

Meet Your Member

It was a hot July evening at Old Orchard Beach, Maine, in 1954 when 17 year old Kevin Sheehan became imprinted by a band organ. Kevin had picked up a girl who worked at the park and was walking with her toward the pier when his attention became critically arrested by the measured groaning, squealing and tinkling of the Style 157 Wurlitzer Military Band on the Dentzel carousel at the top of the ramp. Much to the girl's displeasure, he refused to budge from where he stopped in front of the organ, and his date understandably chose instead to ride the amusements alone. His girl friend abandoned, Kevin returned to his post by the carousel every night after work that summer and wept until the park closed at midnight.

The product of dysfunctional parents, Kevin identified with machinery rather than people, whom he mistrusted. Here at last he'd found a relentlessly dependable music engine that beat in time with his heart and gave him solace. Fortunately, he met a dependable woman while studying mechanical engineering at Cornell, and he married her in 1959. Linda was unusually tolerant of Kevin's affliction for carousel organs. It took ten years to scrape together the \$1600 needed to purchase his first organ, a Style 146 Wurlitzer, from Max Nowicki, the man who maintained the Old Orchard Wurlitzer. And none too soon, for six months later the Dentzel carousel on the pier with Kevin's favorite organ burned to the ground. A warped and blackened crankshaft was all that remained of the 157.



Linda and Kevin Sheehan photographed at a 2004 COAA rally.

For the next decade, Kevin and Linda trooped the 146, cranked by a Domestic one-lunger on the back of their Ford TT truck, in parades, to fairs, birthday parties, and antique engine and auto shows. But the 146 never could duplicate the imprinted sound of the 157 for Kevin, and a serious search for the real thing followed. Kevin chased a prime 157 example owned by the late J. J. Fredericks for many years but was never able to afford it as it changed hands from one collector to another. Fate was kinder this time however, and Kevin got paid to play the restored 157 for its owner one summer before it went to California.

As time went on, with help from his logical Linda, Kevin gradually learned to trust others and became less dependent on his mechanical surrogates. His taste in music broadened to include the more refined, orchestral sound of European organs. For a time, he enjoyed owning and playing three barrel organs, but their limited repertoire became frustrating, and he turned to larger scale book-played instruments, first a 60-key Hooghuyts and then a 90-key Carl Frei system street organ. Now in retirement, Kevin at last could address his ultimate goal: a Dutch street organ custom built to his specifications, incorporating the sounds he learned to appreciate most from years of listening. "Das Eichhornchen" (The Squirrel) was completed by Elbert Pluer in Bussum, Holland, in 2002. It has attended a number of COAA and MBSI organ rallies, hand cranked by Kevin and Linda and many organ friends, both young and old.

COAA Web Site

Check out www.carouselorganassociation.org for the latest information about rallies, membership and COAA items for sale. Vice-president Larry Kern has taken over responsibility for the page and has done an outstanding job. This is a good site to refer your friends who are considering membership in the COAA.

2005 Organ Rally Dates

<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Date</u>
COAA Rally #1	Lake Winnepesaukee Amusement Park Chattanooga, TN	Charles Walker (404-892-0065)	May 28 - 30, 2005
Mid-Am (MBSI)	Sandusky, OH	Marge Waters (330-334-1344)	July 7 - 9, 2005
COAA Rally #2	Midway Park Jamestown, NY	Dan Wilke (716-825-7266)	July 15 - 17, 2005
COAA Rally #3	St. Joseph, MI	James Partrick (269-429-1306)	Aug. 26 - 28, 2005
COAA Rally #4	Findlay, OH	Terry Haughwout (419-454-3671)	Sept. 9 - 11, 2005