia



**The two massive 32' facades mask some pedal stops. The bulk of the organ is situated in both side balconies, behind beautiful scrims.**

See page 5 for cover story!

This article was reprinted from *The Daily Nonpareil* in Iowa, August 31, 2002.

## GARDEN NEW HOME FOR PIPES

It's a horticultural hoot!

Three pipes are sprouting in Joyce Mynster's corner flower bed.

No, they are not the result of a genetic engineering experiment gone awry. They are a garden sculpture composed of discarded organ pipes.

"These pipes are from the original installation at St. John Lutheran Church, Council Bluffs, IA," said Mynster, the church's organist and music director. "In the 14 years since they were put in, they started to lean. So they knew they were going to have to replace them."

Church officials had the pipes replaced last fall and didn't know what to do with them, Mynster said.

"Because I'm an organist and musician, they appealed to me," she said. "I thought, this is too good an opportunity to have something authentic that is music-related. I needed something for that bed, anyway."

The zinc pipes were originally 16 feet tall and silver in color, Mynster said. They were used to produce the lowest pedal tones on the organ.

For the sculpture, they were shortened to lengths of 8, 9 and 10 feet. One was painted gold and another, copper.

The arrangement was designed by Mynster's sister, Joan Smith, and installed June 29 by her nephew, Estin Smith, she said. Three feet of the pipes are underground.

The sculpture was dedicated Aug. 18 by the Rev. Judith Hazen, interim pastor at St. John, during a brief ceremony followed by a garden party.

Mynster has been an organist all her life and has been at St. John since 1996.

However, she does not consider herself a gardener, she said.

"I'm not an outdoor person at all," she said. "I do it because I want it to look nice."

The pipes stand in the center of a triangular bed fronted by marigolds and peonies with a backdrop of Stella de Oro, Diablo Nine Bark and a lilac bush, Mynster said. She hopes some of the shrubs will grow to 8 feet tall.

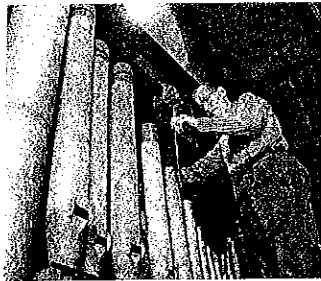
"Next year, we will have other plantings," she said.

Perhaps some flowering flutes would be appropriate.



St. John Lutheran Church organist and music director Joyce Mynster stands next to a garden sculpture created from three old organ pipes from the church.

This article was reprinted from *The New York Times*, May 12, 2002.



## A Tale of Requited Love: A Man and a Pipe Organ

This is a love story about a man and a pipe organ.

The man, Keith Bigger, 55, has worked for the phone company since he was 22. In warmer weather, his uniform is a short-sleeved button-down shirt and Sears trousers. He carries a beeper and two bundles of keys, including ones to the Baptist Temple in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn.

In that temple, in 1951, the 5-year-old Keith first saw the 2,533-pipe J. W. Steere & Son organ, built in 1918. He had sneaked into the empty sanctuary during the annual church supper, and in the dim light, he saw the brass pipes glimmering in the distance.

It took 36 years for him to return. And as it turned out, Mr. Bigger ended up rebuilding that organ — the restoration is in its 15th year — and moving into the church to do it.

His love for the instrument goes back to his childhood. When he arrived at Thomas Edison Vocational High, he started taking organ lessons at a nearby church. When he was 22, he spent two years building his own organ in his family's basement.



In 1987, he met a couple who belonged to the Baptist Temple, where he had seen those gleaming pipes, and made some inquiries. He learned that the congregation had dwindled, the roof leaked and only three of the five keyboards were playing. Few current church members had even heard the instrument.

Mr. Bigger volunteered to restore the organ — the church would have to pay for parts only — and the

longtime church administrator, Arthur Norregaard, happily agreed. "We said, 'Go!'" Mr. Norregaard said. "It's a beautiful organ, one of the finest-sounding organs around."

