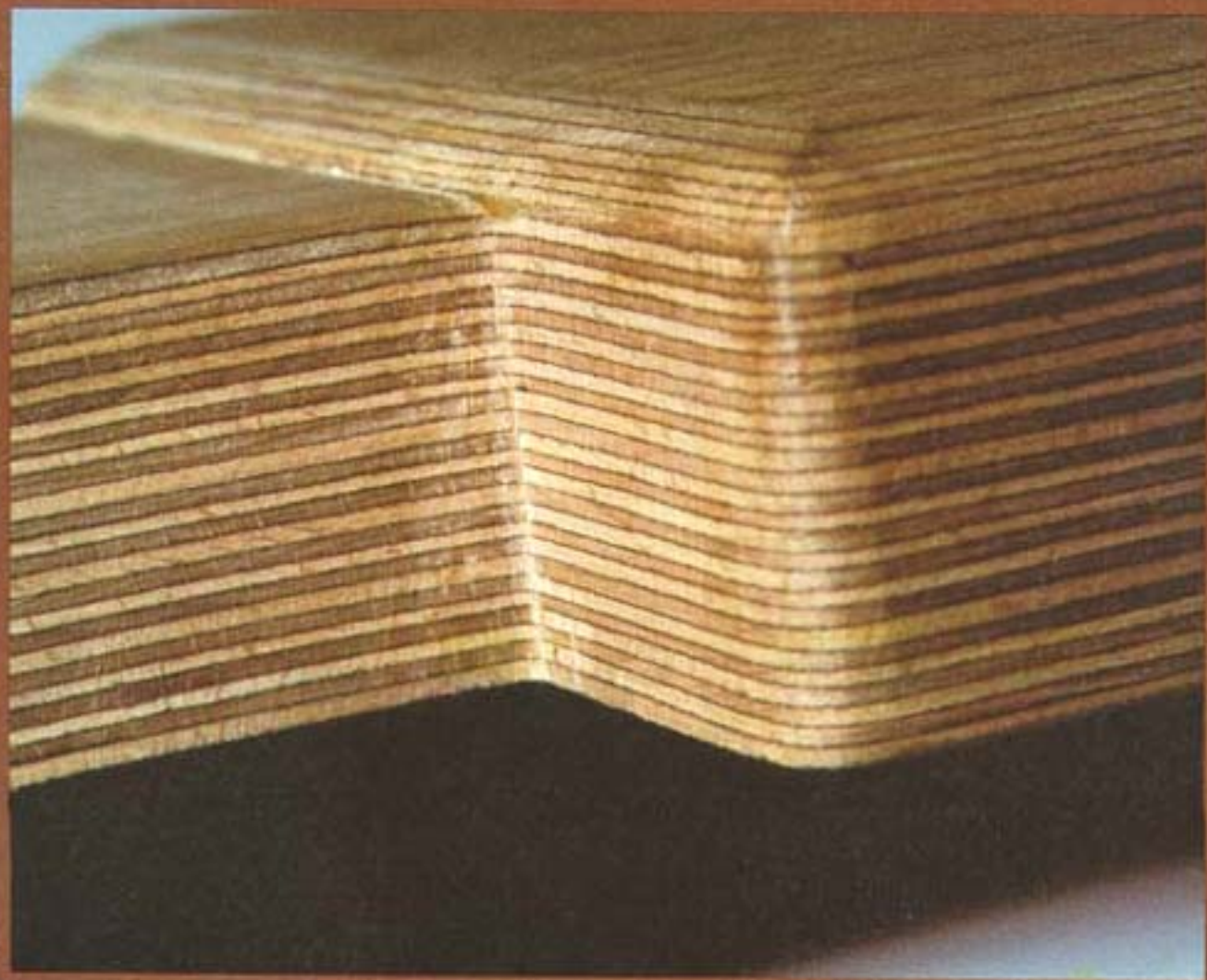


*Piano Technicians*  
**Journal**

*October 1986*



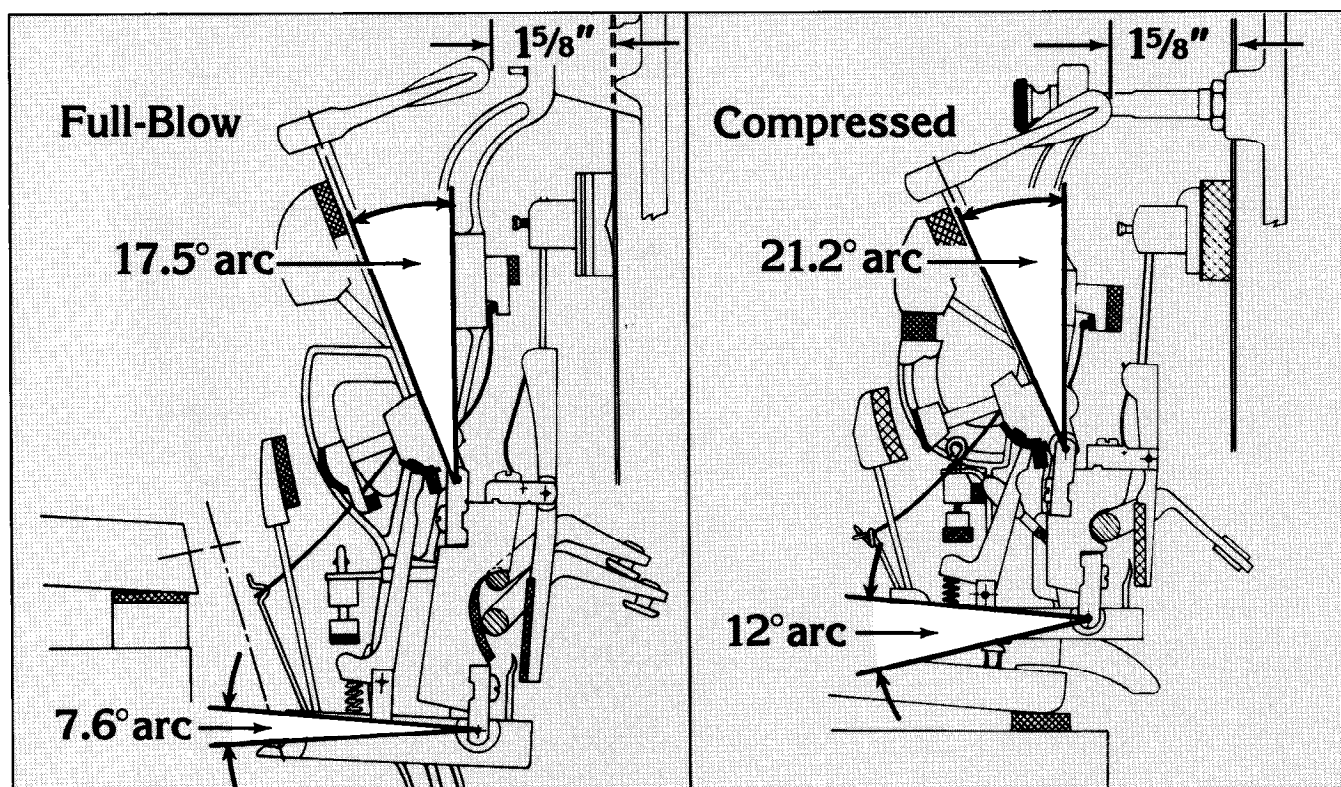
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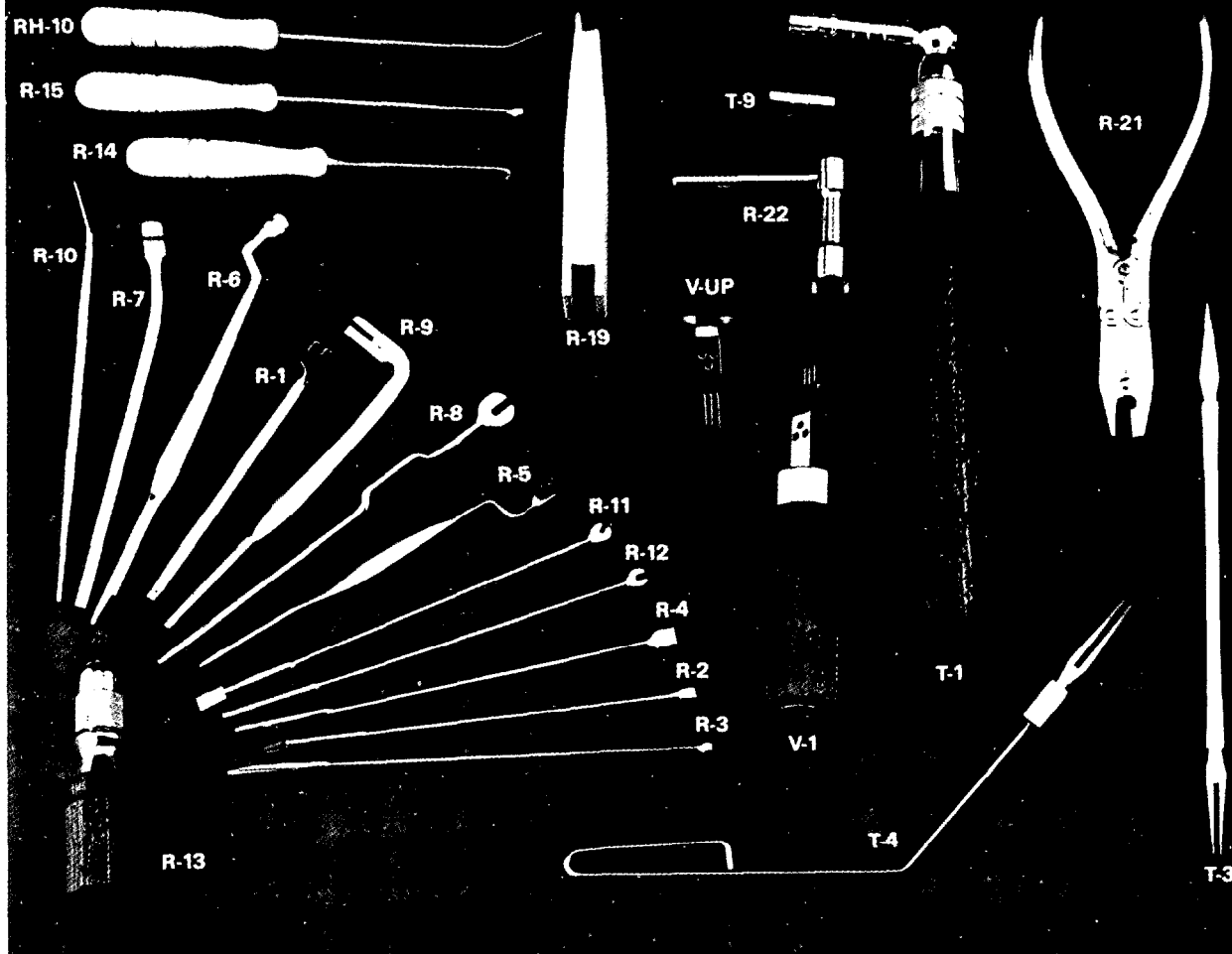


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**PIANO TECHNICIANS JOURNAL**

**October 1986**

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*Volume 29  
Number 10*

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*Close-up section of a custom  
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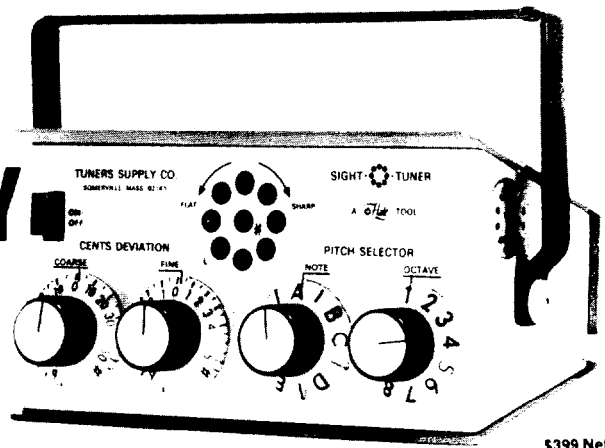
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## The President's Perspective



**M. B. Hawkins**  
President

## The True Assets Of An Association

Most of the time one hears about assets the thought that comes to mind is something having to do with a financial report. One dictionary definition is that of a valuable object or favorable circumstance which adds strength and support or which benefits in any way. I like that definition because the type of assets I'm thinking of are non-financial. The intangible nature of non-financial assets is absolutely vital for true success. They can actually eclipse the importance of any financial asset.

