

Meet Your Member—Dave Mahr

Pat, my wife of 50 years, and I grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We lived a few blocks away from each other and were friends and classmates beginning in the 5th grade. When it was time to go off to Iowa State, we decided to make it a partnership and go together. After graduation, I went to work for Archer Daniels Midland Co. (ADM), for 34 years negotiating labor agreements for the company with numerous labor unions around the country. I retired in 2001. Pat taught school for special needs children in the Decatur, IL school district for 23 years.

As a youngster, I was interested in mechanical things and music. I wasn't disciplined enough to learn to play the piano myself, so why not get something that was mechanical and played music; enter the player piano. My first player piano came in several boxes. I asked myself, where do I start? Thank goodness for Art Reblitz and his books, *Player Piano Servicing and Rebuilding* and *Piano Servicing, Tuning and Rebuilding*. I purchased the necessary tools for piano rebuilding and after about four or five months my piano was up and playing.

Many years after rebuilding my first player piano, I learned about other kinds of automatic musical instruments that I previously never knew existed. My brother acquainted me with the reproducing piano and several months later I saw a Checkering grand advertised in our local paper. I purchased it and with the help of several articles on how to rebuild the AMPICO mecha-



Dave Mahr with one of his hand-cranked organs.

nism, I was able to successfully rebuild the piano. I then joined AMICA and MBSI and I learned about many more automatic musical instruments that I didn't know existed. Over the years, my collection has grown and diversified considerably. After two additions to the house there still was no wall space left, so if I was to continue adding to my collection, my wife made it clear I had to start looking for smaller instruments.

About four or five years ago, Ron Bopp encouraged me to join the COAA. Dr. Tom Griffith wrote a glowing report in the *Journal* about a 20-note, 20-pipe street organs made in Austria. I ordered one and thus began my love affair with the street organ. I have since acquired 20/78 and 31/124 Raffia organs. During 2007, I attended my first two organ rallies, Muscatine, Iowa and St. Charles, Mo. These rallies were learning experiences for me as I had a lot to learn about "cranking" and interacting with the public. Two of the best, Gordy Davidson and Ted Guillaum were my mentors.

What a wonderful experience it is to share your music with the general public on a street corner or in a park and share stories, music, information and good times with your fellow COAA organ enthusiasts. In my opinion, there is no other experience in automatic music like it.

2010 Organ Rally Dates

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| COAA Mid-Winter Meeting | Tampa, FL | Ron Bopp 918-527-0589 | February 19-21, 2010 |
| COAA Rally #1 | Lake Winnepesaukah Chattanooga, TN | Ron & Glynn Keisler 803-356-4515 | May 29-31, 2010 |
| COAA Rally #2 | Knoebels Grove Elysburg, PA | Tim Wagner 585-425-7072 | June 12-13, 2010 |
| COAA/AMICA Rally #3 | Band Organ Recall/Wurlitzer Bldg. North Tonawanda, NY | Mike Walters 716-656-9583 | July 10-11, 2010 |
| COAA Rally #4 | Merry-Go-Round Museum Sandusky, OH | Vicki Bout 419-626-6111 | July 17-18, 2010 |
| COAA Rally #5 | Carousel Museum St. Joseph, MI | Suz Schalon 888-404-7587 | August 20-22, 2010 |
| COAA Rally #6 | Shelburne Museum Shelburne, VT | Tim Wagner 585-425-7072 | September, 2010 |
| COAA Rally #7 | Weston Red Barn Fort Leavenworth, MO | Gordie Davidson 913-683-3645 | October 16-17, 2010 |