

The Postcard Organ (“De Radiostadt — Australia”)

Ron Bopp

Finding a postcard with something related to our hobby is rather unusual and, a real treat. Well, one day this last fall, I was sorting through a batch of photographs from the Dan Slack archives and came across the postcard seen in **Figure 1**. What a beauty! Although concealed in the background there did appear to be an organ—it looked like a Dutch Street Organ. In the following discussion we will find that this is an organ of not one but five names over its lifetime.



Figure 1. The “postcard organ” seen in the background of this 1962 postcard.

In the foreground of the postcard we can see a smiling lady in what appears to be a horse-drawn cart. Present in the background, are bare-footed girls in some sort of gym outfits.

On the obverse side the writing appeared to be French (**Figure 2**). There was an 8-cent Netherlands stamp and a postmark indicating 1962. The postmark included the phrase: “SOCIAAL EN CULTUREEL WERK DOOR ZOMERZEGELS STERK.”



Figure 2. The reverse side of the postcard.

To help me understand the message of the postcard and identify the organ that adorned it I enlisted the help of our organ friends, Bjorn Isebaert in Belgium as well as Gina Rulli. Through these translation efforts I come up with the following information. This was a photo of the Queen (Queen Juliana) of the Netherlands and her husband, the Prince. Although this was mailed from The Hague on May 25, 1962, the photo was taken in the RAI building in Amsterdam (a large exhibit hall).

Apparently the bare-footed girls were gymnasts who were, in addition to the organ playing, performing a show for the Queen.

The hand-written note reads as follows: “Dear Mother and Father, Rie and I hope that everything is going well with you, with your health of course. I have a lot of work but I am not tired. Maybe I’ll come to Brussels in June and I hope to visit you and your family and of course also your dear Pilla Aurore. See you soon dear mother. Big Kisses, Rie” The above mentioned postmark translates into “Social and cultural work, successful with the help of summer stamps.”

The Organ Travels

The organ was quickly identified as *De Radiostadt* (Radio City). Fortunately this organ has been documented several places in the Dutch literature. The organ began as *De Duwyn*, a 72-key Belgian dance organ built

by Remond Duwyn. According to Frans Wieffering—author of the 1965 Dutch organ book *Glorieuze Orgeldagen* (**Figure 3**)—the organ was also known as *De Piet Winter* and was the last organ to play in the dance hall of Piet Winter at the Hogedijk at Zaandam. (Frans Wieffering, was a Dutch author of many subjects and, as a young child in the ‘teens, would follow the barrel organs as they played in the streets of Holland.)



Figure 3. Frans Wieffering, author of *Glorieuze Orgeldagen*, had stated that “already as a child I loved the barrel organ.”

Piet Winter owned many organs (**Figure 4**) but died in the 1950s and shortly afterwards his widow closed the dance hall. The organ was sold to Joh. Krom at Uitgeest. The organ was then sold again to Henk Gossling who reduced it in size and rebuilt it as a Dutch Street Organ (**Figure 5**).



Figure 4. One of Piet Winter's organs out on location.

It was in this reference that it was noted *De Radiostadt* played at the RAI building on the 25th anniversary of Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard. It played *Tulips in Amsterdam*, which in addition to being sung by thousands of onlookers, was heard on both radio and seen on television.

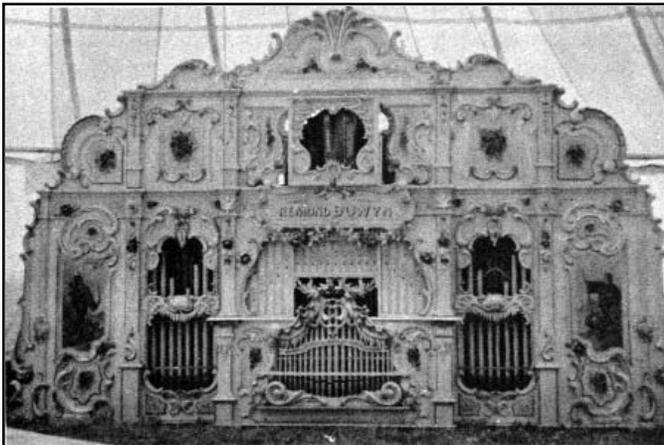


Figure 5. *De Duwyn*, a 72-key Belgian dance organ, as it appeared before its transformation.