When I think of intangible assets the thing that stands out for me is enthusiasm. Possessed with an intensive desire to achieve a stated goal, all surroundings will be charged with enthusiasm. The enthusiastic charge is like electricity; get close enough to it and you will be affected. An organization that exudes enthusiasm actually challenges its members. It challenges its members with many opportunities.

Meeting and becoming friends with a larger body of technicians is unique in itself as members of our group constantly find out. It is great to be able to draw upon the expertise of fellow professionals literally from around the world. Don't miss the opportunity to vary your participation as you share your ideas with others.

Actually, there are many avenues to do this. Our chapters have various committees which function as development stages for new and exciting ideas. Then there are organizational committees which cover a wide range of subjects. Oh yes, we almost forgot to mention the newsletter as a means of communicating thoughts and ideas.

These only scratch the surface because we have so far only mentioned communication within our organization. When we move outside our own group there is another entire world waiting for our input. After all, we are the ones who spend the time to become more knowledgeable relative to the piano. It is our responsibility to not only upgrade ourselves but then share what we have learned with the owners and users of those thousands upon thousands of pianos who need and desire the service we have to offer.

Earlier I said an organization that exudes enthusiasm challenges its members with opportunities. I believe it is clear that the opportunities are present and they are present because of the high energy of so many of our members. Enthusiasm does exude and it is only one non-financial asset. If you don't have it, get in its path. It's going around. Let's cause an epidemic. ■

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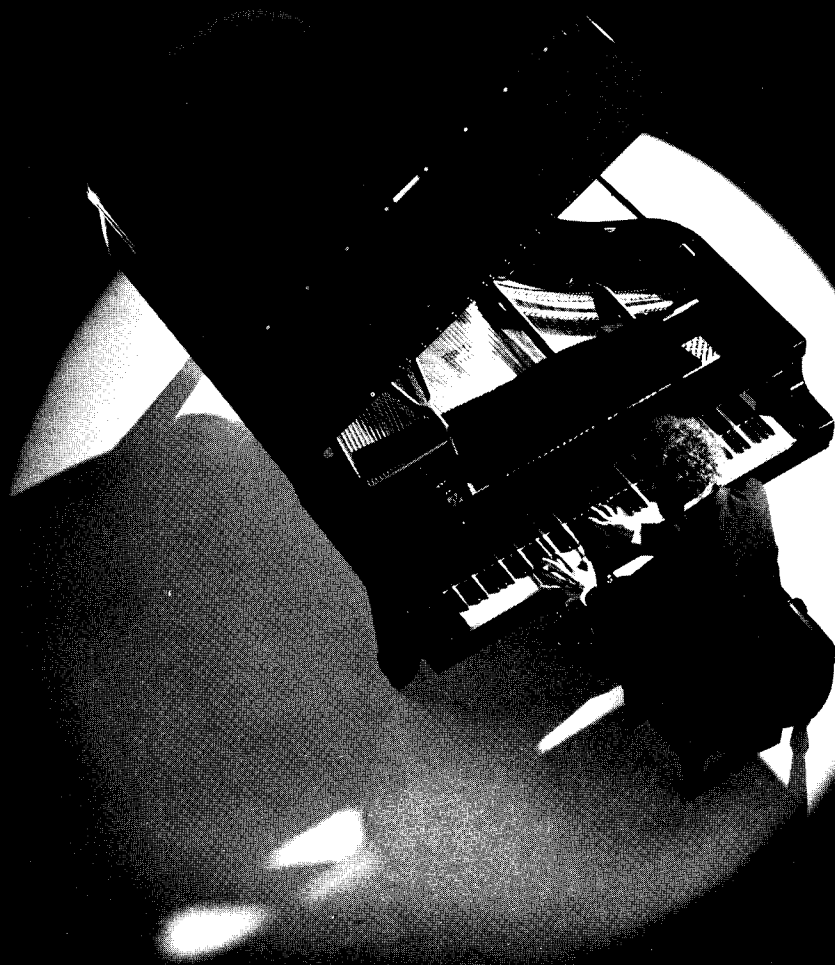
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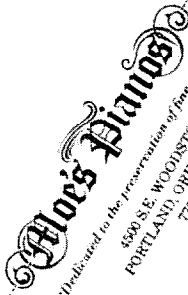
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(702-2480)

February 25, 1986

Mr. David Cho  
Young Chang America  
13336 Alondra Boulevard  
Cerritos, CA 90701

Dear Mr. Cho:

I am in charge of service at Moe's Pianos, Inc. in Portland, Oregon. In the past few years I have been involved with every modern piano manufacturing company through either representation in sales, or repairs in our service department. I would like to draw your attention to one of your employees that I consider to be outstanding among his peers.

Every major piano company must have a good technician to contribute to the improvement of its instruments and develop an efficient field. Without the right person in this position, a piano company is not considered among the top by technicians and tuners.

Young Chang is very fortunate to have Ray on their team. He is qualified both as a fine technician and a diplomatic company representative. Since Ray has been with Young Chang, I have noticed improvements in the piano that has cut our floor preparation time by well over half. His expertise and willingness to listen and help in any way possible are greatly appreciated.

I hope you will consider Ray's contribution and I would also mention that we are very proud to represent the Young Chang line in the Portland area, and look forward to a prosperous future together.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Davis

SMO:cb

# Community Piano Service

April 6, 1986

Mr. Ray Chandler  
National Service Manager  
Young Chang America, Inc.  
13336 Alondra Boulevard  
Cerritos, CA 90701

Dear Ray,

As you know, I have been servicing Young Chang pianos ever since they have been on the market in this country.

I would just like to say how impressed I have been with their quality, and I would like to thank you and your company for the tremendous support I have been receiving from you and your service department, even for your consideration of the customer's concern, for your long after the sale of the piano, I believe is unequalled in the trade. Good luck and best regards.

Walter T. Pearson, RTT  
Daytona Beach, FL

WTP/cp



1124 STATE STREET  
HOLLY HILL, FLORIDA 32017  
PHONE 233-5404



**LEWIS F. HERWIG**  
Piano Builder and Consultant  
4417 East Hearn Road  
Phoenix, Arizona 85032

March 13, 1986

Mr. Ray Chandler  
National Service Manager  
Young Chang America  
13336 Alondra Blvd.  
Cerritos, CA 90701

Dear Ray:

It's a pleasure to be able to deal with a piano company which markets a fine product, backs it with a strong warranty and continues to improve products based on input from "the field".

I particularly appreciate the fact that I can communicate directly with the service department as needs arise and have consistently found Young Chang to be responsive and helpful.

It is apparent to me that Young Chang is dedicated to the production of musical instruments of the highest quality. I look forward to a long, productive relationship with Young Chang Pianos.

Sincerely,

*Lew Herwig*  
Lew Herwig  
LW/ram

## Our performance is letter perfect.

We were very pleased to receive letters from Walter T. Pearson, Lew Herwig and Stephen Davis last spring because we've been trying to reach them for 30 years.

That's when Young Chang began crafting pianos in Korea. From the very beginning we wanted to create fine instruments of unmatched value and support them with a bold warranty that would challenge other manufacturers to stand behind their products as well. We wanted to keep our pianos performing their best year after year. And we recognized that tuners, technicians, rebuilders and piano supply professionals would be the ones to let us know when we met our goals.

So we constantly refined our designs and manufacturing techniques until our pianos were recognized as quality instruments by respected piano care professionals throughout the world.

We established a full time service department and a parts inventory at our headquarters in Southern California to keep parts and information within easy access. And last spring, we finally got word from some of the people that mattered to us most.

We hope to hear from you with questions, advice and recommendations on how we can further improve our products and service. Because when it comes to creating fine instruments and supporting them, we intend to earn our letters.

For more technical information, please call Ray Chandler at 213/926-3200. Or write to him at Young Chang Technical Services, 13336 Alondra Boulevard, Cerritos, CA 90701 for a free copy of our Service Guide and Technical Specifications Manual.



# YOUNG CHANG

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Barbara Parks**  
Executive Director

## Your Image: The Job Is Boss

"Always work on the assumption that 'the job is boss.' The problem is the controlling factor, not your opinion or authority. When you wish to be forceful, let the force arise not from your authority, but from the needs of the job, the urgency of the situation. Talk the language of business, not of emotion or personal vanity."

The writer is Ted Pollock, in the August 1986 *Doors & Hardware* magazine, an odd source of information for piano technicians, perhaps. However, Pollock's article deals with some things at the very heart of customer relations.

"People tend to respond to the attitudes and actions expressed by others in similar ways. Act politely toward someone and he will respond in kind. Display hostility and you will also get back what you give. There is an unconscious urge to live up — or down — to the opinions others appear to demonstrate toward us."

Pollock included a 28-point self-evaluation test of the way we present ourselves. Here are a few of his questions, adapted in some cases to the different requirements of someone who operates his own service business.

1. What is your reaction to a request to perform a service different from any you have done before? Apprehension? Enthusiastic anticipation?
2. Are you generally confident about your ability to adapt to new circumstances?
3. Do you stay on top of your paperwork and does the way you conduct business by mail and telephone speak well of you?
4. When things are going exceptionally well, do you take

advantage of the psychological boost by tackling other tough chores, or do you bask in your accomplishment and ease up for the rest of the day or week?

5. Do you present your ideas clearly, in a logical sequence?

6. Do you view problems as barriers to getting your work done, or do you see them as part of the work for which you are responsible?

7. When faced with a problem, do you try to isolate the key element on the supposition that if you can crack it, everything else will fall into place?

8. Do you get to work on a problem as soon as you become aware of it, or do you tend to put it off in the hope that it may magically take care of itself?

9. Have you devised any new work methods or procedures that reduce waste, save time or conserve material?

10. Are you aware of any biases, preconceived notions or personal flaws that inhibit your creativity — for example, discounting the abilities of others, assuming that certain facts are unobtainable or giving up too soon? If you are aware of them, do you consciously ward them off while in the throes of creativity?

By stepping back and taking an unbiased look at ourselves, we can spot weaknesses that might keep us from fulfilling our potential. It's easy to get so caught up in our daily processes and procedures that we don't see our situation clearly. Next time you deal with a client, be conscious of the way you present yourself and your ideas. By occasionally "taking inventory" of our most important business asset — ourselves — we can work more effectively and serve our customers better. ■



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## OUR BEGINNINGS

Richard Quint  
Waukegan, IL, Chapter

### *An Update On The Guild History Search*

You may remember the first of these articles which appeared in the February issue of the *Journal*. In that writing, I asked for input to help in compiling our history. I mentioned some of the things I had learned at that time. Since then, I have learned a great deal more, and I am sure there is still a lot more. This, then, is sort of a report of my findings and knowledge gained concerning our history to the general membership.

I was asked to prepare a display of old pictures, etc., for the membership booth at convention in Las Vegas this past July and be sort of an historian. I also took along my video equipment for interviewing some of our senior members on video tape. I found considerable interest in the project and some very gracious folks agreed to a taped interview.

