

Meet Your Member—Sharon & Carl Curtis

As young children, in the late 1940s to mid 1950s, we heard band organs at the county fair once a year. We thought the merry-go-round was the source, and we loved the music it made.

Now let's fast forward to late 1960s. We were married and raising a young family. Carl was between teaching jobs and we were living in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We decided we would set the world on fire by opening and running an eclectic store of "things old, unusual and artistic." We also worked flea markets which did earn us some money, but we discovered that we had grabbed the fire extinguisher, not the starter fluid, when we ran the store. No world on fire there. So we chalked the experience up to tuition in life, and did have lots of fun going to auctions to procure items for the store. One auction sold a Regina musical box and we both were mesmerized by its sound. We were also impressed by its price: \$700—enough to keep our family going for a couple of months.

Fast forward another 18 years. We had enough money to buy two small cylinder musical boxes which we figured would be as close as we could get to the Regina that we heard at the auction in 1968. In the course of attending auctions, we discovered there were small tabletop organs—fascinating thing—but we weren't ready for them yet. One auction we attended was memorable in retrospect, because there was a large dark oak box, with brass horns pointing forward out the front. We



Sharon and Carl Curtis at a recent rally. Their Stinson Model 29 is playing in the background.

did not know what it was, but it sold for \$250!

In 1988, we met Basil Chesley, who repaired and sold musical boxes and we bought a cupola top Regina and some discs. More importantly, however, Basil directed us to MBSI, which we joined, and upon receipt of our first news bulletin we read about an event called "The 14th Annual Band Organ Rally at Crossroads Village." So we went; we saw; and we heard the fantastic sounds

of our early childhood days. It wasn't the merry-go-round that made the music, it was a band organ. Wow! We were hooked!

To get some idea about cost of those wonderful band organs, we attended Gordon Riewe's 1989 Mechanical Marvels auction in Lapeer, Michigan, where a Wurlitzer 146 band organ was going on the block. The 146 sold for \$16,000 and we dutifully wrote down that information. At the end of the auction, a thing called a "Jack-O-Lodeon" was put up for sale and we bought it. We had no idea how we were going to get it home (that's another story—ask us sometime) but it did get to our house in Ann Arbor. We figured that we had to learn more about this band organ business and what better place to learn than the 15th annual MBSI Band Organ Rally in 1990. The quiet little Jack-O-Lodeon was placed between the two big organs of Terry Haughawout and Ken Smith. The cacophony of

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2010 Organ Rally Dates*

COAA Rally #7	"Historic Weston Street Organ Muster" Weston, MO	Gordie Davidson 913-683-3645	October 16-17, 2010
Mid-Winter Meeting	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Ron Bopp 918-527-0589	February 19-20, 2011
COAA Rally #1	Lake "Winnie" Chattanooga, TN	Ron Keisler 803-356-4545	May 28-30, 2011
COAA Rally #2	Lake Olcott Buffalo, NY	Dan Wilke 716-825-7266	July 22-24, 2011
COAA Rally #3	Riverside Park Findlay, OH	Terry Haughawout 419-454-3671	September, 2011

*Call the rally host for more information regarding a rally.

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all the organs at the Fremont Fairgrounds made us think that nobody could hear our organ, but if the listener got real close, it's music could be heard. We met wonderful people at the rally; had a great time; and played over and over again the six rolls that came with the Jack-O-Lodeon, the organ that would eventually be dubbed "The Green Machine." We had started our journey along the road of mechanical organs.

In time we have added a Pell 25-note monkey organ; some tabletop organs; a Wurlitzer 105 which appears regularly in Manchester Michigan's Fair Parade and at Christmas in the Village Parade; a Raffin 31/86 monkey organ, which also appears regularly in Manchester; and a Stinson special-equipped Model 29 which we now trailer to organ rallies. We have hosted some band organ rallies and we have been blessed with good friends, good times, and good music on our mechanical music journey with MBSI, ABOA, and COAA.

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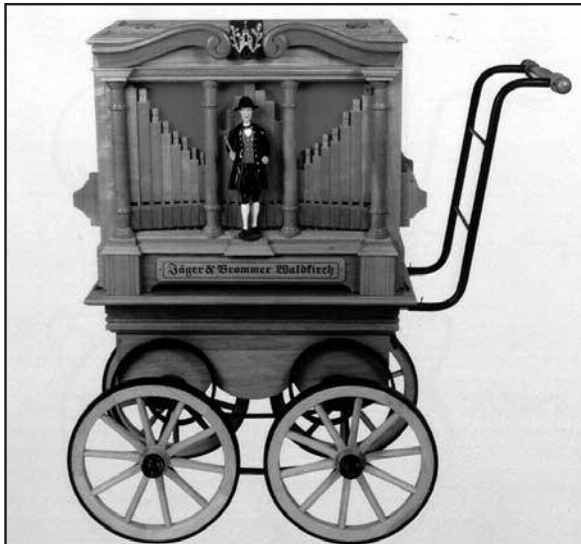
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