Romke de Waard refers to *De Radiostadt* in his section on conservation of dance organs in the Netherlands in his book, *Draaiorgels - Hun Geschiedenis En Betekenis* (Figure 5). He noted that in most of the Netherlands Mortier and Duwyn organs were transformed into street organs. He dates the conversion of *De Radiostadt* to have occurred from 1955 to 1962.

De Radiostadt was a popular organ as seen by its use at the Queen's anniversary celebration. Not only was it known for its quality of music but also for its appearance—there were considerable carvings of the façade (Figure 6). The organ was

used a lot in the area of Hilversum, the center of the renowned Philips Industries.

The organ was purchased by an Australian, Sam Kosen, in 1965 and imported to Toowoomba, Queensland, about 200 miles north of Sydney. At this time the organ had been re-named *Amsterdam* (see back cover).

During the 1980s the organ was bought by Craig Robson of Alexandria, Australia. The organ went through a complete restoration. The organ has traveled thousands of miles now, playing more than when it was in the Netherlands. In 1999 the *Amsterdam* was renamed *Australia* and to quote Craig Robson "is a welcome attraction wherever it is shown, particularly at Dutch-Australian festivals." At one such festival, in a rural area, the organ was greeted by a couple of kangaroos, the only visitors of that day. Although much old music came with the organ, newly arranged music by Tom Meijer and Jan Kees de Ruijter has been added.

Today *Australia* sits in the collection of Craig Robson where it greets natives and visitors alike with its typical Dutch sound. Far away from its original home and renamed many times, the organ still plays like it was playing for a queen.



Figure 6. Henk Gossling's *De Radiostadt* as it performed on the street in the 1960s.

Bibliography

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- Robson, Craig, Personal Communication; January, 2002
- Wieffering, Frans *Glorieuze Orgeldagen*; 1965; Utrecht, Holland

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The Creation of Big Horn

Brad Simon

Big Horn is the magical creation of Hyler Bracey, Ph.D. Hyler had a tragic accident in 1970 racing at a NASCAR short track in Mobile, Alabama. He was severely burned over 45% of his body with third degree burns. Through many months of painful recovery he discovered that the accident, along with numerous other events in his past, was God's way of getting him out of racing. From his burn experience, Hyler learned you better live life to the fullest, there is no guarantee of another day. He also learned that he had a life purpose of inspiring others to live healthy, joyful, productive, spiritual lives, to go for and live their dreams. Out of this learning, he developed a zest for life that eventually resulted in his being a successful businessman and achieving many dreams. This is where the daydream of Big Horn came into the picture. Being a collector of horns and whistles, as well as being a storyteller, Hyler hopes that his story, daydream of Big Horn and zest for life will inspire others to achieve their own goals, dreams and visions.

Hyler grew up in the industrial town of Port Arthur, Texas. Port Arthur literally had been taken over by the oil industry. In this industrialized town he obtained work on a tugboat to earn money during high school. Bracey spent most of his time working long hours instead of playing and hanging out with the other students. The massive sounds of boat horns were a constant but pleasant part of his workday; over time Hyler grew to love each one of their distinctive notes. No wonder these sounds have now worked their way back into his life.

Hyler's collection began when he and his wife Cass purchased their first motor home and she mentioned that a more powerful horn for it would be better. You can only imagine the flurry of excitement over this idea. After hours of research on horns at a local university library, he found there has never been a book or article written on horns. Through a continued search he finally found a horn manufacturer in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, The Kahlenberg Brothers Company. Hyler contacted them and purchased a new horn for the motor home. However, his journey was far from over.