The first person I taped was Errol "Put" Crawl, but made the mistake of trying to do it in the membership booth area. Needless to say, background noise made that one useless. Two and a half hours gone. Well, Put said he didn't mind doing it again, so this time we used my hotel room. Folks, he talked solid for over three hours, and I can't edit out a thing. Every word is priceless. I also interviewed Mrs. Ruth Pollard, and that went on for over an hour and again, I have to save every word. Another interesting person was Fred Drasche of Steinway, who came up for an interview along with his delightful wife.

I didn't have time to tape any others due to their schedules, etc., but there are many more who have a great deal to contribute. I have found that part of the history consists of more than just the activities of the organization. It is the history and background of the people who make it all work. Some of the folks who were very influential did not hold office but did some very important things behind the scenes. One very interesting man is Emil Fries, who became a member of the Hall of Fame this year. Emil is a sight-

impaired man of 85 years who has a very interesting story to tell. In fact, he does just that in a book he wrote, entitled "But You Can Feel It." When I went to talk with him, he sold me a copy of his book, and I have found it fascinating. It is a book that any member of the family can enjoy, about how a man with very little sight and less money made his way through college, earned a degree in education and went on to be a benefactor to other blind folks.

As you know, Mrs. Pollard's husband Allen was executive secretary for the PTG for a number of years. One floor of his house in Houston was filled with files of correspondence and other memorabilia. He passed away some years ago, and Mrs. Pollard has since moved from that house. Much of the material is being kept in storage for her by Ronald Sanford in Houston. Last spring, I was visiting my daughter in Austin and took a side trip to Houston to visit Mr. Sanford and look at some of the files and correspondence. We spent about four hours and hardly skimmed the surface. There must be six or eight hundred pounds of paper there. Needless to say, there are more items of history in those records than one would find in the old magazines.

On a cold January day (nine below zero), Ralph Kingsbury came for a taped interview which is nearly two hours long. I learned a lot from that one, too. In addition, he gave me some old photographs which were on display at convention. All of these tapes were shown on a monitor just outside the exhibit area and were viewed by many.

Next year at Toronto, Dick Bitteringer has promised me a room to use just for interviews and I have some folks who have agreed to be taped. Among them are Emil Fries and Stanley Oliver. Perhaps you might know of others or can be of help yourself. Believe me, I need all the input I can get.

One thing I don't have much information on is the revival of  
*Continued on next page*

## History . . .

NAPT in the 40s. As we mentioned last time, NAPT kind of fell apart during the depression years. And in 1941 ASPT was formed. Sometime during the late 40s, I believe NAPT came back to life and was going pretty strong at the time John Travis became president and took part in making the merger possible. There is a lot of correspondence concerning the negotiations for merger in Mrs. Pollard's files, but not much on the activities of NAPT. Anyone having this information please help us out. We don't want to leave any

blanks in the history.

It has also occurred to me that there is probably a great deal of history contained in the records of "divisions" and chapters. We need the help of interested chapter historians to assist us in this area. Incidentally, if you don't already have a chapter historian, consider naming one. It can be of great value in future years. If you are a new chapter, start out by getting personal histories of your charter members and go on from there. If your chapter history goes back to NAPT or ASPT, find out all you can from some of your older members. You will find it

extremely interesting.

I do have some copies of the *Tuners Journal* dating back to 1913 which Larry Goldsmith sent me and some go up into the 30s, but there is a gap from about 1932 or so to the late 40s. However, formal magazines really don't contain much of the real meat. By that I mean organizational information. All of them contain technical articles and trade information which is also very interesting and important, but what we really need are the stories of the "old timers" to add to the flavor. We are off to a good start, but have a long way to go. Til next time. ■

## Letters

Dear Friends,

You will never know just how much your prayers, thoughts and cards meant to me during my recent three-week stay in the hospital with heart problems. During this time, I discovered one of the best benefits of the Piano Technicians Guild, caring and sharing in time of need. Because of your happy thoughts, supportive prayers and encouraging cards and telephone calls (plus the great medical technology of my physician) I am now "on the road again!"

After receiving a pacemaker, my heart is once again beating "A-440." I am tuning about two pianos a day and getting as much rest as possible, so when the busy season hits I will be ready.

Once again, Ginny and I want to thank everyone for caring during our time of need. What a wonderful feeling...brotherhood!

Bob Russell

Dear Sirs,

I am writing this letter to say thank you to all the people involved in the organization of the PTG Convention in Las Vegas.

It was a great experience for my wife and myself to be able to attend and we thoroughly enjoyed every minute (when we were not

playing the poker machines!) and were very impressed by it all.

An interesting aspect for me was meeting people in my profession and learning about their lifestyles and how they run their businesses and comparing notes — so to speak.

I attended as many classes as time allowed and a new experience for me were the "hands-on" classes.

We both hope to be able to attend another PTG Convention in the not-too-distant future and thanks once again for a great "Christmas in July."

Lex and Suzanne Vandervalk  
Queensland, Australia

Dear Editor:

One thing the *Journal* doesn't have that I would enjoy is letters to the editor.

I am currently writing to tell you how much I have enjoyed the covers of this year's *Journals*. The close-up photos of the different piano parts are excellent visual design and I've appreciated them.

Thank you for listening.

Palma Richardson

*Editor's note: Thank you for your compliments. As you can see, the Journal does occasionally publish letters to the editor. However, it is a technical publication, and we encourage readers to address discussions of technical matters to our Technical Editor, Jack Krefting, Box 16066, Ludlow, KY 41016.*

## Industry News

### Old Concert Halls Still The Best

Modern concert halls with their high-tech construction may look elegant, but they do not match the sound quality produced in late 19th-century halls.

The Grosser Musikvereinssal in Vienna, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Grosser Tonhalle-saal in Zurich and Symphony Hall in Boston, all built before 1910, are generally considered among the world's greatest concert halls.

The limitations of the building materials then in use produced the fine acoustic qualities in these halls, according to an article in the August issue of *Mechanical Engineering*, a monthly publication of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

The halls were shoe-boxed shape, long and narrow with high ceilings and thick walls to bear the weight of the roof. The width was limited by the length of the wooden beams spanning the ceiling and supporting the roof.

Their narrow construction was the secret to good acoustics because it is reflected sound that reaches the ear within a quarter of a second of the direct sound that is important to the concert's quality, according to Leo Beranek, a leading acoustician and author of *Music, Acoustics and Architecture*.

# T H E **TECHNICAL** F O R U M

## *Damper Wire Plating, Grand Rebuilding What's New, Tech Tips, Tips for Apprentices And The Dumb Sales Claim Contest*

Jack Krefting  
Journal Technical Editor

**O**ne of the fresh ideas to emerge from our 1986 national convention in Las Vegas was the appointment, by President Hawkins, of a Publications Advisory Committee which will explore, among other things, the possible publication of certain collections of technical articles from the *Journal*. The Committee is headed, appropriately enough, by Charlie Huether, who has been a vocal advocate of such support publications for several years. Readers are encouraged to suggest favorite articles that could stand collectively in book form, either a related series by a single author or a collection of articles on a given topic by various authors.

And speaking of article series, we are once again in need of a few good authors who will write on a continuing basis. Please send a sample article, such as the first of the series, together with an outline of the material to be covered in the remaining articles. If you can write clearly and feel that you have something of technical interest to share, please consider doing so.

### **Damper Wire Plating**

**Q:** *When replacing grand damper felt recently, I was cleaning the wires and noted that the color of the metal was changing somewhat, from silver to brass. Presumably this means the wires are made of plated brass and that the plating is wearing off. First of all, does this really matter, since brass won't rust anyway? And if it does matter, what should be done about it?*

**A:** They are indeed made of brass, partly for reasons of longevity but mainly to make them easy to bend and twist for adjustment. If they were not plated, however, normal corrosion from elements in the air and in the guide rail bushings would cause a chemical reaction at the bearing surface of the brass, sooner or later causing sluggishness in operation. Faced with such a situation, the technician might be tempted to ease the bushings or lubricate the wires, neither of which is a good idea.

If the contacting surfaces are

rough and the bushing is eased, the contacting surfaces will still be rough and the friction will be as bad as before except that now there is excessive clearance between wire and bushing, allowing the wire to flop around in its hole. Because the wire is now touching just a portion of the bushing, and even then not all the time, it seems to work more freely; but we have merely traded one problem for another.

Lubrication seems a reasonable alternative at first glance, but will not solve the problem in the long term because no lubricant will stay in the bushing or on the wire without evaporating, attracting dirt, or otherwise changing its properties. Shrinking solutions, such as the methanol-and-water treatment commonly applied to tight action centers, won't work either because the wire isn't sufficiently tight in its bushing to compress it when liquid is applied. It may well be too tight to work freely, but not tight enough to allow a shrinking solution to work.

The plating must be restored, and the easiest and least expen-

sive way to do that is to replace the wires. If this is not a routine operation for you, there may be some hesitation about the difficulty involved; but in order to make the dampers work after removing them and replacing the felt, one must know how to bend the wires. It follows, then, that if one knows how to bend old wire, one can bend new wire as well.

That's the way it should be, anyway. In the real world, however, until a technician has actually performed a particular procedure, he will understandably be lacking in confidence. Here, then, is a simple step-by-step procedure that can be followed by anyone who can regulate dampers:

1. Obtain new wires and make sure they are long enough, which means if the new felt is thicker than the old, the new wires may have to be longer as well. Check the position of the dimple in the old wire made by the top flange screw; if it is near the bottom of the wire, the new wires may well have to be longer unless thicker damper lift felt is also being installed. Also be sure there are enough bass wires — swaged near the top for string clearance — and enough extra-long tenor wires for the dampers in the area of the tenor-bass break.

2. If the technician is in doubt about how much to bend the wires, they can be pre-bent to match the old ones before the latter are removed. The bends will have to be refined when the dampers are installed, but at least this pre-bending will get them close enough to install.

3. Remove the old wires by pulling them out of the wood, taking care not to damage the mortise in the damper head. The easiest way to do this is to bend the wire completely out of the mortise before pulling it out of the hole in the damper head.

4. If any mortises were chipped, repair them now; then size the holes and mortises with a mixture of glue and water. An aliphatic resin such as Titebond, mixed 50/50 with water, is fine for this, although any water-soluble glue would presumably serve as well.

5. Lay each damper head on its

side in turn, mortise side up on a workbench, and place its wire in position over the mortise and the hole. Tap each wire into its head firmly with a hammer, so that the widest part of the wire is completely within its mortise. This is important because otherwise the damper head could loosen on its wire and move out of regulation.

6. Reinstall each damper, using a caul to set the height of the damper lever for proper key lift, just as would be done if the old wires were being used. Setting samples is actually easier with the new wires, though, because

there are no old nicks in the wire to contend with.

7. The traveling bends can now be refined so that each damper moves straight up and down, and then the spacing bends above the guide rail can be made to center each damper over its unison. The rest of the regulation is the same as would be done with old wires.

## What's New

Joe Sciortino of Copiague, New York, has developed something of a reputation as a "gadget man" who

## Grand Rebuilding Third in a Series

Continuing with our discussion of materials, and assuming some hypothetical prices just for illustration, here are some examples:

Material: Pinblock for average-sized grand  
Mat'l A: \$95.00 Generally considered excellent  
Mat'l B: \$75.00 Generally considered good  
Mat'l C: \$55.00 Adequate, but just barely

The difference in cost between the most expensive and the cheapest is just \$40, which is nothing compared to the cost of the labor to install the block and string the piano, install dampers, etc. A high-volume manufacturer probably wouldn't spend the extra money, simply because \$40 per piano times 20,000 pianos per year equals \$800,000.00 and that's lost profit to him because he can repair or replace a lot of blocks for that kind of money. But the custom rebuilder can't afford the luxury of buying cheap material because some of it will go bad, inevitably, and he can't afford even one

failure, as we discussed last month. Another example is below.

