

Meet Your Member: David & Darlene Wasson

I first became interested in automatic music at age 15 when I helped my Dad, and Granddad repair a player piano. I soon became fascinated with all this related to automatic music, and learned much from the things published by the Vestal Press. Harvey Roehl made it possible for me to find out about, and join, the Fair Organ Preservation Society. One of the publications I bought from the Vestal Press was Bob Stanoszek's Wurlitzer Band Organ Building plans. I also bought a tape from Bill Black, of a Wurlitzer 125.



Darlene and David Wasson at a recent COAA rally. "Trudy" is in the background.

The tape was all marches, some of which I had played in school and community band. As I listened to the 125 tape, and looked at the 125 trackerbar scale, I could see and hear what was done to the music in order to make it fit. It seemed to me, that it would be very little effort, if one was to build an organ, to include all of the "missing" notes, and those marches would sound more like the way I used to play them in band. At this point, after watching miles of paper go by on my player piano, I could see how the music was arranged. I made myself a simple "music roll drafting board" and made my first piano music rolls when I was 16. Armed with the desire to build an organ, (as I could never possibly buy the organ I wanted), and the thought to do the music myself, I started building the organ you see today at rallies. The first pipes were built while I was still in high school, in my dad's workshop (he hated the dust I was always creating and tracking into the house).

Meanwhile, after graduating from high school, I worked in the ship yards in San Diego as a journeyman machinist, and learned to operate many different kinds of machine tools. My skills learned as a machinist helped much to build my organ. Tenacity and the ignorance of how big the project really was, did the rest.

After working in the shipyards, I was hired by Mike Ames, a west coast collector, to maintain and repair his collection of automatic musical instruments. I worked for him for thirteen years before moving to Erie, PA. Working for Mike, exposed me to music machines that I might not have ever been able to see otherwise.

My first rally was in 1990, at Fremont Ohio. This was probably one of the last Dan Slack influenced super rallies. It was quite overwhelming for me, but, it was

so much fun, that I could not resist going back each year to the Midwest for the band organ rallies. It's hard to believe that I've been attending organ rallies for seventeen years.

Then in 1994, at the rally in Pittsburg, I formally met Ken Smith. No single person has influenced me more than him, from both a standpoint of craftsmanship, and philosophy of life in general. After seeing his work up close, I wanted to start my organ all over and I did. After 1994, I began, with the infectious enthusiasm of Ken, to build and add more to my band organ. Each summer, my wife and I would visit the Smiths, and I would return home, pumped up to work on the band organ. Then, in about 2001, I decided the organ was finished tonally. Now that it sounded right, I wanted to rebuild everything so it looked right as well. So, the rebuild began. It took about two and a half years. Fortunately, my friend Ken witnessed everything along the way.

My interest in band organs has never really been nostalgic. There were no band organs around when I was a little kid. My interest has always been a fascination of sound and music and nothing satisfies this interest for me quite like the sounds that come from a large band organ.

2007 Organ Rally Dates

<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Date</u>
COAA Rally #1	Lake Winnepesquakah, Georgia	Charles Walker (404-892-0065)	May 25-28, 2007
COAA Rally #2	Gallipolis, Ohio		June 16-17, 2007
COAA Rally #3	Quassy Amusement Park Middlebury, Connecticut		June, 2007
Mid-Am Chapter (MBSI)	Wabash, Indiana	Hope Rider (260-563-5030)	July 19-21, 2007
COAA Rally #4	Muscatine, Iowa	Ron Bopp (918-786-4988)	July 27-29, 2007
COAA Rally #5	St. Joseph, Michigan	Ken Kasbaski (269-926-1053)	August 24-26, 2007