Two years into the restoration, Mr. Bigger, then on strike from the phone company, was spending more and more time at the church. One night,

he saw a mattress propped up against a wall. He realized that he could accomplish more if he slept there. Mr. Bigger, who "had some girlfriends way back" but never married, has been living near the organ ever since.

Six nights a week, Mr. Bigger sleeps on a cot next to one of the

organ chambers. On Saturdays, he drives his Buick Le Sabre — license plate JWSTEEER — to his childhood home in Cambria Heights, Queens, which he shares with his brother, to do his laundry.

After 15 years, the restoration continues. Into the church, Mr. Bigger has moved a microwave oven and a bookcase's worth of organ-building books. He keeps an anteroom stocked with canisters of bow-tie noodles and a jumbo-sized bottle of Hershey's chocolate syrup. He will move out if anyone asks, but no one has suggested it.

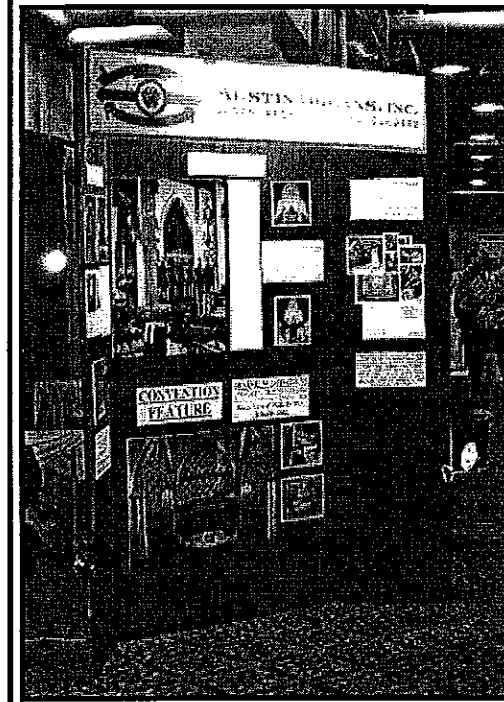
The organ was in playable condition by 1991, but Mr. Bigger continues to do repairs on the instrument and anything else that needs fixing. "What's the sense of fixing the organ if the roof leaks?" he said.

He patches leaks in the roof. He automated the heating system. He changed the lights in the chandeliers to long-life fluorescents.

Mr. Bigger says he may go home someday, but for a complete restoration, the organ's pedal board still needs to be restored and every bit of leather must be replaced. "It's his lifework," said Betsy Mitchell, a church member. "Some people never find their lifework."

## 2002 NATIONAL CONVENTION-AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

An oppressively steamy Philadelphia awaited the conventioners attending the '02 AGO National Convention. Temperatures hovered just below 100 with matching dew points as people attended classes, recitals, lectures, etc. in both air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned venues.



The exhibits area was quite busy, with most major builders in attendance, along with the usual music vendors, choir robe salesmen, electronic organ makers (both well known and obscure). APOBA/AIO had a very nice, well-attended booth, as did OHS.

It should be noted that the late-to-register were turned away, as this was a 'capacity crowd'! And it is no wonder, as Philadelphia is a treasure trove of every sort of organ and architecture imaginable. Although only the façade is installed, one also got to see the inside of Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center, Philly's newest performing arts venue. The Dobson organ will be installed sometime in the future behind the façade (contract has been signed). The Toronto Children's Chorus was one of the final awesome events of the convention. How any director can get two dozen absolutely attentive children to sing so precisely and blend so well is beyond me.

Plenty of Austin folk were in attendance as well — Kimberlee Austin, Al Isaacson, Bill Hesterman, Mike Herzog, Byron Arneson, Alfred J. "Biff" Buttler, and Hugh Pierce were on the prowl. Our own booth featured the recent antiphonal at Christ Church Cathed-

ral, Hartford, as well as the upcoming jobs at Fountain St Church, Grand Rapids, MI, Cathedral of The Blessed Sacrament in Detroit, MI, and of course, one of the featured instruments of the convention, the Sesquicentennial Exposition organ at Irvine Auditorium, University of Pennsylvania.