It costs just as much to install, regulate and voice a cheap set as a better set, and the results will be quite different, assuming the most expensive is always the best, which isn't necessarily true. The point is, however, that because of the high labor cost, the biggest waste of money would be to buy and install a cheap set of hammers, spend hours trying to achieve a decent sound, and then have to remove them and install another set.

In most shops the cost of material represents just 10 to 20 percent of the total cost to the client, and almost anyone who is spending \$10,000 or so for a custom rebuilding job would leap at the chance to upgrade the materials wherever possible. Just try telling that customer that you saved him \$75 on hammers and \$40 on a bargain pinblock and you will see a long look of concern on his face, not gratitude.

Next month: OVERHEAD

Quality of hammer	Cost of set	Cost of installation & regulation, voicing
Best	\$150.00	\$1,000.00
Good	100.00	1,000.00
Cheapest	75.00	1,000.00



is always thinking of ways to use fixtures and special tools to solve everyday problems. Joe's latest effort started out to be a vertical hammer hanging jig which we were going to feature in these pages a few months ago; but Joe found that although the jig worked fine at first, it wouldn't work on every make and model without some modification. When he finished redesigning it, it occurred to him that with just a little more effort he could make the thing work for grand hammer hanging as well, so he redesigned it again.

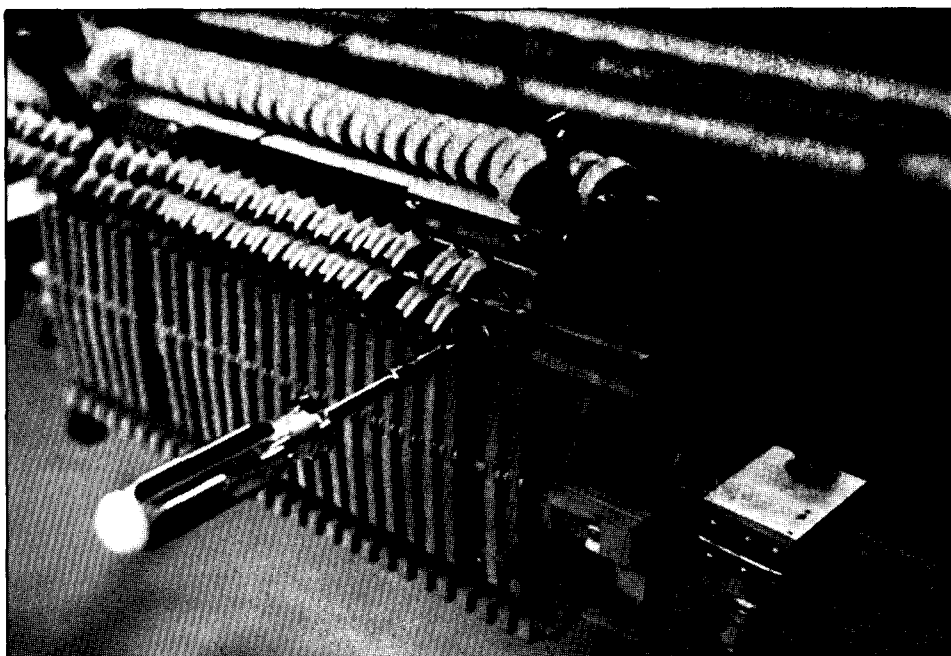
Since the fixture uses the hammer rest rail as a reference point when set up for grand hammers, it obviously would not work on pianos that have bumper cushions on their wippens, so he reworked it again, and at the same time added a grand letoff reference to make the jig even more useful. As though this weren't enough, Sciortino has even devised a method of clamping a broken key, using pieces from the jig!

As can be seen in the accompanying photos, Joe has addressed the problem of ascertaining the strike point by using the point of the hammer molding as a reference; and, assuming the boring distance is the same and that there is no under-or over-centering, either now or originally, that should work at least as well as other systems now in use.

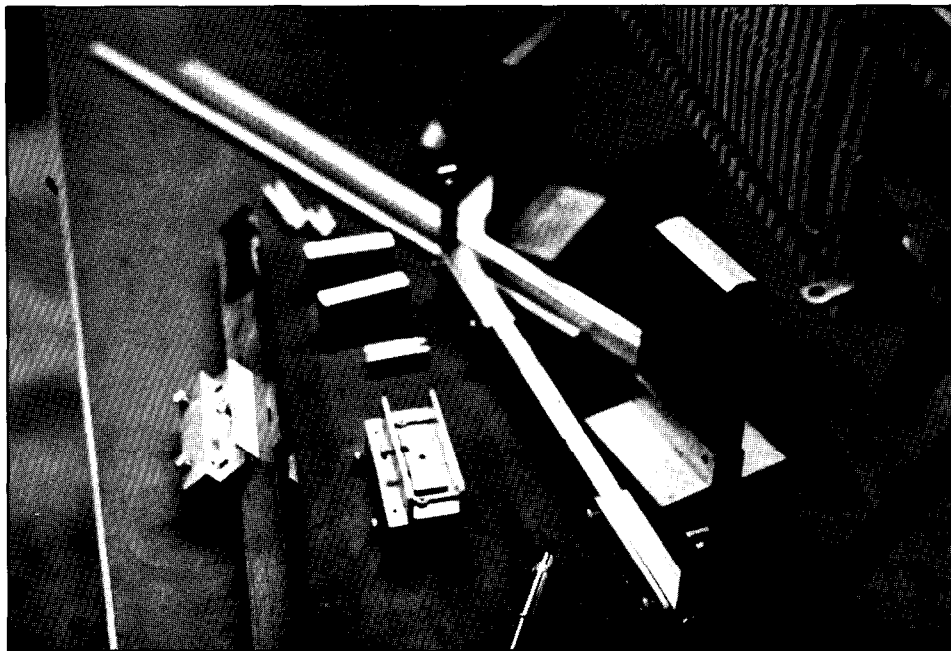
## Tech Tips

Peter Briant of Great Falls, Montana, writes to say that the tip he offered in our July issue regarding iron-on veneer was incorrectly interpreted by us as being the same procedure as has been advocated by many other technicians. Peter's offering, instead, is not coated with Titebond by the technician; it comes from the manufacturer already coated, and when used in small pieces such as when repairing keys, is simply heated and applied. Here is some of Peter's letter:

*I have found this material to be most useful for repairing keys in the field. The Reblitz repair sequence (p.104) may be fine in the shop, but is not practical when a cracked or broken key is encountered mid-tuning, since one is required to wait for*



*A magnetic screwdriver included with the kit allows easy installation of hammer hanging fixture.*



*Emergency key repairs can even be made with parts from the kit.*

*glue to dry in the crack and then for the reinforcing patch to dry.*

*Using the "iron on" veneer, Titebond is first applied to the cracked or broken area of the keystick. Then two patches are heated (5-10 seconds) and pressed into place. Adjacent keys may be used for clamping and alignment while the adhesive cools (5-10 seconds). After wiping off any squeezed-out Titebond or sanding the veneer to increase clearance, replace the key and com-*

*mence tuning. This method creates a secure clamp or splint while the Titebond dries, and then forms a strong reinforcement for the glue joint. Time lost is usually 5 minutes or less.*

Briant goes on to say that the material to which he refers is shown in Constantine's catalog under the heading, "flexible veneer," page 15. Our apologies to Peter for the error.

# Tips For Apprentices

## A Good Choice...

A good action cradle is just about as smart an investment as we can think of, especially for the relatively inexperienced technician who will be spending a lot of time transporting and working on old upright actions. If you're really short of money, make a cradle from plywood scraps as shown here:

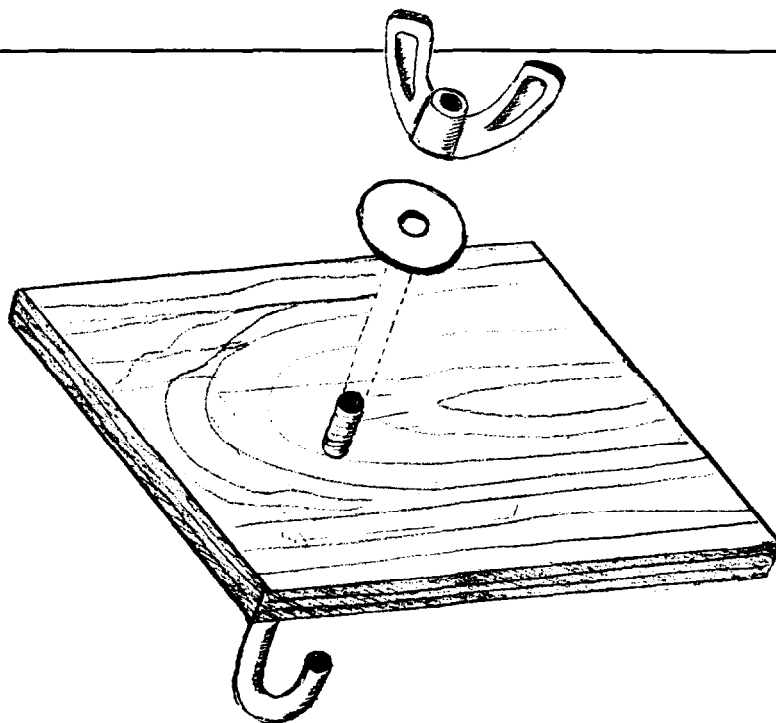
## ...And A Poor One

Flange guards, sometimes called flange shields, are sold by supply houses to be installed on every other flange to keep the centerpins from walking out; these devices do much more harm than good and should never, in our opinion, be installed in any instrument.

If the centerpin is starting to walk out of the birdseye, that means it's too loose and must be replaced with a

larger pin, an operation that doesn't take much more time than it would take to install a flange guard anyway; to simply block the end travel with a metal shield will allow the part to wobble on its loose centerpin. That wobbling will

quickly destroy the roundness of the hole in the birdseye, usually requiring replacement of the entire assembly. That entire scenario could have been avoided simply by repinning the part properly in the first place.



## DSC Contest

This month's Dumb Sales Claim was submitted by Dan Squire of Lake Charles, Louisiana:

*And for the dumb sales claim contest — I went to a music dealer and I looked at one of their vertical pianos. I saw that it had no back*

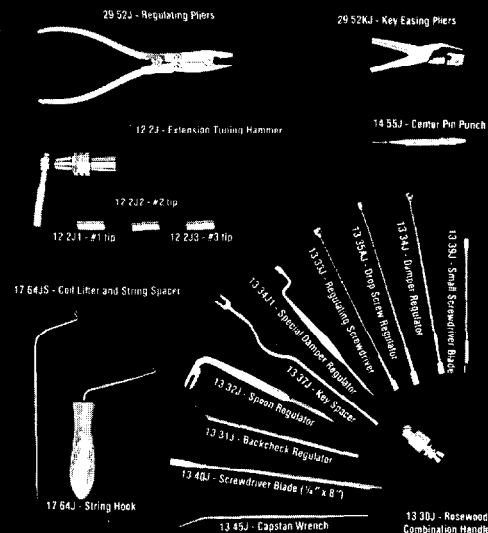
*posts or bracing assembly to stabilize the plate. I asked the salesman why this was and he said that this plate has been vacuum cast and will not bend or distort for any reason. Besides that, those back posts absorb tremendous amounts of sound and therefore makes this*

*piano superior to any other piano with back posts.*

Please send all tech articles, tips, comments, questions and DSC contest entries to me:

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# S O U N D BACKGROUND

## *Later History Of The Silbermann Pianos; Schroter's Piano Action*

Jack Greenfield  
Chicago Chapter

### **Second Generation Silbermann Instrument Makers**

The reputation of the Silbermann family as great instrument builders was maintained by the work of the sons of Andreas. Johann Andreas, born in Strasbourg in 1712, the oldest son, followed a career of building organs and attained the first rank stature of his father and uncle Gottfried for these instruments. Johann Daniel, born in Strasbourg in 1717, went to Freiburg to take over his uncle's business after Gottfried died in 1753. Very little is known about Johann Daniel's work. He built keyboard stringed instruments and organs but neither instruments nor documentary evidence have survived. It is likely that his business was curtailed or terminated by the unsettled conditions that existed in Saxony during the Seven Years War started when Frederick the Great invaded Saxony in 1756. Other instrument builders who left Saxony during this period moved to England where they helped start a piano building industry there.