Through all Hyler's research he found that it was very difficult to find horns and whistles to collect. So with his passion rejuvenated, he frequented garage sales and antique shops and steadily built a small collection (**Figure 1**). In his adventures Hyler also found a Horn and Whistle club that publishes a magazine [*the founding editor was MBSI member Jack Hardman - Ed*] and subscribed immediately.

Hyler kept dreaming of a vehicle completely covered with bells and whistles. He admits he thought this daydream was so silly that he never mentioned it to anyone, not even his wife. Then one day he spotted a magazine ad that listed a large train whistle for sale. He called and spoke with a man who would soon change his life. In casual conversation he got so excited about his new whistle that the man said Hyler ought to buy his horn truck as well. Before he ended his conversation Hyler had bought not only the whistle, but the man's horn truck also (**Figure 2**). You can only imagine his wife Cass's reaction when he hung up and told her he had just made

such purchases. So off to Detroit Michigan went Hyler to pick up his new whistle and horn truck.

Now with a horn truck and a small collection of his own Hyler started to build his dream vehicle covered with horns and whistles. His next major purchase was a real show stopper—a Kahlenberg S-6, the world's largest air horn. This giant masterpiece immediately became the crown jewel of his collection. You can see that it is completely logical, and utterly fitting, that the official name for the vehicle would be "Big Horn."

This project became a great passion by providing him with a creative outlet not inhibited by the physical limitations caused by Hyler's accident. Big Horn soon became the center of attention at many local

parades and festivals. Big Horn was a dream come true for Hyler. His secret d a y - d r e a m s manifested themselves into this real life r o l l i n g t r i b u t e

that truly has "all the bells and whistles." Things were really rolling as he began to receive a steady stream of requests for Big Horn to participate in various events.

Then like a lightning bolt, Hyler had the idea to use Big Horn as a prop in his speeches on "How to overcome adversity" and "Making corporate visions and personal dreams come true." Big Horn was a manifestation of Hyler's dream and his wish that it would inspire others. While he was doing local parades and festivals Hyler never stopped to consider the special needs that would arise when he decided to take the show on the road. Weighing a whopping 12,000 pounds, Big Horn could only be driven about 600 miles a day. The security issues that surrounded Big Horn on the road also posed a problem for a safe place to park at night where nothing would be stolen. He came up with a solution—to have a trailer built to haul Big Horn. Hyler also decided that in order to pull Big Horn he would need to purchase a converted bus, because a regular motor home does not have a heavy enough chassis to tow that much weight. The solution worked great and Hyler said there was only one way to describe this combination: perfection.

Now that Hyler was ready to begin travel over long distances he knew where his first trip would take him. Reading a newspaper one morning, he



Figure 2. The original Big Horn. Mounted over the front of the truck is the Kahlenberg S-6, the world's largest air horn.

Photo: Hyler Bracey, *Horn & Whistle*, Fall, 1995.

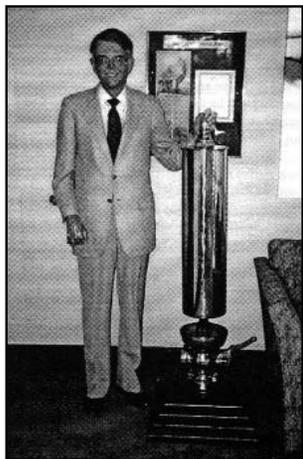


Figure 1. Hyler Bracey, posing with one of his many steam whistles.

Photo: Hyler Bracey, *Horn & Whistle*, Winter, 1966.

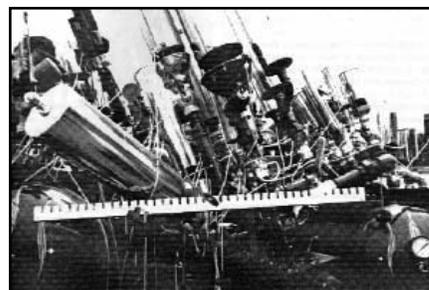


Figure 3. Big Horn after the wreck. The various steam whistles can be seen arranged in a whimsical fashion.

Photo: Hyler Bracey, *Horn & Whistle*, Winter 1997.