The program at Irvine featured Richard Morris at the new Austin console and Hector Olivera playing a custom Roland. This program was without a doubt the hit of the convention, and although Morris only made use of the GT, SW, CH and PD, the organ showed herself quite nicely. And, the newly refurbished auditorium is AIR CONDITIONED!!

Unfortunately, Girard College chapel (EM Skinner organ) is not, where the Philadelphia Orchestra played a program with several different organists. Also Jane Parker-Smith played several recitals.



From Right to left: Alfred Isaacson, William Hesterman and Hugh Pierce

Among the other venues and organs were the new Mander at Chestnut Hill Presbyterian Church, the recent Reuter at First Presbyterian Church, the Reiger at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian, the Princeton Univ. Skinner/Skinner/Mander, a recent Ott at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale, and the controversial Skinner/Cornel Zimmer at St. Mark's Episcopal — and many more. Indeed there was something for everyone!

## THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN HANDS

by Al Isaacson

**John Lizzi is our Plant Superintendent, a position he has held for the past three years. He is one of the most energetic people I have ever met and has a no-nonsense attitude toward just about everything he attempts.**

John was born in Hartford on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960 and grew up in the Bishops Corner section of West Hartford. He attended Northwest Catholic High and graduated from Hall High School. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, John was exposed to woodworking, sheet metal and plastic forming classes. An industrious individual, he built a small landscaping business in his teen years cutting local lawns and blowing snow as well as pumping gas at a nearby service station. He earned enough money to purchase his first car,...a 1965 Plymouth Satellite that he still has...!!

Not looking forward to pumping gas in the cold winter months, John saw an ad in the local paper for someone with some woodworking experience. Knowing absolutely nothing about pipe organs, he applied and started work here on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1979 earning \$3.85 p/hr and has been a valuable employee ever since.

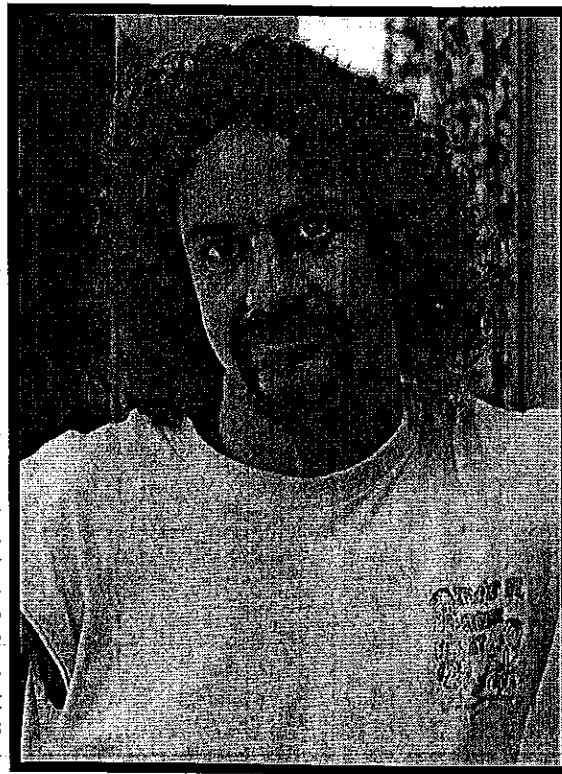
His first job was making small parts for the Pneumatic and Console Departments on the third floor under the close scrutiny of Gordon Hoyt, who retired in 1987 and spending countless Saturdays performing maintenance duties with our own Merle Lamb, who passed away in January 16th, 2001. Since then, he has become adept in many ways...from caring for all our machinery, tuners helper, trucking, assisting with local installations in the New England and New York areas...and the list goes on...!!! His first complete organ installation was for Simsbury United Methodist Church in Simsbury, Connecticut (Opus 2705 - III/29) with Hugh Sears in 1985. He became maintenance and small parts foreman in 1990.

