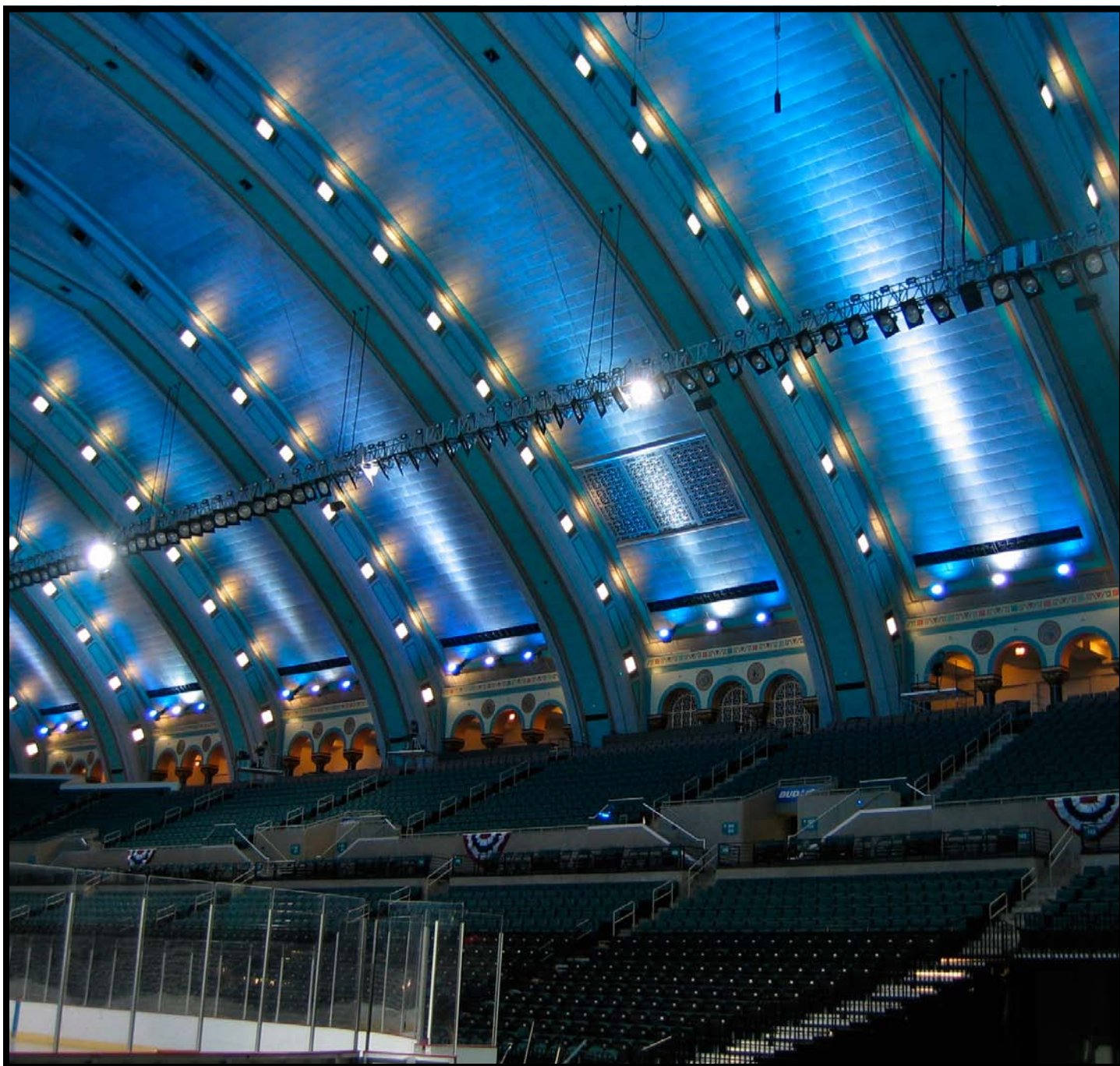


# *the* GRAND OPHICLEIDE

*Journal of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc.*

*Issue 35*

*Spring, 2007*



# *the* **GRAND OPHICLEIDE**

*Journal of the  
Atlantic City Convention Hall  
Organ Society, Inc.*

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*The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1997 and dedicated to the use, preservation and restoration of the organs in the Atlantic City Boardwalk Convention Hall.*

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**On The Cover** — View of the Main Auditorium with its new lighting system. The Fanfare organ grille can be seen in the ceiling along with the Left Center chamber – Gallery III & IV organs. The placement of these chambers (and the opposing Echo and Right center chambers) contributes to the amazing "Surround Sound" effect in the hall in this spectacular and supportive acoustic space.



