

### Meet Your Member

I became very interested in band organ music in the late 1940s. I looked forward every year to the week of the street fair in our town and spend a lot of time around the merry-go-round listening to the band organ. I was always interested in music, taking piano and accordion lessons for many years. I shared my talents at many of the school functions and also with the accordion band, which played for organizations, etc.

After high school, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy for four years. Upon returning to Hartford City, Indiana, I was soon married to my wife, Ruth. From the Navy enlistment, I was able to use the G.I. Bill to acquire an education in piano tuning and repair. I sold my beloved Harley Davidson motorcycle to buy my first piano to learn on. Through the years, I branched off to include player piano rebuilding, reed organ rebuilding, and other mechanical pianos. Since I was new to piano tuning, etc, and raising a family, I had to have a “real” job to pay our bills. I worked for the 3-M Company in Hartford City. I took an apprentice program to become a machine repairman and worked in this capacity for 35 years until retiring in August, 1998.

As our three sons were growing up, we would take camping vacations and try to find places that had mechanical music. One of our earliest was in Michigan at the State Coach Stop in the Irish Hills before the first MBSI rally was held there.

Owning my own band organ had been a dream for years,



Ruth and Kim Pontius pose alongside of their beautifully hand-crafted Wurlitzer 105 military band organ.

but I didn’t know where I could purchase one. I also figured I wouldn’t be able to afford one if I found it. I decided I would just have to make my own. I learned of the MBSI in the early 1980s and we attended rallies as non-members while vacationing with our sons.

I learned that there was a book on how to build a Wurlitzer Style 105 organ by R.M. Stanoszek. I used this book and I also received guidance from Ken Smith, Steve Lanick, and others during the building of the Wurlitzer 105. This project took eight years to complete, as I was still working full time at 3-M, keeping up with my piano business, taking care of things at home, and

raising three sons. I became discouraged with the progress at times, but after investing so much time and money, I had no choice but to finish my project. Because I am so meticulous with my work, I chose to do everything myself. Even though I call it “our organ,” my wife says all she has in it is “coffee.”

Soon after completing the Wurlitzer 105, I knew I wanted to build a bigger organ. I have now spent nine years building a 63-key Ruth Organ. This will be “our” organ, as Ruth has already purchased the band director to put on it. Hopefully it will be playing by the rallies of 2002.

Since we have joined the mechanical music organizations, we have been amazed at the large number of new friends we have made. They are a wonderful group of folks with an interest in mechanical music in common.

#### 2001—2002 Organ Rally Dates

<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Date</u>
Organ Grinder Show and Tell Gateway/HOA (AMICA)	Children’s Museum St. Louis, MO.	Cynthia Craig 314-771-1244	Oct. 19-20, 2001
COAA Rally #1	Dutch Village Holland, MI	Terry Haughawout	June
COAA Rally #2 2001	Bearcreek Village Bryant, Indiana	Kim Pontius 765-348-0107	July ,
COAA Rally #3	DeBence Museum Franklin, PA		August 2-4, 2002
Mid-America (MBSI) Band Organ Rally	Monroe County Fair Dundee, MI	B Bronson	August 2-4, 2002
COAA Rally #4	Naperville, IL		Sept.
COAA Rally #5	Applefest	Ed Ditto	October 4-5, 2002