

Meet Your Member

Band organs and mechanical music machines have been almost a life-long love for Dan Wilke. Residing in Buffalo, NY his entire life, Dan “grew up” with three organs on area merry-go-rounds—a Wurlitzer 125, a North Tonawanda 156 (playing Wurlitzer 150 rolls), and an unusual but very heavenly-sounding Artizan with a North Tonawanda facade playing Wurlitzer 150 music. Dan says however, that it was the 125 at New Rialto Park in Olcott (about 40 miles north of Buffalo on Lake Ontario) that really was the bug that bit him at age three.



Ann and Dan Wilke riding the carousel.

“Even at that young age, I was fascinated with gears, belts and wheels,” says Dan. “I would purposely sit on the very insider ow of the merry-go-round so I could watch all the machinery in the center while I was riding. There was this neat “music box” sitting in the middle with horns honking out this wonderful music with drums playing by themselves, and the best part about it was the big fly wheel on the back, turning around.”

At age 5, Dan’s parents took him to the Musical Museum in Deansboro, NY (1948-1998) where he was exposed to everything from bird boxes to orchestrions. Future visits became almost a yearly ritual. Dan discovered the Vestal Press at age nine, and that same year acquired the first instrument in his col-

lection, a pump organ. At age 10 he obtained his first Victrola, and finally a player piano two years after that.

In addition to his love of mechanical music machines, Dan is quite an enthusiast and historian of amusement parks and roller coasters. In 1892 Dan co-founded the Western New York Coaster Club which currently has over 450 members. It was through this club that he met his future bride, Anne, in 1983. They were married in 1988 and continue to enjoy many roller coaster rides together. Dan says about Anne that when they first met she didn’t even know what a band organ was, and frankly did-

n’t much care for them. Over the years, however, things have changed a bit. It was the sound of the different musical arranging style of the European Fairground Organs that gave Ann an appreciation of these wonderful machines, and now, she even attends organ rallies.

The first organ rally attended by Dan was Fremont, Ohio in 1985. Since then he has hosted several small organs in conjunction with a local steam show, and hosted his first “official” rally when the COAA was at Midway Amusement Park near Jamestown, NY in August, 2001. Dan says he can’t wait to do it all again in 2003!

COAA Web Site

Check out www.carouselorganassociation.org for the latest information about rallies, membership and COAA items for sale. Vice-president Larry Kern has taken over responsibility for the page and has done an outstanding job. This is a good site to refer your friends who are considering membership in the COAA.

2003 Organ Rally Dates			
<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Date</u>
COAA Rally #1	Dutch Village Holland, Michigan	Terry Haughawout 419-454-3671	June 20-22, 2003
Ohio Bicentennial Mid-Am (MBSI) Rally	Marietta, Ohio	Sylvi Caporale 740-373-4262	July 11-12, 2003
COAA Rally #2	Jamestown, New York	Dan Wilke 716-825-7266	July 18-20, 2003
COAA Rally #3	North Tonawanda, New York		July 25-27, 2003
COAA Rally #4	DeBence Antique Music World Franklin, Pennsylvania	Lynn Zillmer 814-432-8350	September 12, 2003
COAA Rally #5	Findlay, Ohio	Terry Haughawout 419-454-3671	September 21, 2003