It was Johann Heinrich, born in Strasbourg in 1729, Gottfried's youngest nephew, who carried on his work building keyboard stringed instruments, including pianos. Johann Heinrich followed his career in association with his

brother Johann Andreas in Strasbourg. His training had included over a year of study in his uncle's shop in Freiburg in 1742-3. Johann Heinrich became famous for excellent workmanship and for building instruments with fine tone. He was best known in France but his instruments were also widely

exported to other European countries as well and were sent even as far away as India. Examples of spinets, clavichords and grand pianos he built have survived in European collections. Since he followed his uncle's designs quite closely, the study of his surviving instruments also provides additional information on details of Gottfried's work.

### **Silbermann Pianos Neglected**

In spite of Frederick the Great's early enthusiasm for the Silbermann pianos during Bach's visit in 1747, Frederick did not give up the harpsichord. He subsequently ordered some large harpsichords in 1765 and 1775 but there are no records of any further piano purchases. The English historian Burney during his European travels around this time had the opportunity to examine one of Frederick's Silbermann pianos and gave an account of his observations in his book *Present State of Music in Germany* (1773). After Frederick's death in 1786, his successors had no interest and the pianos were put aside and neglected. The author Forkel, who wrote a biography of Bach published in 1802, reported on the state of the Silbermann pianos in one of his footnotes, "I hear they all now stand, unfit for

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When interest in the early history of the piano was awakened during the last few decades of the 19th century, musicologists began to seek out the neglected and forgotten historic instruments which were previously considered worthless.

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use, in various corners of the Royal Palace."

When interest in the early history of the piano was awakened during the last few decades of the 19th century, musicologists began to seek out the neglected and forgotten historic instruments which previously were considered worthless. There were only three Silbermann pianos still surviving. Among the piano authorities who came to examine them were Carl Bechstein and Alfred Hipkins. Hipkins reported that in 1881, he found one in each of the music rooms of three royal palaces associated with Frederick, The Stadtschloss, the Sans Souci, and the Neues Palais in Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin. During World War II one of the pianos disappeared, either taken away or destroyed. The remaining two pianos are now in the Sans Souci Palace.

### Description Of The Silbermann Pianos

A description of the Silbermann pianos is given by Edwin M. Ripin in the section "Pianoforte" of the 1980 *Grove Dictionary of Music*. They are close copies of the 1726 Cristofori piano with equidistant spacing of strings — two per note, inverted pinblock, rolled parchment hammers and padded backchecks, and a hand stop operated una corda shift. Silbermann had made several improvements. Instead of mounting the circular hammer butts to pivot around a common center rod as in Cristofori's pianos, he mounted each hammer butt by a strip of leather attached to a rail. Cristofori had used leather strips similarly for attachment of the intermediate levers. Seeking to achieve the same effect Silbermann evidently had observed in the playing of sustained tones on Hebenstreit's oversized dulcimer, the Pantaleon, he added hand stop operated damper-lifting mechanism for raising the dampers of the treble and/or the bass notes. Silbermann did not copy the obsolete Italian double inner-outer case construction of Cristofori but assembled the soundboard, framing and outer case as a single structure, the usual practice of German instrument builders then. The references available do not give details on Silbermann's internal bracing or scaling.



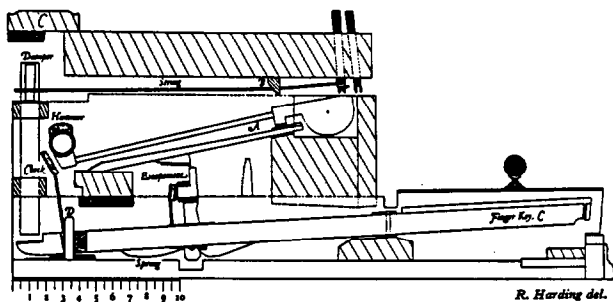
*Above, grand piano by Gottfried Silbermann (about 1745 — Sans Souci Palace, Potsdam, Germany. At right, grand piano by J.H. Silbermann (1776).*



Drawings of the Silbermann action have been made by several different observers including Carl Bechstein. Harding's *The Piano-Forte* does not show the Gottfried Silbermann action. Instead she provides a drawing she made to illustrate the principles of the action in a piano built by his nephew in 1776. J. H. Silbermann's piano, seen in a museum in Berlin, is a direct copy of the Gottfried Silbermann pianos in Potsdam. Harding's drawing does not show the inverted pinblock or backcheck details.

### Silbermann And Schroter Supporters Debate

During the investigations by musicologists in the latter half of the 19th century seeking to determine who was responsible for the invention and the establishment of piano making, there were some who accepted the claim of Cristoph Gottlieb Schroter that he had been the first to design a hammer action. They maintained that Silbermann had profited by using Schroter's ideas while Schroter did



*Left, action diagram of 1726 Cristofori piano. Right, diagram off 1776 grand pianoforte by J.H. Silbermann. Both by R. Harding.*

not receive sufficient credit or benefit otherwise. One of Schroter's leading supporters was Oscar Paul, author of a history of the piano, *Geschichte des Claviers* (Leipzig, 1868). An earlier book, *Der Flügel* (Frankfurt, 1856) by H. Welcker von Gontershausen also discusses Schroter's work. Schroter's claim to be the inventor of the piano was based on his up-striking action model he said he built in 1717 and submitted to the Royal Court in Dresden in 1721. He had a description of it in his first letter written in 1738 and provided a drawing with his later letter published in Marpurgh's *Kritishe Brief* in 1763. Harding's *The Piano-Forte* contains several drawings of museum action models of Schroter's designs which were constructed using information derived from the Welcker and Paul books. Besides the up-striking action, drawings of his tangent action and down-striking action as interpreted from his written

descriptions are also shown. Schroter's crude original 1763 drawing of his up-striking action is not included by Harding.

Judging the information on Schroter's work given in the Paul and Welcker books against the more recent knowledge acquired on Cristofori and Silbermann leads to the conclusion that Schroter's claims were greatly exaggerated. There is no evidence that Silbermann or other early piano builders copied Schroter's designs.

The overstatement of the significance of Schroter's work in the early development of the piano has been continued by a few modern writers who have used Paul's book as reference. An error has also been made in crediting Cristoph Schroter with being an instrument maker. It was a contemporary of his, not related, J. G. Schroter who built organs and who received a testimonial from Bach in 1716.

In evaluating the achievements

of Schroter, regardless of any doubt over the details of his original actions, he is generally recognized as the first German designer of a piano action. His influence on a few German piano builders after the 1763 publication of his action drawing and description is considered a possibility.

## Details of Schroter's Action

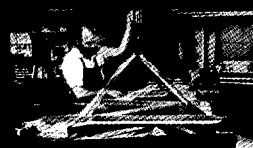
In Schroter's up-striking action drawing, the key, supported on middle and back rails, is guided by rows of pins set in the back rail. A key stop rail controls upward motion. The rear end of the key lifts a small intermediate lever that supports a thin wooden jack. Escapement, not shown, evidently was intended to be a copy of the harpsichord jack system with a spring-loaded swinging tongue that caught the hammer shank while moving upward and swiveled back

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to clear the shank when the jack dropped after the key was released. The pivoted hammer mounting is located about one-fifth of the way up from the bottom end of the hammer shank. A damper pad in the museum model but not shown in Schroter's drawing is placed at the bottom end of the hammer shank.

The most noteworthy feature of Schroter's design is his use of an iron bar to give downbearing pressure on the strings to prevent them from moving up and away from the bridge under the force of the hammer blows. In early pianos as in harpsichords, from the tuning pins, strings passed over a pinblock bridge, known as the "nut." Schroter's pressure bar was placed to bear down on the strings just past the pinblock bridge. This eliminated one of the reasons Cristofori had had for inverting the pinblock. Schroter's pressure bar principle was the basis of the 1843 invention by Antoine Bord of the capo tasto bar. In a patent later by Steinway in 1875, the capo tasto bar was made part of the plate structure.

## Silbermann's Place In Piano History

Silbermann never disclosed the source of the design for his pianos although he never claimed credit for being the inventor. It is unlikely that Silbermann earned much from piano building as stated by some critics. He probably did it mainly for prestige since he had become wealthy building organs and other keyboard instruments. Although he made no major advances in piano design, he rates an important place in piano history. His work attracted the public interest and changed the status of the piano from a curiosity like the geigenwerke to an established mainstream musical instrument. Men trained by him became the

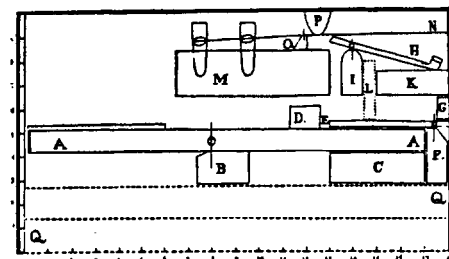


Diagram by Cristoph Gottlieb Schroter of his action design, published by Marpurg in 1763-64. A, key; B and C, keyframe rails; D, keystone; E, driver lever; F, driver lever rest rail; G, driver stop rail; H, hammer; I, hammer rail; K, hammer rest rail; L, jack; M, pinblock; N, string; O, nut bridge; P, down-bearing bar; Q, keybed.

leaders of piano building in Germany, England and elsewhere in Europe. ■

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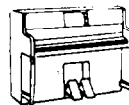


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# ***The 1986 P.T.G. Study Tour of Europe: A Report — Part 2***

**Yat-Lam Hong  
Western Michigan Chapter**

*Editor's note: In the last issue, our travelers took a well-deserved weekend break after visiting the Schimmel, Grottrian-Steinweg, Bluthner, Roslau, Bosendorfer and Holzwerke Schwaiger factories.*

**A**fter a weekend at the resort city of Bregenz, Austria, we drove along the south shore of Bodensee (Lake Constance) through Switzerland, and then north towards Stuttgart to visit the world-famous Louis Renner Company.

Renner, we learned, now has two factories: the main one in Stuttgart and a smaller one in Odenheim, a village about 38 miles northwest of Stuttgart, where wood processing and most of the prefabricating are done. Founded in 1882, Renner was once a family-owned business, and is now owned by two families. Currently, the two plants together employ a total of 405 people, 60 of whom are office workers. With sales of DM 34 million (about US\$16 million) in 1985, Renner is one of the largest piano action manufacturers in the world, producing between 25,000 and 30,000 vertical actions, 8,000 and 9,000 grand actions, and about 40,000 sets of hammers a year. 37 percent of its products are exported, and its largest overseas customers are Steinway of New York and Samick of Korea.

Mr. Robert Lins, president of Renner, met us at the hotel, and rode with us on the bus to the Odenheim plant, which is not easy to locate without a guide. There to meet us were Rudolf Genger, Renner's technical director, Klaus Fenner, renowned piano designer, and Mrs. Fenner.

Renner consumes about 2,000 cubic meters of wood every year.