# An Amazing Space for an Ultimate Son et Lumière Experience

The designers of Boardwalk Hall incorporated various illumination devices that were beyond the state of the art at the time. The renovation of the Hall included modern lighting systems intended to replicate the original systems that were too complicated to repair and restore. Whether the lighting effects shown on the postcard were ever actually done is unknown.

Here is an original description from a [syrupy] brochure published by Atlantic City in 1928 – before the hall was completed:

With a frontal exterior of Indiana limestone and marble, flanked by hundred foot towers...the Hall – a modern adaptation of the Romanesque period – literally breathes the indefinable essence of the sea.

Mellow floodlights, iridescent and softly tinted with the blue and green of the ocean, pleasantly bathe the great structure when darkness falls, etching it out even among the numberless lights of the brilliant skyline.

Throughout the Convention Hall a tone of quiet dignity, pleasingly merged with the soothing colors of the sea and sky, has been used in all decorative effects, while floods of pure and tinted light present and infinite array of radiant scenes, restful to the eye and temper.

The huge trusses and ceiling are of neutral tone, giving full effect to the many color combination of an extraordinarily elaborate lighting system, while the balcony faces are in two tones of green and gold.

In fact, by utilization of an entirely new and original principle, lighting of the stage and auditorium has been so designed as to permit not only the usual projection, spot-lighting and special display of feature objects, but an endless number of color effects, including the warmly gorgeous hues of sunset and sunrise and illumination of the great ceiling in all manner of shimmering shades and hues.



## More Boardwalk Hall Restoration

The planning work has been completed to restore the original open-air Loggia area on the façade of Boardwalk Hall. When Donald Trump constructed his Trump Plaza casino to the right of Boardwalk Hall, he was granted permission to enclose the originally open Loggia walkway area with glass and install a heating and cooling system. This area made it possible for patrons of the Plaza to walk to and from Trump's World property to the left of Boardwalk Hall. Trump's World was demolished several years ago.

The restoration will be complex due to the large amount of glass that has to be removed along with the installed HVAC and electrical systems running between the two casinos.

## Watts Vs. Horsepower

Russ Engelman, a 1962 University of Illinois physics graduate and ACCHOS fan, stated, from his calculations that it would probably require some 77,000 watts of audio power to simulate the intensity and energy density produced by the Midmer-Losh organ in Boardwalk Hall based on the fact that the blower motors total 600 horsepower. From studies made of several pipe organs, he used a factor of 17% when converting horsepower to watts.

In the 90s, a comparison was made with the organ and a huge sound system installed for a rock concert. The rock group made the challenge, but we were told that the organ won hands down!

Engelman also recalled meeting Robert Elmore (of *Bach On The Biggest* fame) in 1966 after an organ recital. When Engelman told Elmore he had a copy of the LP, *Bach On The Biggest*, Elmore responded: "So you're the one who bought the second copy!"

# Emerson Richards And Seibert Losh: A Dream Ticket?

Emerson Richards and Seibert Losh knew each other for some 15-or-so years spanning three decades. Their friendship ended acrimoniously in the early '30s, but the preceding years saw some interesting organs produced as a result of their association.

The pair probably met in the last years of the "teens" — when Losh was Eastern Sales Manager for the Möller firm (a job he left in December, 1918) and Richards was just out of the army (where he served as a major, having previously been a State politician since 1911). In 1920, Losh bought the organ building firm of Midmer & Son, and Richards returned to politics in 1922.

It's said that their first meeting was when Richards was acting as consultant for two churches that were exploring the purchase of organs — the suggestion being that Losh, on behalf of Möller, was interested in tendering for the instruments. It's not known which churches these were and there seem to be no records of Losh's initial opinions of Richards or vice versa. However, it seems likely that the pair had common goals and got on well because they started working together within a fairly short space of time.