John is our own in-house success story becoming Shop and Facilities Superintendent in 1999. It is a rare moment that you don't find this man on the go, always overseeing the work flow in the shop, helping repair a machine, or turning in a time sheet for work done in the shop. One of John's specialties is making reed blocks in the basement...of course with the radio blasting as loud as it will go!! Another amazing feat was the difficult and laborious task of crating and packing the ocean-going 40' containers for both the Japan and China organs... an absolutely awesome job completed quickly and very efficiently.

John is the middle of three brothers and has three children of his own. He has lived with his wife, Lacey, in Riverton, Connecticut for 17 years...and a "stone's throw" from the famous Hitchcock Chair factory. His parents now live only three miles away in a home his father built himself. John recalled how he used to watch his father maintain and fix things around the house in West Hartford and credits his Dad for inheriting his fine mechanical ability. He says that he is not afraid to take anything apart, diagnose the problem, and repair what needs fixin'...!! John's hobbies include car repair, home improvement, cutting and splitting wood (his house is 90% heated with wood and requires 7 to 10 cords of wood per season), landscaping with special emphasis on stone walls, and he loves to build just about anything.

2003 is John's 23<sup>rd</sup> year with the Company, which marks the halfway point in his career. He says that he is looking forward to retirement in another 23 years.

After our interview, I went upstairs to the Pneumatic Department to ask Jadwiga Majewski, Foreman, how she remembers John. She recalled the day when this 18 year old young boy started and portrayed him as "very hard working with the agility to accomplish any task before him...and always striving for perfection. There are lots of brains under all that curly hair!" She totally dislikes the fact that John rides to work in the summer months on his Harley (which he also repairs...!!) because it is "just far too dangerous!!" Her initial description of John was that he is "the man with the golden hands!"



## University of Pennsylvania Inauguration

On October 11th, 2002 at 7:30PM, Walter Strony will be on the bench for the official grand re-opening of this landmark instrument!

The rebuild started in 1997, beginning with the removal of the pipework for protection and refurbishment during the massive renovation of the building. Subsequently, contracts were signed for a complete re-leathering and mechanical rebuild, and a new four manual drawknob console.

The buildings' interior and exterior renovations were all-encompassing; every brick was repointed, every pane of glass replaced, every bit of stenciling on the interior walls (lots of it) was reproduced authentically. Needless to say, it was an undertaking which took years to complete.

Unfortunately, the organ renovation had to take place under less than ideal conditions in many cases. However, with some careful planning and lots of elbow grease, the organ is now in tip-top shape and sounds positively awesome.

The concert is by invitation only — any one who would like to be included, please email us at [Liz@austinorgans.com](mailto:Liz@austinorgans.com). All AOI employees and representatives have been included already.

Hope to see you in Philadelphia!

### Shoe By MacNelly Productions



### Current Projects:

- ◆ A new 3 manual stopkey console for Austin Opus 2194 (1953) at Christ's Chapel at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The organ was cleaned and re-acted over the summer by Tom Crossan, Alan Savage, Steven Sykes, and John Ronan while the new console was being constructed in Hartford. The College held us to a very tight deadline, but Crossan & Crew were able to get the organ up and running in time for Chapel ceremonies in September. Well done!

The new console sports a mahogany case with walnut interior, replacing the original "colonial" finish (white with mahogany accents). New console features include, integrated multiple memory combination action and switching system, transposer, and multiple programmable Crescendos and Tutti's. Special attention had to be given to include some of the unique features of the original console: silencer vents for 16' and 4' couplers, Celestes, and 16' manual stops, as well as a Choir to Great 2 2/3' coupler. In addition, the new console has been made mobile on a concealed dolly.