To provide a steady supply of materials to work with, it maintains an enormous lumber yard at the Odenheim plant, where a wide assortment of wood from all over Europe is being seasoned. The bulk of it is hornbeam ("white beech" from Finland), which is used in almost all action parts. After two or three years outdoors, the wood is further dried in the computerized kilns for 10 to 14 days to a seven or eight percent moisture content before it's cut to working dimensions.

According to Mr. Lins, Renner's reputation for quality is based on the way it processes its wood, which is a very time-consuming and costly procedure. Because of Renner's high standards, the waste of materials is tremendous. The slightest imperfection is enough to send a piece of wood to the junk pile. The rejected materials in Renner's junk pile are already of better quality than what some manufacturers use to build their pianos with, Mr. Lins said. But strictly speaking, the junk pile is not junk. It's burned in the winter to heat the plant.

From Odenheim, we drove back to Stuttgart to see the main factory in the afternoon, and enjoyed a well-balanced sack lunch provided by Renner on the way. Mr. Lins said Stuttgart is a good location for his business because of the availability of a large pool of skilled workers. Several major car makers are also located in the city, presumably for the same reason.

My first impression of the Renner factories is that both of them are extremely labor-intensive, much more so than any other factory we visited. But then, this could be simply due to the nature of action parts manufacturing,

where every hammer butt, shank, damper lever, etc., is the result of as many as several hundred operations, which must be perfectly coordinated for the finished product to work. Although there are hundreds of machines in use, almost every machine calls for the constant attention of an operator. The machine may do the actual work, but it still takes a person to guide it, feed it, and pick up the processed pieces to fill the storage trays. These trays of parts are then carried to the next work station for the next operation. Ingenious, specialized, and complicated as they are, these machines can only be called "semi-automatic." They are efficient, but perhaps not efficient enough.

This is a point Mr. Lins also touched upon: The labor cost accounts for 57 percent of the total expenditure at Renner, which, by today's industrial standards, is very high. The company hopes to reduce it to below 50 percent within a few years through further automation. It appears that the large machine shop in the basement, which designed and built most of the working machines upstairs, and its engineers have their work cut out for them for quite some time. Now that we know about the hundreds of steps it takes for wood, leather, felt, center pins, lubricant, glue...to come together to form, say, hammer shanks, we have a renewed respect for piano parts. I'm sure next time we order a set of hammer shanks, instead of complaining about the "high price," we would scream with joy that it isn't high.

That evening, we were the dinner guests of Renner at an elegant 380-year-old cellar restaurant in Endersbach (just outside Stuttgart). It was an eight-course filet mignon dinner, where wine literally flowed



like water. From appetizer to dessert, it took three-and-a-half hours to consume. Without a question, this was the most lavish dinner we had, and Renner's hospitality was just unbelievable, to which we can only say "Thank you." As one of us remarked, it's nice to have a taste of how "the other 10 percent lives."

Our next visit was to Euterpe/Feurich/Hoffmann in Langlau, a small village about 32 miles southwest of Nurnberg. It's actually three separate small companies which have joined their resources, and built one modern factory. The three pianos are all built by the same workers, using the same supplies and machinery, but each according to its own design and scaling. Since Euterpe pianos are not exported to the United States, American technicians probably are familiar only with the Feurich and W. Hoffmann pianos. This factory is located in a most scenic area, totally surrounded by tall trees, with a large man-made lake nearby. There are no neighbors that we could see. A piano factory may be the last thing in the world one would expect to find in these woods, but there it is.

We arrived around noon, and were immediately taken to lunch by Julius Feurich, company president, at an equally isolated and scenic outdoor restaurant on the other side of this lake. (More food!) Fortified by the Bavarian-style lunch (bratwurst, roast pork, sauerkraut, rolls and beer!), we were ready for the tour.

Euterpe/Feurich/Hoffman is situated on an 11-acre site, with 118,000 square feet of manufacturing space inside its building. It employs 210 people, 20 of whom are office workers. The total annual production is 3,000 pianos, 300 of which are grands. From start to finish, a grand takes about a year, and a vertical, five or six months.

Euterpe/Feurich/Hoffmann is another ultra-modern plant, with numerous machines in operation. Many of them were designed and built by the company's own machine shop. The one that caught my fascination the most is the automatic key-bushing machine. (This must be because I'm terribly slow at this job.) It applies just the right amount of glue to the wood inside the key-button mortise, and inserts the bushing cloths from

both sides to a pre-determined depth. While the bushing cloths are held in place, the machine inserts a plastic key-bushing wedge, trims the cloths, and moves on to the next key-button. Very rhythmically, it does one bushing every two seconds — without human supervision. In three minutes, an entire set of key-buttons is bushed! This is another one of these technological marvels that one has to see to appreciate.

While going through the grand department, someone happened to check the pinblock fit in a Feurich grand, and was surprised to discover that the pinblock didn't even touch the plate flange. That raised a lively discussion about tuning stability. Mr. Feurich and his plant manager explained that, for pianos using tuning pin bushings such as Feurich and many other makes, a tight fit is not necessary, because the leverage on the tuning pin is exactly reversed from what one would expect: As the string tension pulls the top of a tuning pin backwards (that is, towards the hitch pins), the bushing becomes the fulcrum, and the bottom of the tuning pin will move forward (towards the pianist), pulling the pinblock *away* from, and not against, the plate flange. The principle is that it's the tuning pin bushings that support the pinblock, as is frequently the case in vertical pianos, many of which don't even have a flange cast in their plates. Klaus Fenner, who was also with us at Euterpe/Feurich/Hoffmann, concurred with this theory, and pointed out that the physics of the situation is really so. He said that it's only when a piano does not use tuning pin bushings that the pinblock must be fitted tightly to the plate flange. For American technicians, a tight-fitting pinblock is practically a law in grand rebuilding, but then, many of them rebuild only pianos that do not use tuning pin bushings, where a tight fit is critical to tuning stability. One should keep in mind that a company like Feurich has been in business since 1860, and it evidently knows what it's doing.

From Langlau, we moved on to Kitzingen, a city of 20,000 people about 12 miles southeast of Wurzburg, to visit the Eduard Seiler Piano Company. At the time of our visit, Mr. Steffen Seiler, company president, and his wife were in

Chicago to prepare for the NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Expo, and couldn't welcome us in person. Instead, they had arranged for their youngest and very talented daughter, 12-year-old Manuela, to greet us with the music of J.S. Bach in the company show room on a gorgeous 7' 11" Seiler (of course) grand.

Seiler employs 150 people, and turns out one grand and 20 verticals each work day. Due to the recent expansion, Seiler now has two factories in Kitzingen: The main one is called the "Etwashausen" factory, and the newer one, on the outskirts of town, is the "Goldberg." We visited the "Goldberg" first. As it was raining heavily, our bus drove right into the factory building to unload us. Seiler's chief engineer, Horst Donnert, showed us through the plant, explaining everything in perfect German, which the company manager, Ursula Schuhmann, translated into English for us. This was our only bilingual tour.

"Goldberg" is mainly a wood-working plant, where case parts and grand rims are made and finished. It's here that we first saw an automatic finish-applying machine: The case parts to be finished move along a conveyor belt under a steady "waterfall" of lacquer (or polyester, as the case may be). The coated pieces are then loaded onto racks, and moved to the drying room. At Seiler, a lacquer finish piano gets four coats, and a polyester-finish piano gets eight. Between coats, there are the usual rubbing and buffing operations.

What impressed me about this department is that, although wet lacquer and polyester were everywhere, the place did not smell bad — thanks to a specially designed ventilating system required by German law. This is the exact opposite of the Bluthner operation, where employees in the finishing department literally work in an "explosive" atmosphere of heavily concentrated chemical fumes. (The lack of ventilation there is probably deliberate — to keep dust particles from settling and ruining the shine of the finished surfaces. The result is certainly obtained at a terrific human cost. If the workers there become ill from inhaling toxic fumes, the state will provide free medical treatment, but this is

really a matter off our subject.)

Before continuing on to the main factory, we were invited to meet with Kitzingen's mayor, Rudolf Schardt, in the 400-year-old City Hall. The mayor welcomed us with a history of the city and refreshments. Among the interesting things we learned is that Kitzingen has the distinction of being the city where the world's greatest number of American-German marriages takes place, thanks to the large U.S. military bases nearby. The local newspaper photographer took our picture, and we were front-page news in the *Kitzinger Zeitung* the next day.

The "Etwashaussen" factory is where the bulk of the interior work is done. Here we saw more clever machines, such as the plate-drilling machine, which is designed to drill two plates simultaneously with only one operator, the automatic voicing machine, which can pre-voice a set of new hammers in only a few minutes — regardless of how hard they may be, stringing machines, bridge-notching and bridge-pinning machines...The productivity is truly impressive.

We were then served an elaborate Frankish-style lunch in the company dining room. In the evening, we were the guests of Seiler again at a cocktail party at the hotel, where we had another opportunity to visit with our hosts. We were overwhelmed by Seiler's hospitality, and our visit was another memorable occasion.

Talking about hospitality, we had another surprise; an invitation

to lunch in Bad Hersfeld as Klaus Fenner's guests. This is Klaus' home town, which was on our way from Kitzingen to Hamburg. Founded in 736, the prosperous city of Bad Hersfeld is celebrating its 1,250th anniversary this year with a very ambitious series of concerts, operas, and plays. The festive mood could readily be felt everywhere during our walking tour of the city before lunch at the Ratskeller (restaurant in the city hall basement). There we had our *sixth* Wiener Schnitzel of the trip, which was every bit as enjoyable as the first. To the Germans, the Wiener Schnitzel (veal cutlet) must be "company food," perhaps equivalent to roast beef for Americans (that is, before the health food craze took over) — a supreme demonstration of friendship and good will. Proportionally speaking, this was also the most generous of hospitality, for which we are all indebted to Klaus Fenner and his family.

Our last factory was Steinway in Hamburg. Mr. Werner Husmann, Steinway's export manager, greeted us at the entrance, and led us through the plant. It was immediately apparent that, in spite of his official title, he is much more than a businessman. Having been with the company for 20 years, he is well acquainted with every aspect of piano-making, and knows his way around the plant inside and out. According to Mr. Husmann, the first major difference between the manufacturing methods of Steinway and those of other companies is in the extraordinary

care lavished on the preparation of wood. Steinway cuts most of its lumber by first slicing logs into boards, which are laid out to season outdoors for several years until they reach a moisture content of 15 percent. They are then dried down to 8 percent moisture content in electronically controlled kilns. After that, the wood is to be "aged." The climate-controlled "aging room" in the basement is almost as big as the whole building, and the aging process takes between six and nine months. Also aging in this room are all the wood parts that eventually go into a piano: the rims, pinblocks, case parts, soundboards, actions, glue flakes, etc. All the parts are labelled, and kept in the computerized inventory.

The exceptional care taken in seasoning, drying, and aging wood is mandatory, Mr. Husmann said, because wood is the foundation of piano building. Without a totally stable foundation, the rest won't be necessary. As an example for comparison, he said that, if a certain very large piano maker in the Orient were to season, dry, and age its wood the way Steinway does, it would have to have a lumber yard the size of the city of Hamburg (which, of course, it doesn't). This remark is certainly an exaggeration, but its implications are obvious.

The next major difference is that Steinway does things "backwards." While other makers build their pianos from inside out, Steinway builds them from outside in. This is to insure the rigidity of that foundation, so the energy from the strings are not lost through the many loose joints because the case parts are not "added on piece by piece." First, the inner and outer rims are built as one inseparable unit, using laminated African mahogany and beech, and cold animal glue in a cold press. Next, the pinblock, stretcher, and belly rail are glued and doweled into the rims and each other in one operation. (They are not screwed in.) Then the beams are fitted, glued, and doweled into the rims, with their other ends converging at the center of the belly rail where they are fastened by a metal bracket. All these parts come out of the aging room after having been there for six to nine months. The all-

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important foundation is now more or less complete.