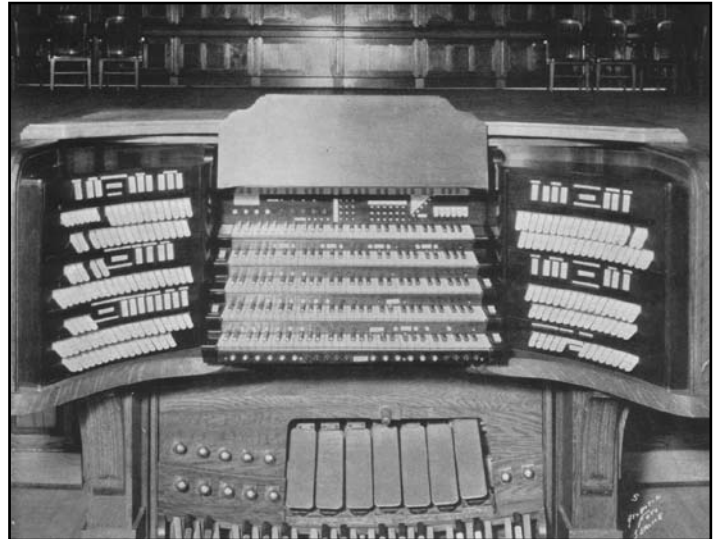
The first instrument to receive the Losh treatment was Richards' own — an Estey situated in the Music Room of his residence — where a number of new stops were added. This was in 1921. At the end of the following year, the Losh-owned Midmer & Son signed a contract to build an organ, designed by Richards, for the High School in Atlantic City. It was this instrument that put Losh and his firm on the organ world's map. As is well known, the High School organ was the largest ever built for a public school. Initially, it had four manuals and 73 ranks but, in stages, it was enlarged to five manuals and 121 ranks.

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>63 Voices</b>	<b>73 Ranks</b>	<b>4,817 Pipes</b>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>11 Voices</b>	<b>16 Ranks</b>	<b>1,143 Pipes</b>
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>25 Voices</b>	<b>28 Ranks</b>	<b>2,001 Pipes</b>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>4 Voices</b>	<b>4 Ranks</b>	<b>364 Pipes</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>103 Voices</b>	<b>121 Ranks</b>	<b>8,325 Pipes</b>

*Atlantic City High School organ, stages of construction.*

It is said that some changes to the instrument were made by Richards who, apparently, would turn up at the school, replace a stop with one he had brought with him, and then play it for a while. Sometimes he would put back the original pipes but, on other occasions, he would leave the new rank in situ if he thought it was an improvement upon the one it had replaced! Some of the increase in the instrument's size was due to Losh providing a number of derived mutation registers — to demonstrate their use for creating synthetic tones. Although most of the instrument was built by the Midmer firm, three ranks

(Musette, Kinura, Saxophone) were supplied by the Gottfried company. Also, part of a Roosevelt rank originally used for test purposes was retained for sentimental reasons and because of its beautiful tone. The instrument was completed in 1925 at a total cost of \$42,425.



**Console of the Atlantic City High School organ. The vertical stop-keys were couplers, and the piston above the central swell pedal coupled all shades onto that pedal.**

With the completion of the High School organ, in 1925, came the announcement of another Atlantic City organ that resulted from the collaboration of Richards and Losh. This was for the City's new Lodge of Elks, on South Virginia Avenue. The lodge room was of carved French walnut with white and gold decorations, and the instrument that Richards designed was almost entirely enclosed. The Choir and Great departments occupied one chamber, the Swell another, and a floating Echo section was in a third. The chambers were located at the east end of the lodge room and the console was positioned to the left of the Exalted Ruler's throne at the west end. In addition to soft voices designed for use during rituals, the specifications included a boldly voiced Swell organ and some unenclosed stops on the Great to fill the room with sound. The Pedal organ included an 11 o'clock Chime (an important hour for Elks) and, as at the High School, there was a tuba with double harmonic trebles. Richards pressed for power from the stops, resulting in a very loud instrument indeed — even more so than the High School organ, which was reputedly considered by many to be louder than was necessary.

Power and volume were also on the agenda for the next project involving Richards and Losh; a west end section of 30 ranks for St. Mark's Church, Locust Street, Philadelphia. The



specifications included two extended Dulciana ranks (32TC-16-8 and 4-2-1) and nine unison voices. There were two 16 foot flues, three 4 foots, two 2 foots, and fourteen ranks of mixtures! Reeds were available at 16-8-4 and, on the Pedal, at 32 and 16. Wind pressures were 3.75, 7.5, 12 (Diapason I), and 20 (reeds) inches. The cost was \$25,000.