- ◆ Only one week after the console for Gettysburg was shipped we delivered the 3 manual drawknob console for the M.P. Moller organ at St. Stephen's Church in Ridgefield, Connecticut, which had been removed in June and brought to the factory for solid-state conversion. On site work, involving rewiring of the organ, and installation of the re-composed Great Mixture and new 4' Principal for the Choir was handled by Bon Smith and crew at Austin Organ Service Co.

The console has the same system and features as Gettysburg, and now resides on a newly built mobile platform. As with Gettysburg, this project was on a difficult and short timeline, but thanks to the efforts of all involved, the organ was playing before Labor Day.

### A Tribute Recital

On Friday, September 27th, A Tribute Recital will take place at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Hartford. It is the organ's 40th birthday, and key people involved in the project at the time are being honored:

- Donald B. Austin, then Austin Vice President
- Edward Diamente, then Cathedral Organist
- Frederick L. Mitchell, Chief Design Engineer

The recital will begin at 7:30PM and feature organists Ezequiel Menendez and David Spicer. Diamentes "Mass of St. Joseph" will also be performed by the Cathedral Choir.

Admission is free! See you there!

## TOO MUCH PROGRESS

The elderly priest, speaking to the younger priest, said, "It was a good idea to replace the first four pews with plush bucket theatre seats. It worked. The front of the church fills first."

The young priest nodded and the old one continued, "And you told me a little more beat to the music would bring young people back to church, so I supported you when you brought in that rock 'n roll gospel choir. We are packed to the balcony."

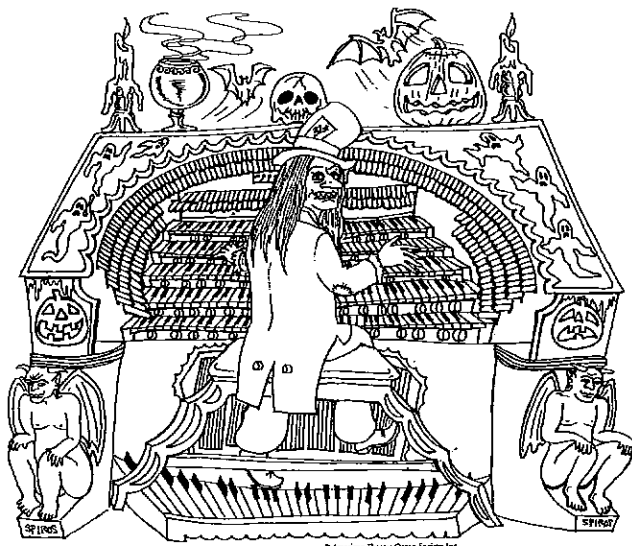
"Thank you, Father," answered the young priest, "I am pleased you are open to the new ideas of youth."

"Well", said the elderly priest, "I'm afraid you've gone too far with the drive-thru Confessional."

"But Father," protested the young priest. "My confessions have nearly doubled since I began that!"

"I know son," replied the old man. "But that flashing neon sign, "Toot 'n Tell or Go to Hell", can't stay on the church roof!"

## Happy Halloween



## Norwich Cathedral

This restoration of the 1954 AEolian-Skinner Organ was completed during the Summer. Interestingly, during a recent thunderstorm, the Cathedral was directly struck by lightning, which took out their computer and telephone systems, but the new multiplex throughout the organ was untouched!

The new Austin Chamade is exceptionally fine and is used at almost every Service. The organ will be heard in a formal recital on Friday, September 27 at 7:30pm.

