

TEXAS CHAPTER

President: Rich Clayton, McKinney, Texas
Vice President: Bill Boruff, Dallas, Texas
Secretary: Suzanne McCall, Dallas, Texas
Treasurer: Janet Tonessen, Richardson, Texas
Reporter: Janet Tonessen, Richardson, Texas
Board Representatives: Suzanne & John McCall, Dallas, Texas

The Texas Chapter has 42 paid household memberships representing 68 individuals. The treasury is solvent.

The chapter had 4 meetings in the year 2008. In February, we met at Mama Emilias Restaurant in McKinney, Texas. After dinner, we walked to the Court Room Theatre on the court house square. The venue was a silent movie, "The Son of Sheik" starring Rudolph Valentino. The movie (with subtitles) was accompanied by a mighty Worlitzer Pipe Organ. This was a joint meeting with The American Organ Society. Several members of that group became members of our club after this event.

In May, we met at the home of Gordon Kelly in Dallas. He has a 1926 Mason Hamlin Ampico A 6'2" Grand Piano.. This piano belonged to the daughter of the Ball Glass Jar Company and was completely restored by Gordon himself. He received training and expertise from the now retired E. L. Perry, a highly respected, factory trained Ampico and Duo Art technician. Gordon also favors trained Chihuahuas and one entertained us with his tricks.

Come September, we met at the lovely home of Richard and Janet Tonessen in Richardson, Texas. Their 1926 Marshall Wendell Upright Ampico has been recently rebuilt and is now playing in grand style. This piano was discovered by their 9 year old son (in 1974) in a St. Louis Pizza Parlor. We were also treated with a tour of the first computer-driven paper roll perforator and a vacuum operated roll reader, designed and built by Richard Tonessen in the 1970s. The perforator is still punching 88 note Ampico, DuArt, and Welte Piano rolls. They also have an upright Dishlavier Piano which plays all the piano roll files from the past 29 years, (ie) Duo Art, Welte and Ampico. The phenomenon of all roll types played on one piano is due to a computer program WINPLAY, written by Richard Brandle of Dallas. That evening, the group reassembled in McKinney at the Court Room Theatre to hear Dick Kroeckel on the piano and Dave Wickerham on the Wurlitzer Pipe Organ. Dave is organist and curator of the Milhaus Museum in Boco Raton, Florida. Members were advised at this meeting that member Bill Flynt was named to THE AMICA HALL OF FAME at the 2008 Amica convention, Los Angeles. He arranged and coded Ampico Expression on numerous piano rolls in the 1970s. Another member, Ken Caswell of Austin, Texas, was honored at the convention with the Amica International Award. He recorded and preserved historic piano roll performances. The music has been donated to the University of Texas Archives.

The final meeting of the year was held as a Christmas Party at the home of Jerry Bacon, past president of the Texas Chapter. A barbeque dinner was followed by a "Chinese" gift exchange. Jerry has a Christmas tree decorated with World War II ornaments. Jerry is an accomplished organist with a fascinating background in both collecting and playing antique instruments. He can play by ear as well as read sheet music. He has a Seeburg L with parts rebuilt by Reblitz Restorations. He also has a Gulbransen Player, several phonographs - a Victor 8-9 spring wound, Victor Credenza Spring Wound, and a VERY early Edison A-100. He also showed a DVD of a tour on the Organ in the Wanamaker Department Store.

It is interesting to note how people get acquainted with mechanical music. In Jerry's case, he was only 8 or 9 (living in Oklahoma City) when he went to Spring Lake Amusement Park and was fascinated with the band organ there. A neighbor's Victrola model 215, an upright player and an Emerson Fan were his introductions to piano rolls and records and a future fan collection. His family had an Orthophonic Cradenza, Spring wound.

The family moved to Denton, Texas and then to Arlington, Texas in 1955 -1956. This is where he saw his first Ampico and became interested in Ampico rolls. He would attend traveling carnivals in Arlington to hear a small Wurlitzer Band Organ. He became interested in organs and organ music while attending the First Methodist Church which had the only pipe organ in town at the time. He learned to play on a Hammond Church Model in Arlington High School. He also worked at Six Flags over Texas caring for two band organs and a Mills Violana.

He installed a small pipe organ and played for Christmas with the garage door open for people looking at the Christmas lights. He moved to Dallas in 1964 and gave the organ to, and installed it in, the Lutheran Church. He played at the Melba (Capri) Theatre, downtown Dallas and also cared for the Band Organ at the State Fair of Texas. Later Jerry installed a pipe organ in the Fine Arts Theatre and played there. He then went on to Landmark Pizza and Pipes in Dallas and Pipe Organ Pizza in Houston. He was organist and choirmaster at St. Patricks Episcopal Church in Pleasant Grove. He continues to sub at St. Johns Episcopal Church in Dallas and other churches in the area.

A few of the instruments he has owned are a Hammond Player, Chickering Ampico 5' 8" (1922) a Cremona A piano with Xylophone, Seaburg K, Western Electric X, American Photo Player Model 20 and an Everet Orgatron. He has been active in Amica, Texas Chapter since the early 1970s, recently serving a record term as president of the Chapter from 2000 to 2007. The Chapter salutes you for being a true and devoted Amican !!

The Texas Chapter had a fine year. Viva La Amica.

Submitted by Suzanne & John McCall, Board Representatives, Dallas, TX