After this, Steinway employees have to work in very tight quarters to fit the pinblock to the plate, the soundboard and bridges to the rims, and the plate-supporting dowels to determine the downbearing. Fortunately, ingenious machines are available for some of these operations. Pinblock-fitting is done by a tracing router in an elaborate set-up, which is similar to the kind used by Grottrian-Steinweg described earlier.

We were very surprised that Steinway would show us how it installs its soundboards. For a long time, this department was off limits to visitors because it was considered a "trade secret." But even now, photography in this department is still strictly forbidden. The procedure is too difficult to write about, and I can only say that the work is painstakingly done by hand, by workers with many years of experience. We saw several young apprentices working in this department under the watchful eyes of the master craftsmen, a few of whom are perhaps close to retirement age.

Steinway hammers are still made by Renner, according to Steinway specifications, but with felts supplied by Steinway. These felts are made in England (also according to Steinway specifications), and are checked out by Steinway before being shipped to Renner. When Steinway receives its hammers, each set is tested for quality with a special hammer-testing device. Only hammers passing this rigid test are used on pianos, and bad hammers are rejected immediately. Unfortunately, Mr. Husmann could not show us this testing device.

As hammers are such an integral element in tone production, Steinway regrets that it has to subcontract their manufacture to a supplier. For a small company like Steinway to get into the business of making (and controlling the quality of) its own hammers is almost more bother than it's worth, Mr. Husmann said. Of Steinway's 500 employees, only 285 are piano builders. (The rest are office and sales staff.) The company produces 1,700 pianos a year, 1,400 of which are grands, and of these, 180 to 200

are concert grands.

Unlike most other pianos, Steinway's main market is the concert stage, rather than homes or schools. But even here, Mr. Husmann said, the competition is heating up. He didn't elaborate on this point.

At the conclusion of the tour, we were treated to a fruit-and-sandwich lunch in the company dining room, where we also saw a 25-minute video film on how to regulate a Steinway grand. On our way out, we were each given a chart of Steinway specifications and a set of regulating tools, which were greatly appreciated. Again, we were overwhelmed by our host's kindness and generosity.

After I got home, a friend wanted to know what I have gained during the trip, "A few pounds," I said. Well, that's only a small part of it. The main thing is that, each in his own way, the participants on this tour have gained a better understanding of the piano-manufacturing business in Germany. Everything I saw may be summed up in the following observations.

First of all, I was struck by the fact that these company presidents *really* know their business. They understand their products, and it

shows immediately in the way they talk. For example, Mr. Bluthner told me he can do every job that his workers do, because, as the president, he has to set an example for his employees. Mr. Schimmel has no difficulty answering questions about string lengths in his pianos and their effect on inharmonicity. He is not just another knowledgeable piano technician who has passed the P.T.G. Craftsman examinations like most of us; he is also the president of the largest piano company in western Europe! As "the man on the white horse" (pardon the pun), the president has to provide the leadership for his company, which is in turn reflected in the quality of its product. Although they have to be sharp businessmen, too, they form a startling contrast to those executive types who keep mouthing tired, old clichés about "quality and workmanship" — but don't know a hitch pin from a bridge pin. This is not to belittle the value of paper-shuffling. To do that profitably also requires enormous skill, but not really knowing one's products will always be a handicap. Besides, there's always something *phony* about them.

I was impressed by the good working conditions the West Ger-

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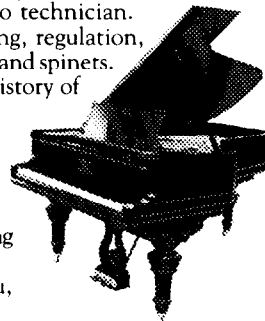
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man piano workers enjoy. (The East Germans are in a special category of their own, and not discussed here.) In every factory we visited, I noticed how well protected they are from typical industrial hazards. For example, all spraying booths are backed by a wall of running water to catch the overspray. Wherever toxic fumes tend to accumulate, a proper ventilation system takes them out. German law requires these installations to protect the workers' health. The companies also provide free ear plugs, hearing protectors, eye goggles, dust masks, etc., for additional protection in the appropriate departments, but this is considered an area of "personal freedom," and the company cannot force the workers to wear these devices. Of the hundreds of piano workers we saw, I counted only four wearing eye protection, two wearing dust masks, and one wearing a face shield — although quite a few do wear ear plugs in very noisy areas. Mr. Duricic of Schimmel compared such abuse of one's health to smoking: You know it's bad for you, but you keep smoking

anyway.

Perhaps the problem runs deeper than that. I suspect there may be a "macho" attitude at work. "Whatever the abuse, the *real man* can take it." Wearing too many protective devices may make one appear "sissy." But then, self-destructive behavior is nothing new to the human race. I vividly recall our visit to the polishing department at Grottrian-Steinweg, where a worker was buffing an ebony grand with a huge buffer. So much dust was coming off that his face had already turned black from it. When he noticed our presence, he turned around, and greeted us with a polyester grin. I kept wondering what his lungs looked like.

Germans also seem to be a very environment-conscious people. Living in close proximity, they perhaps have to be. The law imposes stringent controls over sources of pollution, and requires that all waste products from factories be filtered and purified before the used water and air can be returned to the environment. Anti-pollution devices on smokestacks, for instance, are standard. Companies violating

these regulations will be shut down by the government, and forced out of business. These expenditures are part of the cost of operating any manufacturing facility in Germany.

On the average, German piano makers get 41 paid holidays a year — not counting weekends. These include both religious and national holidays. It also means that an average worker works only 10 months out of a year, which seems very generous indeed by American standards. At the same time, the typical work week has shrunk from 40 hours to the present 38. Within three years, it's expected to drop down to 35 hours. Normally, they work eight hours a day Monday through Thursday, and quit early on Friday, so they can have a longer weekend to spend in their cottages in the country. Somebody has to pay for all these benefits! And the burden naturally falls on the employers. Mr. Lins of Renner gave us a rather somber picture of the present German piano industry. He said that on top of a worker's salary, a company has to pay an additional 80 percent in fringe



The Golden Gate Chapter and Auxiliary invite you to the 20th Annual California State Convention on February 13-16, 1987 at the Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco, followed by a tax deductible tour (with technical classes) to Hawaii. All members of the Western Region will soon receive promotional materials and registration forms. Others may obtain them from Sid Stone, 16875 E. 14th Street, San Leandro, CA 94578. Convention registration and hotel rooms will be the lowest possible. The Hawaii trip will be priced comparable to the Hawaii trip following the PTG Convention in 1981.

Besides the 1987 California State Convention being held in "America's Favorite City" and recruiting PTG's favorite instructors, we will also have "The World's Strongest Piano Man," "The World's Largest Collection of Business Cards of Piano Tuners & Technicians," and a "Hall of Shame" display. (Note: the proposed Birdcage Bonfire will not take place).

benefits and social costs. The high labor cost forces up the price of the product, which puts German pianos at a great disadvantage on the international market. On the average, a Japanese piano is 30 percent cheaper than a comparable German one, and a Korean piano, 60 percent cheaper. Today, two out of three pianos sold in Germany are imported, and grands form an increasing percentage of the imported pianos. Compared to 1981, sales of German pianos worldwide have declined by a shocking 30 percent. The "guest workers" (imported foreign laborers) are also becoming a major social problem, although it does not have too serious an impact on the piano industry.

In view of the tough situation which is getting increasingly tougher, one has to wonder: What's making all these piano companies hang on? The answers I get vary widely, but they can all be boiled down to one word: pride — pride in one's work, pride in the family name, and pride in a long tradition, which is reflected in the quality of the product. Of the seven piano companies we visited, five (Schimmel, Grotrian, Bluthner, Feurich, and Seiler) are still run by direct descendants of their original founders, who carry the company

names. Without saying it in so many words, they all seem to realize that cutting quality to reduce cost will amount to professional suicide. To reduce cost without sacrificing quality is going to be a major challenge. One way to go about it, as Mr. Lins had pointed out, is further automation. We can expect to see more machines, better machines, faster machines to replace the present ones (and perhaps some of the workers, too.)

Another alarming development is the trend for more and more companies to purchase supplies from fewer and fewer suppliers. In some ways, it may mean that all pianos are becoming more alike, if that's possible. But I'm not sure if this trend is all that healthy for the industry. If a major supplier has a lengthy strike, or suffers some natural or man-made disasters, the disruption will have a far-reaching effect. Although foreign-made instruments are a tremendous competition to the German piano industry, Mr. Husmann of Steinway said that an even more serious threat is the booming leisure industry, which takes away an increasingly large percentage of a consumer's disposable income. Television, video recorder, stereo, travel, camping, sailing...all claim their share, leaving fewer dollars

and marks available for the purchase of pianos. On top of it all, the consumer's choice for entertainment is changing. Piano-playing requires physical effort and mental discipline, which not everyone is willing to invest his free time in. It's much easier for him to go for passive entertainment, for example, to sit in front of the television set (perhaps with beer in one hand and potato chips in the other), and let the show come to him instead. Nobody knows where it will all lead. Maybe, regardless of the best efforts and the most intense pride, some companies will still have to go out of business, which may give the remaining ones a better chance for survival. It's not a pretty thought.

There is an old Chinese saying: When you drink water, think of the well. In concluding this rambling report, I must publicly thank two gentlemen who made this P.T.G. Study Tour of Europe possible: Dan Evans, who spent over a year planning for this trip and making all the arrangements, and all at his own expense, too, and Fred Odenheimer, who provided the many necessary contacts in Europe. If you missed this trip, it was your loss. But it's not too early to start saving up your pennies for the next one. ■

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# The Auxiliary Exchange

## President's Message

As you are reading this message I will have already been to Toronto for the convention planning meeting and the Auxiliary program for our 1987 Annual Convention will be in the process of development.

While we will do our utmost to present a varied, entertaining and educational week, it will have to be based more on what we think you want than it will on what we know you want. In the packets in Las Vegas a questionnaire was included for the 157 registrants. In spite of a small "bribe" in the way of a gift to be drawn from those who submitted the questionnaire, only 35 were received. Vera Pierson (Mrs. James) of Seattle was the lucky winner.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher wrote the following short verse:

*"It's easy enough to be a starter,  
But are you a sticker too?  
It's easy enough to begin a job,  
It's harder to see it through."*

You members can make it so much easier for the Board to "see it through" if you would let us know what you want. We already know what kind of program we like. While the program is now in the process of being formed, final decisions will not be made for many months. It is still not too late for you to get your ideas into the planning process.

Would you like some organizational meetings? Classes of a technical nature related to pianos? More free time? More scheduled events? Perhaps this lethargy is because you like the programs just the way they are. If this is the case tell me that and I'll quit worrying about it, but many seem most eager to tell us what they didn't like after the convention but very few tell us what they would like beforehand.

**Ginger Bryant**

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## Convention News

The 1986 convention held in Las Vegas, NV was one of the biggest ever for the Auxiliary. There were 148 registrants, 54 of whom were non-Auxiliary members. It's always nice to see the friends with whom you've conventioned before, but very exciting to meet so many new ones! At our opening assembly roll call, we found that 21 states were represented, along with Canada and Australia, with the largest delegation being from California. Many people took advantage of the Auxiliary program, enjoyed the Las Vegas city tour, and got caught up in the spirit of "Christmas in July." I'm sure many people at Caesars Palace thought it strange to see 150 people displaying hand-crocheted Christmas wreaths on their name badges. Seven of our past presidents attended the convention and graced our Tea. **Julie Berry, Pauline Miller, Helen Pearson, Ruth Pollard, Luellyn Preuit, Jewell Sprinkle, and Esther Stegeman** contributed their graciousness, enthusiasm, and collective wisdom to our functions. Many thanks to Helen Pearson who also served as Parliamentarian for the Council.