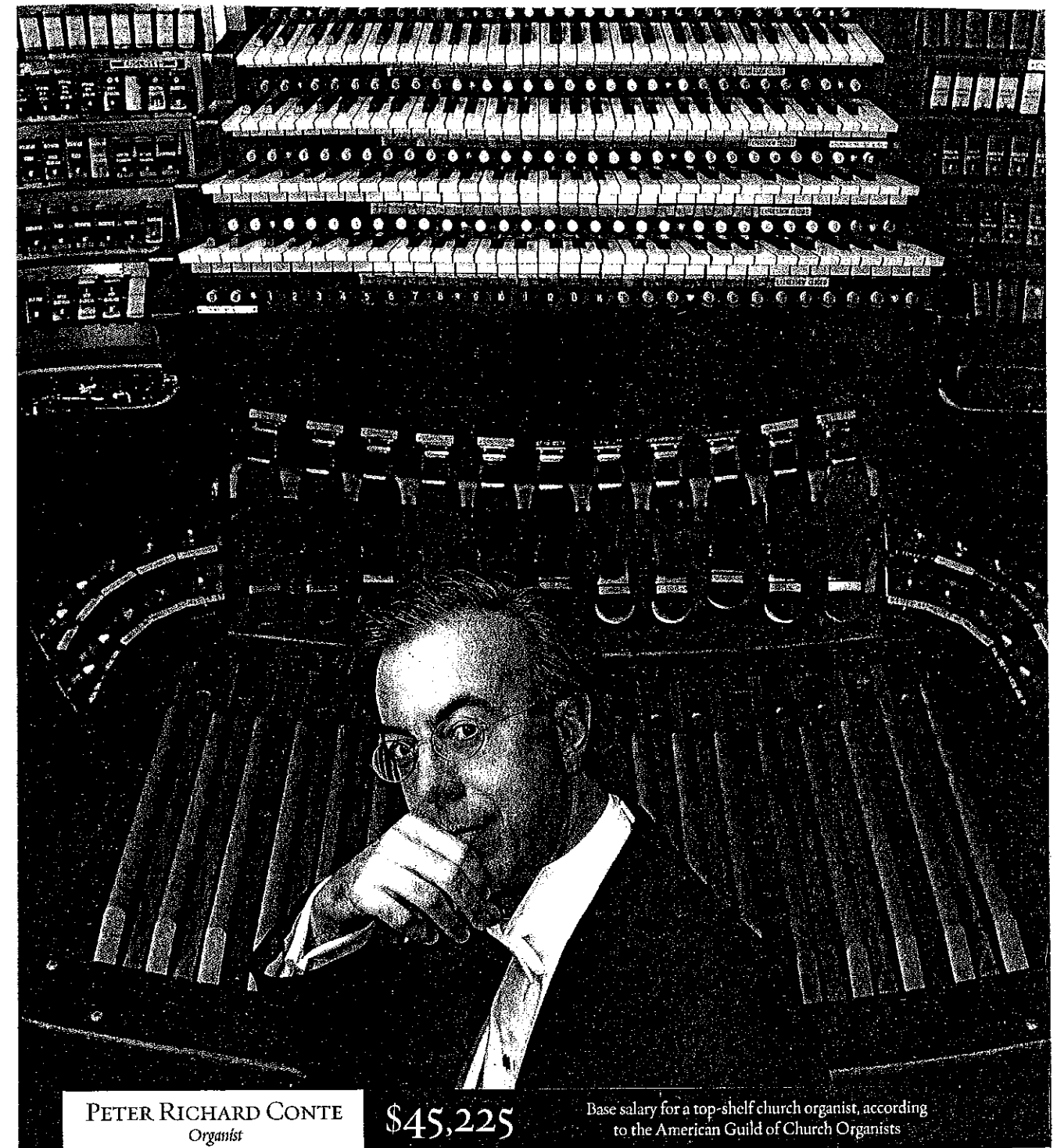
We thank everyone for their fine work to make this organ play for another 60+ years!

## Austin Opus 2782 - Grand Rapids, MI

The installation of this very large and interesting organ began in June, when the rear gallery divisions and much of the front pipework were delivered to the Church. On August 26, the second truck arrived, completely filled with the bottom structure of the main organ. Vic Hoyt, Luke Bittner and Alan McNeely are attending to the installation, with help from local riggers. So far, everything has fit in this tight installation.