Losh's brother, George, thought the department's exposed position made it oppressively loud. Richards, initially, defended the scheme but, in later years, claimed he had "...warned the music committee previously that it would be much too loud...it almost blew the elderly ladies completely out of their seats in the rear pews." When the instrument was replaced after only 11 years, Richards rescued one of the mixture stops and placed it in his residence organ (Aeolian-Skinner, opus 1047).



**The West End section at St Mark's included one enclosed stop, a Grand Cornet; a compound stop with ranks that could be drawn separately.**

As mentioned previously, Losh and Richards seemed to have common goals. Certainly, the High School and Lodge of Elks instruments were based largely in the orchestral type of organ that both men seemed to prefer at the time. However, the West End section for St Mark's was a different matter consisting of organ tone stops rather than orchestral voices. Even so, this section wasn't Richards' first sojourn into 'proper' organ tone – the High School's Great was mainly a diapason chorus (from 32-foot to mixture) and the instrument was later provided with an unenclosed Choir department that was, according to

Richards, "to produce a homogeneous ensemble similar to the Silberman organ familiar to Bach".

Losh's idea of organ design remained grounded in the symphonic, and there can be little doubt that he viewed Richards' evolving tonal ideas with some skepticism. Despite his reservations, Losh expressed his interest in building the Atlantic City Convention Hall organ. In fact, he "wanted the job so bad, he couldn't see straight", said Sam Hovsepian (a Midmer-Losh employee who was interviewed by Nelson Barden in 1983). Whilst a number of other organ builders expressed their concern about bidding for such a huge undertaking (and having their staff tied-up for years on the project), Losh was raring to go! This may have been, in part, because the scheme exceeded his wildest dreams – his wildest dream being a mammoth organ built on the New Jersey Palisades and voiced so boldly that would be audible across the Hudson River in New York. This outrageous proposal was, it seems, surpassed by the ACCH scheme.

In it, Richards extended his ideas about 'proper' organ tone to the nth degree, with principal choruses and mixtures throughout (we know that Losh disapproved of mixtures). There was scope for expanding the orchestral and mutation schemes too – and Richards seemed to relish the task of designing an instrument capable of producing any type of music. The result included orchestral reeds at every conceivable pitch and mutation stops at some downright inconceivable pitches!

The Midmer firm, having been renamed Midmer-Losh in 1924, won the contract to build the ACCH organ based on price alone, i.e. their bid was the lowest. Richards' had hoped that the contract would go to Kimball (who had already secured the contract for the Ballroom organ), but their bid was outrageously high – and probably intended to ensure the job didn't go to the firm.

Questions have, from time to time, been asked about whether Richards had any financial interest in the Midmer firm, but no evidence has surfaced to show that he had. In fact, Richards and both Losh bothers denied, in writing, that he was in any way 'involved' with the company.

There probably wasn't too much surprise in the organ world when the ACCH contract went to Midmer-Losh; after all, there was no reason to assume that the instrument, like those before it involving Richards and Losh, would be anything other than a straightforward project, notwithstanding the larger-than-usual scale. Indeed, had the Great Depression never happened, it is likely that things would have gone according to plan. The Depression created tensions and exerted stresses that, otherwise, would not have arisen. So, what was thought of as a 'dream ticket' turned out, in the end, to be for a 'nightmare ride'.

The Richards/Losh partnership produced some justly famous instruments and, of course, the ACCH organ was to be the most famous of them all. As a result, Midmer-Losh was assured of a place in the record books, but Seibert's name is absent from the builder's plates on the consoles. His fall from Richards' grace having come about in May, 1931. He died, at the age of just 53, in January of 1934. Richards lived for almost 30 years more but his reputation and his career never recovered.

Howdy,

I got the video a few days ago and I want to tell you it is fantastic. I think that a real key to our efforts to promote the organ art is to fully use the new media and aggressively advertise just like other arts organizations do. We can't be shy! One thing I especially liked was the plentiful sequences of pipes. A lot of people think that a console is all there is or are amazed to discover that the pipes are more than just the visible display pipes.

When our local theater organ society gives occasional VIP tours of our fairly large Wurlitzer, people are uniformly stunned to see exactly how many pipes are involved. We have one room full of 16' bombards and some tibias and it is like a forest. People's eyes get as big as saucers in there.

The documentary is wonderful and I am planning to have 'movie days'/'nights' at work and also at home to show it to as many people as I can. And all the extra features as far as the photo montage, etc are real eye candy for organ nerds like myself.