At the Council meeting, one of the first orders of business was to unanimously approve the Indianapolis Chapter's proposal to confer Honorary Life Membership upon **Ginny Russell**. Ginny is a recent past president and one of the most energetic and tireless supporters the Auxiliary has ever had. The Council felt it a privilege to bestow this well-deserved honor upon Ginny Russell.

The Council also voted to establish a scholarship fund in order to benefit up-and-coming piano students and promote awareness of the Auxiliary. The award will be administered through the Piano Technicians Guild Foundation. Proceeds from the "Christmas in July" project together with a most generous \$1000 donation give us approximately \$2750 to begin our fund. **Dorothy Silva** of the Golden Gate Chapter of the Auxiliary presented her gift-donation in memory of her mother.

The Council commended **Ginger Bryant** for her fine work on the Auxiliary Exchange. The Council also elected the slate of officers pre-

sented by the Nominating Committee which you will find boxed on these pages. The Nominating Committee elected for this term is **Helena Thomas, Chair, Barbara Fandrich and Grace Mehaffey.**

A Committee to investigate the restructuring of Council voting was formed. **Rebecca Heneberry** will chair the committee and be assisted by **Julie Berry** and **Marge Evans.** **Jewell Sprinkle** addressed the assembly with a plea to disband the chapters for purposes of representation at Council for a more equitable division of delegates. Anyone who would like to express their views on this issue and/or offer possible solutions is asked to contact Rebecca.

You will be seeing a new piece of Auxiliary literature in the not-too-distant future. An informational brochure is in the works which is designed to answer that age-old puzzler; "just what is it the Auxiliary does, anyway?" It will tell who we are, why we are, and what we are doing.

There are also some other interesting things stirring, like child-care options for Toronto and "mini-techs" for the Auxiliary program. These are just in the "Idea Stage" so if you would like to see these things happen, send your thoughts and ideas to Rebecca Heneberry, our new Corresponding Secretary. She will collect your input and maybe we can come up with something workable for our upcoming conventions.

It has been and is a pleasure for me to serve the Auxiliary as Recording Secretary, and I hope you will all start thinking and planning toward Toronto in '87.

*(Our thanks to Helena Thomas for a comprehensive account of the '86 convention of the Piano Technicians Guild Auxiliary. Editor)*

## In October...

October, that beautiful month which signals the end of summer and the beginning of cold weather in the northern hemisphere, has its most spectacular "show" in the northeastern region of our country, from Maine and the New England states to the southern and western areas of Pennsylvania. Fall foliage tours are many and it is the rare

## Exchange Editor:

AGNES HUETHER  
34 Jacklin Court  
Clifton, New Jersey 07012

individual who does not enjoy walking through parks and forests to store up in the mind's eye all the autumnal delights before the onset of winter. Into this new season arrive the first-run films, the new TV and sit-com shows as well as the tried and tested ones brought back by popular demand. The Metropolitan Opera House has its grand reopening and even the United States Supreme Court starts a new session.

The various P.T.G. Chapters structure their seminars with the goal of providing and enhancing new ideas, new techniques and new formats for their membership. Of special interest to Guild members and their spouses will be the state seminars to be held in October in Cleveland, OH, New York City, NY and in Houston, TX.

Did you know that October too is the birth month for some famous individuals of the music world. Just to name a few we cite Itzhak Perlman, Vivienne Della Chiesa, Georg Solti, Barbara Cook, Melba Moore, Vladimir Horowitz and Luciano Pavarotti.

And our Statue of Liberty in New York harbor was not 100 years old last July 4th, her actual 100th "birth" day is October 28, 1886. In 1886 the statue was unveiled on Bedloes Island — later know as Liberty Island.

## Logo? Hallmark? Colophon?

For quite some time this writer has heard a good deal about one four-letter word, who may use it, when may it be used, etc. Of course this reference is made to the word "logo." It is highly probable that some of my colleagues in the Auxiliary also know of these concerns. Because of the recurrent interest and attention, it seemed that some mild research was in order. Upon consultation with Webster's dictionary it was determined that

the word *logo* is derived from the Greek, meaning word, speech or reason. A *logo type* is a symbol, trademark or name of a company or publication. (dialogue, logic, logistics)

Hallmark, a mark used in England, is stamped on articles of silver or gold to designate that they meet established standards of purity. A secondary meaning applies to any work of recognized quality or excellence.

Colophon, originally from the Greek *kolophon* meaning "summit" or "finish," was the "finishing touch" at the end of a manuscript or book. Today the word has two meanings: the original one, and a new one referring to a publisher's trademark or emblem.

An interesting story is told about the founders of Viking Press and how the publishing company came to be so called. Established in 1925, the Board of Directors of the founding company wished to have the business known as The Half-Moon Press, to be named after Henry Hudson's vessel, the Half-Moon. They commissioned the noted illustrator, Rockwell Kent to design a suitable colophon. The artist did not care for the old English vessel, and employing artistic license, drew instead a *drakkar*, a type of ship used by the Vikings. The design so pleased the founders that the company's name was changed to Viking Press.

We're sure many of you are familiar with Viking Press and the Viking Penguin books. Now when you see the drakkar and the penguin you'll know the story behind them.

Is the PTG emblem of a tuning fork and hammer a logo, hallmark or a colophon?

## Still Available:

- *Suncatchers*
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## Membership Matters

# Associate With The Guild

Ron Berry  
Vice President

**L**ook around your community. Are there some people there you'd like to have as chapter members? Chances are there are still some fine people in your area who should be in the Guild but have not yet joined.

Our membership restructure voted in by the 1986 Council offers us a good way to help people get involved with the Piano Technicians Guild. All people who join the Guild in one of our six regions join as Associate Members. Later on many of them will proceed to become Registered Tuner-Technicians, but everybody comes through the door marked "Associate."

This takes away the fear a tuner with an established business might have of being faced

with entrance exams which could label him as an Apprentice or a Student.

Under the new system exams are no longer part of an entrance procedure. Instead our exams are given to our members after they have already been accepted into the Guild as Associates. This gives a new member time to feel comfortable in the organization, to receive the *Journal*, to ask questions, and to attend chapter technicals, seminars, and conventions at member rates before requesting RTT exams.

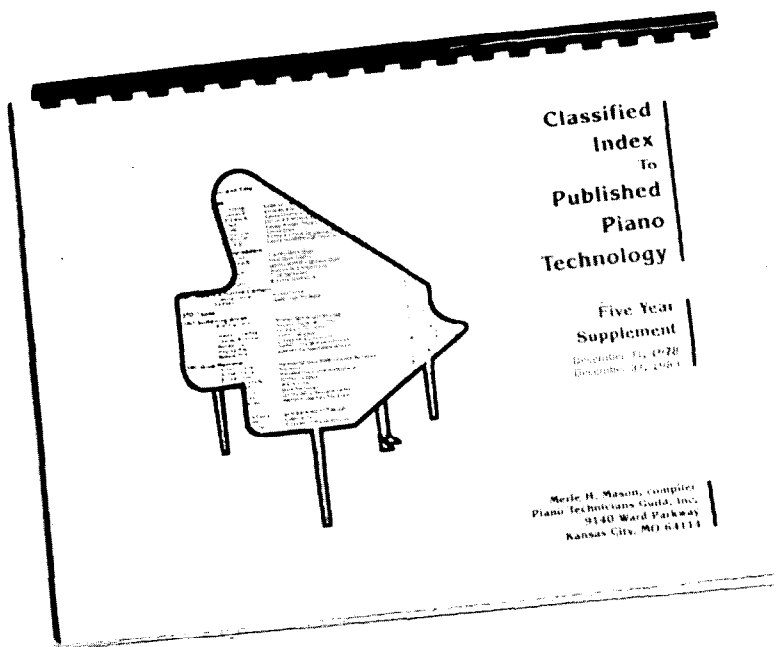
Since RTTs are the only ones who may use the logo and advertise as Registered Tuner-Technicians, Associate members who are technicians will want to work towards passing the exams and

becoming RTTs themselves. This will preserve the high standards we have established with our standardized written, technical and tuning exams.

So do look around your community to see if there is a person there who belongs in the Guild. A personal invitation from you might be the beginning of a lasting good relationship for that person and for the Guild.

*New members who joined the Guild during the month of August and those who were reclassified to Registered Tuner-Technician will be listed with membership information in next month's Journal.*

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*(Covers articles published  
between January 1979  
and December 1983)*

**Compiled By  
Merle H. Mason**

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## Calendar Of Coming Events

Date	Event
Oct. 10-12, 1986	<b>Ohio State Conference</b> Wickliff, OH Kevin and Janet Leary; 18817 Hilliard; Rocky River, Oh 44116; (216) 331-5605
Oct. 16-19, 1986	<b>New York State Conference</b> New York, NY Nancy Hazzard; 1 Ruth Place; Staten Island, NY 10305; (718) 979-5154
Oct. 17-19, 1986	<b>Texas State Seminar</b> Intercontinental Airport Holiday Inn, Houston, TX James B. Kozak; 301 W. 19th St.; Houston, TX 77008
Nov. 7-9, 1986	<b>North Carolina State Conference</b> Adams Mark Hotel, Charlotte, NC Eugenia Carter; 4317 Commonwealth Ave.; Charlotte, NC 28205; (704) 568-1231
Nov. 8, 1986	<b>Intermountain Seminar</b> Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah Jack Reeves; 486 N. 300 W.; Orem, UT 84057; (801) 225-1757
Nov. 15, 1986	<b>20th Anniversary Baltimore Chapter Seminar</b> Omni International, Baltimore, MD Christie Cornetta; 10 Drawbridge Ct., Baltimore, MD 21228; (303) 788-3684. David Hughes; 13228 Old Hanover Rd.; Reisterstown, MD 21136; (301) 429-5060.
Jan. 9-10, 1987	<b>Arizona State Seminar</b> Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ Wirt Harvey; 5901 Calle del Norte; Phoenix, AZ 85018; (602) 945-8515
Feb. 13-16, 1987	<b>California State Conference</b> San Francisco Sheraton Palace Sid Stone; 16875 East 14th St.; San Leandro, CA 94578; (415) 481-1903
Mar. 7-8, 1987	<b>1987 South Central Regional Seminar</b> Oklahoma City, OK Gary Neie; 240 Jane Ann; Pineville, LA 71360; (318) 640-3122.
Mar. 20-22, 1987	<b>1987 Central West Regional Seminar</b> University of Minnesota Paul Olsen; 3501 Adair Ave. N.; Crystal, MN 55422 (612) 533-5253.
Mar. 26-28, 1987	<b>1987 Memphis Mid-South Seminar</b> Memphis, TN Ken Tapp; 4131 Old Brownsville Rd.; Memphis, TN 38134 (901) 386-1515.
* July 20-24, 1987	<b>30th Annual Piano Technicians Guild Convention &amp; Institute</b> Constellation Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada Home Office; 9140 Ward Parkway; Kansas City, MO 64114; (816) 444-3500

## MOVING?

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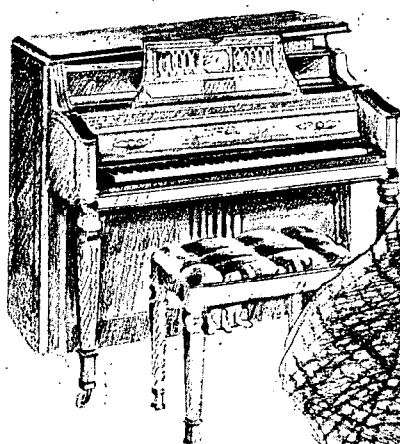
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