Grand Rapids has many, many Churches, many with recent new organs. This organ will join a recent sister Austin only a few blocks away at LaGrave Avenue Reformed Church. Congratulations to everyone who worked hard to build this organ, which is one of the largest the Company has built!

-Alan D. McNeely



PETER RICHARD CONTE  
Organist

\$45,225

Base salary for a top-shelf church organist, according to the American Guild of Church Organists

Joke all you want about the size of Peter Conte's organ. That's not going to change the fact that he relishes sitting at the controls of the world's largest fully functioning pipe organ, housed in Center City's Lord & Taylor department store (formerly Wanamaker's). The organ has more than 28,500 pipes and six keyboards, which means it's capable of delivering the symphonic equivalent of the Voice of God. Conte's title is almost as huge: He's the "Grand Court Organist of the Wanamaker Grand Court Organ at Lord & Taylor," and only the fourth person to hold the job since 1911. You can hear Conte perform at 11:15 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. every day except Sunday, but the volume is usually kept to a soothing level, since few want to hear the Voice of God while shopping for socks. To really appreciate the raw power of the Wanamaker organ, sneak into one of Conte's rare after-hours concerts. "That's when the magic happens," he explains, "when the building is completely quiet, the elevators are turned off, and the cash registers are silent." —Duane Swierczynski

This article was taken from the Philadelphia Magazine, September 2002

## PNEUMATIC FANATICS

by Al Isaacson

*This is the sixth article of a series featuring our dedicated and talented workers in our Pneumatic Department.*

Helen MacFarlane is a delightful person to get to know. She has a marvelous sense of humor and is always ready to share it!!

She was born in Hartford, attended public schools and graduated from Hartford High School.

Helen met Alan MacFarlane in 1959 at a Polish Dance Club, and it was love at first sight...at least for him, Helen added...!!! They were married 3 years later and moved to Manchester, Connecticut a few years later. They bought a beautiful home in which they have lived for 35 years.

They have three children, Shelley, Todd and Scott, all of whom live locally in the Hartford area. Helen and Alan are very proud of their 4 grandchildren who occupy a large part of their free time.

Helen worked for Heublein Distilleries in West Hartford for 20 years on a production line. After the Company decided to move their manufacturing facilities out of town, the employees were offered schooling to assist in finding employment in other fields. She became qualified as a Medical/Dental Office Specialist...but after working in that field for a year and a half, she decided it was not for her.

Her husband started his own auto repair business 18 years ago, and is now in partnership with his son, Scott.

Helen answered an ad that AOI placed in the local newspaper and has been employed here since June of 2001. The best part is that she spends January to April in Melbourne, Florida, where I am sure she is polishing up her game of golf. She and her husband also thoroughly enjoy walking and camping. They frequent a campsite in Stafford Springs, CT where they have a permanent "park model" camper.

In describing Helen and her husband, the phrase "*variety is the spice of life*" certainly suits them...!!!

Helen is a very competent and dexterous worker and we are very pleased to have this *Pneumatic Fanatic* as a member of our staff.



## MUSIC IN ALBANY

Some thirty years ago Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany, New York, replaced their three manual AEolian-Skinner organ with the latest in four manual digital technology. The member of the parish who had purchased the AEolian-Skinner for his home retired and decided to move to a warmer climate. He felt the organ was not going to accelerate the sale of his house and, advised by the organist, offered it back to the church. The offer was accepted and the organ was removed from the house by Austin to be restored in transit to the church. Subsequently, they contracted for a new encased Antiphonal division to replace the belfry Echo, which did little for the ensemble. The console has been rebuilt in the factory with a multiple memory combination system and multiplex relay to drive the chests. The first delivery of console and Antiphonal components was in mid-September, and the balance of the main and offset chests will be delivered as soon as factory erection is complete. New Ventus blowers have been ordered to replace the original Spencer, not least because the original windlines from the basement have been renovated away, and chamber access has been modified from the former scuttles to regular doors. An especially happy ending to a discarded pipe organ story.