

2009 COAA Mid-Winter Meeting

Liz Barnhart

For the first time ever, COAA had a Mid-Winter Meeting. It was held Feb.27 - March 1, 2009 in Kissimmee, Florida at the Clarion Resort and Water Park Motel with 85 members registered. The hospitality room was opened Friday evening where we were entertained by the newly-acquired *De Waterjuffer* (“The Dragonfly”). This 45-key Dutch street organ was built by Johnny Verbeeck in Belgium and delivered to Ron and Mary Jo Bopp about a month ago. Our evening program was presented by Ron Bopp on “Twenty Years of European Organs.” Those who have been on Bumbling Bruder Tours would have recognized many of the organs shown.

On Saturday morning we carpoled three hours to Boca Raton to see the collection of Paul and Bob Milhous. From the outside of the building, no one would ever suspect the wonders that are found inside. We were greeted by Dave Wickerham, who served as our official guide and theater organist. We were joined by the owner, Paul Milhous, for much of the tour. He and his brother, Bob, have amassed a fantastic collection of musical instruments, rare world-class classic cars, boat models and many other objects of interest.

Upon entering the building, we were in a foyer containing a 1956 Chrysler Imperial Limousine, a Verbeeck hand organ, a Dutch street organ which was over our heads, along with an elegant chandelier which had been obtained from a theater in Chicago. The first thing we saw, as we went into the main display room, was a large carousel. We all had the opportunity to pick an animal to ride. As we circled the room, we were entertained by several large fair organs, interspersed by the antique cars and Indy 500 race cars. The upper floor circled 3/4 of the way around the room below. Each of the four upper rooms was beautifully decorated with chandeliers, inviting chairs and couches, and surrounded by large European orchestrions and various theater or electronic organs. The first room was highlighted by a huge bar almost the length of the room and a magnificent Weber Maestro. We were also privileged to hear Steve LastName sing, accompanied on the Wurlitzer by Dave

Wickerham. The second room contained the huge electronic organ which Dave also played. The third area had more organs plus a Pierre Eich Orchestrion and both rooms had several Weber and Welte Orchestrions. The fourth area was highlighted by a photo player, which Dave demonstrated for us, as well as many styles of antique slot machines. We all were disappointed when it was time to leave and we want to thank the Milhous brothers for a fabulous afternoon.

Sunday morning we met at the music building housing the collection of Bill and Cindy Hall. “Cappy” the chimp met us outside as we went in the room which contains five large fair organs plus many other carnival related posters and memorabilia. The first organ was one which Bill had earlier obtained a Marengi facade to which Arthur Prinsen later added an organ. We next heard an 1890, 80-key Gavioli/Mortier street organ. The beautiful facade, which had survived a fire, was decorated by three wreaths and named *De Drie Kransen*. Another organ was a 121-key Mortier which Bill obtained by paying the college bills of the previous owner’s daughter. A Mortier dance organ, which contained 345 pipes, was enjoyed by all—it was installed in a gypsy wagon made by Carl Frei. The fifth and last organ was a beautifully painted 89-key Gavioli. While at the Halls we had a delicious barbeque lunch and enjoyed hearing Cindy and Bill tell us how

they met and the history of their collection. We thank them for being such gracious hosts.

The first COAA Mid-Winter Meeting was a great success thanks to the hard work of Ron and Mary Jo Bopp. We hope this will be just the beginning for winter meetings.

*[for other details regarding the Milhous collection and Bill and Cindy Hall’s collection see the July, 2007 edition of the **Carousel Organ** (Milhous) and the October, 2005 edition of the **Carousel Organ** (Hall) - ED.]*

More photos will appear in the 2009 Rally Edition.]



Above, Paul Milhous addresses members. Right, Bill Hall introduces organs.



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The Park always welcomes us with open arms and plenty of great Southern hospitality! Just as an example, the Park offers free unlimited rides to all COAA Registrants during the entire Rally!

While in the area, you might want to plan to stay for an extra day or two, to see some of the other attractions in and around Chattanooga, Tennessee. So, kick the snow off of your tires, tune up your organ, and make your plans to head for Lake Winnie on Memorial Day weekend. You'll be glad that you did!

If you need more information, please contact Ron or Glynn Keisler at (803) 356-4545.