

A Ruth Style 33-A/Bruder Organ

Tom Billy

I was always fascinated with band organs starting at a very early age (about eight years old). My family would vacation every year at Seaside Heights, NJ and I would always go to the carousel to hear the Wurlitzer organs. My parents also took me to Olympic Park in Irvington, NJ and again I would hang around the carousel. At about age 15 I knew I wanted one of these musical mechanical machines.



Figure 1. The unrestored organ as found in 1967.

I began to look for one. When I was 19 I went to Coney Island, and I saw a small German carousel-in the middle there was a band organ. It was not playing, and looked like it had not played for quite some time. I inquired about the organ and found out that the owner wanted to sell it (**Figure 1**).

Although my find was a nice, I didn't really know the make or condition of the organ. There was no doubt in my mind I had to have it. The following weekend I bought the organ (1967) and carried it home in a U-Haul trailer. My mother had a fit and exclaimed "What did you buy now?" I took the organ apart although not knowing anything about it and got nowhere on how to restore it.

I went into the Army in 1968 and it sat, stored in my mother's garage until 1977. At that time, someone had told me about Mike Kitner and his organ restoration business. I met with Mike at his shop in Carlisle, PA. I had never really heard what an organ could



Figure 2. The organ as it was photographed in Mike Kitners organ repair shop.



Figure 3. The front of the organ during restoration.

sound like until that visit. My eyes, ears and my entire body just absorbed it all. Mike restored the organ in 1979 and sent for the Bruder rolls from Carl Frei (**Figures 2 & 3**). I had to do some research to find Carl Frei

and the 56-keyless Bruder music but it was worth the effort. I bought all the rolls that I could get for the Ruth organ.

Ruth Style 33-A/Bruder Disposition

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| 20 Melody Pipes | Bass Drum |
| 11 Trumpets | Snare Drum |
| 11 Accompaniment | Cymbal |
| 5 Trombones | Triangle |
| 6 Bass (plus 2 Contrabass) | |
| | Forte Register |
| Total Pipes: 247 | |



Figure 4. The newly-restored playing for the first time at Blob's Park in Jessup, MD. The year was 1979 and the organ had just been mounted on the Chevrolet truck.

A Chevrolet flat-bed truck was bought and a body was built. I have been to shows, grand openings and organ rallies in the 1980s (Figures 4 & 5). I took the organ off the truck in 1990 and put it in a large garage as the truck was getting old. The organ played in the garage—sometimes I would roll it out and listen to it outside. I joined the COAA, MBSI and FOPS in 2003.



Figure 5. The organ was displayed at the Liberty State Park, Jersey City, NJ in 1986. The box on the truck bed allowed full exposure of the organ's facade.

I wish I had joined the COAA long ago. Once I got involved I started to go to the rallies without the organ.

I was



Figure 6. Above is a view of the duplex roll frame.

very impressed with the people that brought their organs, and I noted to myself that I had to get a trailer and bring the organ out again.

I ordered a trailer in 2006 and mounted the organ within. I am very proud and consider myself very lucky to have found such a machine that plays so musical and looks so good (Figure 7 & back cover).

A friend of mine (Lou Pane) painted the façade while Durward Center recovered the puff pouches and did some other work about five years ago



Figure 7. The Ruth Style 33-A/Bruder organ today.

Tom Billy lives in Little Silver, New Jersey where he cares for his Ruth fair organ. The organ is often seen in appearing at a rally on the East coast.

