

Remembering Jack Hewes

Bruce Miller

Back in the late 1970s, I was living in Virginia and attended the Musical Box Society annual meeting. This was where I met Jack Hewes for the first time. Not too long after that, my employer, United Airlines, transferred me to their Seattle base. I contacted Jack when I arrived and that began a friendship that lasted many years. About a year after I moved to the Northwest, I drove my band organ truck, with my Wurlitzer 153, from Michigan to Washington. Jack was instantly ready, eager, in fact, as he always was, to help me get the organ back into playing condition. He spent innumerable hours removing, revoicing, and tuning pipes. He also remade the entire bell box for the front of the organ (the one that was in the organ was someone's poorly-made contraption that barely worked, if at all).

Jack had a unique ability to be able to figure out innovative things and put them into practice. Much of this came out in his interest in automatic music. However, this ability extended to other endeavors as well. As an example, Jack, almost single-handedly, built the large A-Frame styled house, in which he, and his wife, Aggie, lived. A main part of the construction of the house required the lifting of a very large wooden beam up to the peak of the structure. This beam ran the entire length of the house. Jack figured out a way, with the aid of a number of various pivots, pulleys, etc., to hoist this massive timber into place entirely by himself, with no assistance from anyone else.



Jack posing with his Dutch street organ (playing a 56-key Limonaire scale) at a rally in Jefferson, Texas.

Jack built a Dutch-styled street organ, which became a fixture at many band organ rallies around the country. He was always ready to load the organ in his truck and hit the road. This organ, as many MBSI, ABOA, and COAA members can attest, was a very sweet sounding and well playing organ, even though Jack never really completed his work on it. He didn't ever get the percussion instruments (bass drum, snare drum, cymbal, etc.) built or installed. He also planned to build and paint a facade for the organ, but this, too, never got done. He was really more interested in playing the organ and adding to his library of book music.

Wanting a smaller organ, Jack designed a hand crank organ. He decided that as long as he was building one, it wouldn't be much more difficult to make every single part in groups of five, so he would end up with five duplicate organs. He actually finished two of them, and had many parts left over for the intended remaining three.

Jack designed and built an extremely clever machine for copying punched book music, well before the advent of computer assisted devices with photoelectric cells, LED's, etc. He merely inserted the end of a music book to be copied into the device, along with a roll of blank paper, and carbon paper, turned the crank, and out came a perfect copy of the original book. It could copy as fast as you could turn the crank. He was a very clever and accomplished wood worker and machinist.

Once, after Jack and I had to put a piano up and on a dolly for moving, he decided that there must be an easier way to raise a piano than by using sheer brute strength. He designed, and built, a clever device, which was actually in two parts. He merely slipped one part under each end of any size piano, turned a crank, and the piano lifted evenly and easily, allowing a dolly to be simply rolled underneath the piano. He was a real believer in using levers, fulcrums, rollers, etc., to simplify heavy lifting and moving tasks. We used his methods several times to remove and replace my Wurlitzer 153 from its place in the truck.

Jack's wonderful wife, Aggie, passed away a number of years ago, and his eyesight began to be a problem. This curtailed, and eventually ended, his ability to work with music machines.

I was very sorry to hear of his recent passing. Jack's friendliness, talents, abilities, and eagerness to help will be sorely missed, especially here in the Pacific Northwest, where the number of both organs and enthusiasts seem to be extremely limited.

Continued from page 9 (Notes from "The Rise, Blossom and Fall of the Gavioli Factory" by van Oost) . . .

After Napoleon's fall in 1814 the duchy of Modena was re-established and Franco mounted the throne as Franco IV. He was succeeded by his son Fran V.

9. *Illustrated London News*, December, 1846.
10. Hans van Oost, "De eerste Grote Gavioli in London" (*Het Pierement*, January 2000, p. 35).
11. Corvi, Antoine, Rue d'Aligre 14, St. Antoine, Paris. A maker of street barrel organs, one of which has seen employing the "système Gavioli" of patented organ

pipework and fitted with the flutter-type of tremulant. Corvi took out several patents for improvements to street organs, including one for a tune indicator (1853). Arthur WJG Ord-Hume, *Barrel Organ*, 1978.

12. Ludovic's fame was also based on his profound knowledge of the classical organ; in such a way that queen Isabella of Spain commissioned a prestigious organ.
13. Rouillé, Philippe. "Sur les rapports de Gavioli et de Corvi," *Musiques*

Mécaniques Vivantes, Nr. 51, 2004.

14. In the 1850's the road situation in the neighborhood of the Rue Charenton, Rue d'Aligre and Fauburg St. Antoine differed considerably from the present one. The Boulevard Diderot, then called Boulevard Mazas, was constructed between 1850 and 1852. Many of the streets between this boulevard and the Rue Fauburg St. Antoine were made later. The Avenue Daumesnil did not exist.