

Patience Is A Virtue —Anxiety Isn't

Ralph Schultz

Patience is a virtue, anxiety isn't. It all began at the 1987 MBSI annual meeting in St. Paul. I had been a member less than one year with the Snowbelt Chapter and knew little about mechanical music. In Rice Park, an organ rally took place and not having anything to participate with, I made sure I would go there to see and hear all the organs—big and small. They were all enjoyable, but one crank organ stood out from the rest of them in sound quality—a Prinsen organ. Ten years later I found one and purchased it. Then I needed more music, so I contacted Arthur Prinsen in Belgium and began to acquire more books.

In April 1999, I invited Arthur Prinsen and his wife, Paula, over for a tour with Carol and me. We began at the Circus World Museum, then the Bob Gilson collection, Jasper Sanfilippo's, and on to Jim Krughoff's. From there we flew down to Florida and visited the Bill Hall collection and finally, the Milhous collection.

During the time that we spent with the Prinsens, Arthur mentioned that he was going to build a 48-key organ. He was not sure yet what type of pipes to use or how many of them it would have but said that when it was done, he would send me a tape of the organ. Then, in November 2000, I received the tape and from that moment on I knew from the sound of that organ it was one I wanted. I needed to figure out a way to obtain it and had to sell something to fund it, but that was okay. However, there was someone in France that had first chance at the organ, and I was second. The facade wasn't finished yet, but as soon as it was done, the people in France were to come and look at it for their decision. It was around the 15th of January when the man went to see the completed organ. He liked it but had to consult with his wife back home first. Arthur told him that whoever says "yes" first wins. As soon as the man left, Arthur contacted me and explained the situation and I immediately said "yes." Then the fun began!

During the waiting period, I told Arthur how much music I wanted. That would take some time for him to make the books. I also decided I wanted a conductor, which had to be carved in Holland and would take even more time. And then, Arthur went on vacation or "holiday" as they call it. Finally, around the first week in April, he was getting ready to ship everything. In the meantime, I had to make a motor mount and pulley reduction system because their motors are 220 volts and 50 cycles, and that's not good here.

To save money, I made all the crates to hold the music books here to avoid the shipping expense.

Then on Thursday, April 12, 2001, the finished organ was completely crated up for shipping, left Brussels, and would go to Memphis and be in Minneapolis on Friday the 13th—that should have been an omen! It was to arrive at the Minneapolis FedEx terminal at 5:30 a.m. I was told it would take only an hour and a half for the paperwork. After two hours I began to wonder and called FedEx—I found that the organ was at their terminal but there was a problem—they lost the paperwork. I called Memphis and after a run-around, I found someone that was willing to help me. She checked the computer—yes the organ is in Minneapolis, but there is a shortage of papers so she'll start a search. In the meantime, I call Arthur Prinsen and get him to fax me his paperwork, which I fax it to Memphis, and Memphis faxes it to Minneapolis, and then, we have a three-way conversation.

Finally after hours of phone calls, (around 1:00 p.m.) they call and say "come and get it." I'm on the way dragging a four-place snowmobile trailer through a construction zone and on to the FedEx Building for the paperwork. I have to go over to the H.H.H. terminal for Customs, O.K.? Now I'm on my way pulling this trailer through the gates in the parking lot with not enough room to turn around. I go to Customs and turn in the paperwork, and up comes the question "what was the value of this organ?" Oh, oh!—anything over \$2,000 has to have a bro-

ker and where is one? I was given a list of thirty; six are checked off—where is the closest one? The Customs agent can't tell me that, but his finger is pointing to one—oh, how about this one?

Back across Interstate 494 to the first stop light and make a left turn; go down two blocks and that is it. Good! Well, more construction area—all streets are fire lane now; the parking lot doesn't have much room; and I have to park in the street with the trailer and let my wife drive away if someone comes. Now the receptionist asks: "do you have an appointment?" And my response is: "No, and I don't intend on coming back either. I am from out of town and it's too far to go." She responds: "Okay, go see Miss Johio: \$200 please!" My next question is: "Where can I pick it up?" And she quickly responded: "You can't get it today, maybe next week on Tuesday." Now, I am ready to strangle someone. I go home and patiently wait it out.



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was no actual band organ music on these tapes. One was a tape of hand-played organ music which didn't have the flavor of the band organ.

I quit working in the park after 1964 and was out of touch with the organ till about mid 1970s. One of the fellows who worked on the carousel with me in the 1960s was now employed by the park in a management position. He was aware that I had acquired a band organ. About that time, a major expansion of the park was underway which included moving the carousel from its location by the creek to a new location.



Figure 5. Enclosed in the back of the Wurlitzer 153 are the twin roll frames.

This included a new building to house the ride and a restoration of the carousel. Attention was again turned to the organ. I was contacted by the park and asked if I knew anyone who could restore the organ. I sure did . . . Mike Kitner!

The organ was moved to Mike's shop and underwent a complete restoration. This was accomplished over the winter months. In the spring, Mike and I installed the organ on the ride. I no longer remember the year. From then on, the carousel had an operating band organ. Mike took care of the maintenance from then until his death. We usually went to the park together for service calls. Every couple of weeks during the park seasons, I would visit the park, touch up the tuning and give Mike a report on its condition. At the end of each season, Mike would decide what needed to be done for the next season. We would remove the parts to be worked on and take them to his shop. In the spring we would return the parts and get the organ ready for



Figure 6. Another view of the Wurlitzer 153 band organ reveals the colorful lights and painted facade.

the season. During this period from the 70s to the present time, the organ had been in his shop twice for restoration.

When Mike passed away last December, the repairs for the coming season had not been done. I knew what was planned and was able to complete it and prepare the organ for the 2001 season.

The organ's serial number is 3839 and was built in 1926.

All photos were taken by the author.

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Bill Black is a full-time practicing dentist in Chambersburg PA from 1964 to this day. He has been a band organ enthusiast since his employment at HERSHEY PARK. He began collecting band organs in 1972.

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On Tuesday morning I call Memphis and learn they found the original paperwork and it's in Minneapolis. Good! I call the broker and tell her that. She responded by saying that they had already sent the paperwork over to Customs, but now they can't find it either. Must be "airhead work" again. By now I could have carried this thing on my back and swam over here. I go back home again. At 1:15 in the afternoon a fax comes through to come and get the organ, it's all cleared. Hooray! Back to the cities, load the organ, and drive back home. Then I uncrated the organ, unloaded it and placed it into the shed.

That evening we're ready to hear the first tune. Wrong again—no belt. I look at the pulley and there's a place to put a crank handle. Yes! I have a bolt that will fit as a crank. I hand cranked for the first half song and thought I would have a heart attack. The next

day I went to my old work place to see if I could borrow a V-belt. We found one, and that put me in business. But the motor was noisy—I've had troubles before with Dayton motors, they are electrical-ly out of balance. I took it back and exchanged it for a different brand—one that is smmmoooth. I finally got the original belt, the motor located, and all the other idiosyncrasies ironed out. Now I am in heaven playing up a storm.

Yes, my middle name has always been "Wait" but the wait is sure worth it. Anyone wanting to see and hear our new Prinsen organ is always welcome.

This article previously printed in the May 2001 edition of the *Resonator*, a newsletter of the Snow Belt chapter of the MBSI.

Since high school Ralph Schultz has always dreamed of having a repair shop. With 27 years as a tool and die maker as background he has worked for 12 years restoring musical boxes.