

Meet Your Member

39 years ago COAA member Ken Smith became an instant band organ enthusiast when he discovered a huge A.Ruth & Sohn concert organ playing at the Ohio State Fair. Upon hearing it, he knew he had to have one, but how to get it? The answer: he would build it himself, an almost insurmountable task. At that time there were no plans or books available on band organs, so Ken was unable to even begin the project. Several years went by, then Ken met a man who had a Wurlitzer band organ in his garage. This led to others who had access to organs, and by gradually accumulating information on the workings of the instruments, Ken was finally able to build his own band organ, a reproduction of an 89-keyless Gavioli, and even a second organ, the 63-keyless *Der Bebe' Ruth*.



Ken Smith proudly posing with his 89 keyless Gavioli fair-ground organ.

In 1971 Ken joined the Musical Box Society hoping to meet other band organ enthusiasts, and five years after that the MBSI Mid-America Chapter started having organ rallies. By the 7th annual organ rally Ken had acquired a used horse trailer to haul

his 63-keyless Ruth to it.

Ken may have started a trend towards “building your own organ” in this country. The only known home-built before his was by a man in Connecticut, but this organ, while it played Wurlitzer 165 rolls, was built like a theatre organ on benchwork in the man's basement, not self-contained and not portable.

Ken also helped pioneer “make and punch your own organ books” for book organ owners and designed and built his own book punching machine. The design of his machine has been widely shared with others.

Before the COAA came into being, Ken had formed “The American Band Organ Association” (ABOA), which existed for 18 years and conducted 33 of its own rallies (*for more information on the ABOA see pages four through seven of this issue—ed*).

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Ken now arranges tunes for his organs, and spends much of his time making and punching cardboard books for them.

2002 Organ Rally Dates

<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Date</u>
COAA Rally #1	Dutch Village Holland, MI	Terry Haughwout 419-454-3671	June, 2002
COAA Rally #2	Bearcreek Village Bryant, Indiana	Kim Pontius 765-348-0107	July, 2002
COAA Rally #3	DeBence Museum Franklin, PA		August 2-4, 2002
Band Organ Rally Mid-America (MBSI)	Monroe County Fair Dundee, MI	B Bronson	August 2-4, 2002
Band Organ Rally Heart of America (AMICA)	Eureka Springs Arkansas	Marty Roenigk 1-800-671-6333	August 23-24, 2002
COAA Rally #4	Naperville, IL		Sept., 2002
State Fair of Texas Sunbelt (MBSI)	State Fair Dallas Texas	Walter Moore 214-348-1749	Sept. 27 - 29, 2002
COAA Rally #5	Applefest Zoar, Ohio	Ed Ditto 330-343-7697	October 4-5, 2002