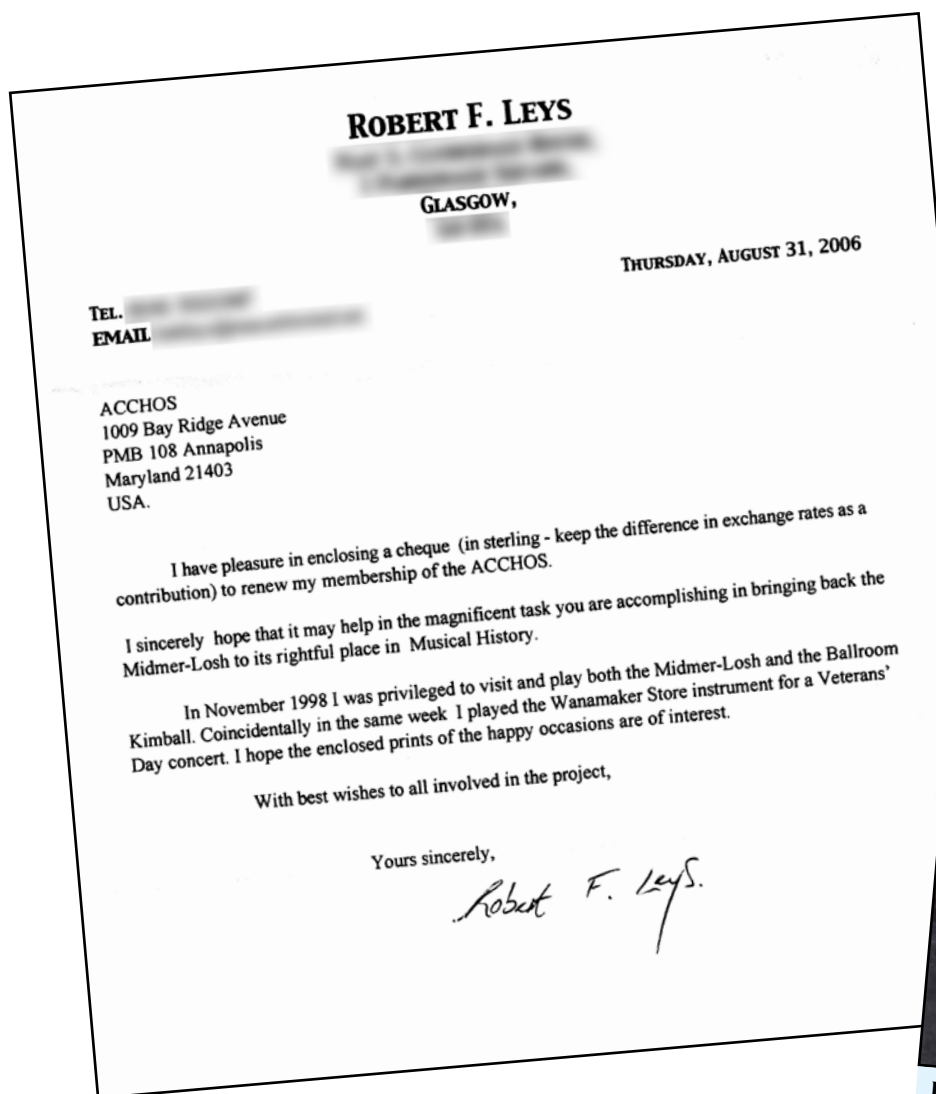
I was glad to see the sequence of the kids getting a tour. I wonder what they thought of all that?

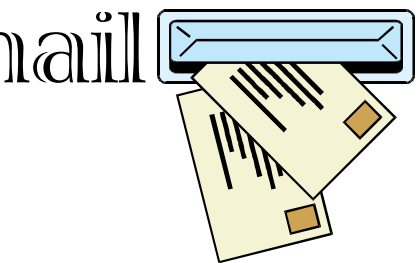
For the curator position, it must be a hard job to fill because of the enormous previous experience whoever will need to do a good job of it, to say nothing of political acumen to charm all the layers of bureaucracy who are probably involved and personal charisma to raise the money needed.

Once you get started on the restoration project (I have confidence in your group that is a 'when' not an 'if'), I encourage you to record a vast amount of video of the process. That video, itself, will be a profoundly important historical record, perhaps more so than the Hess photos. We need a sequence of the voicing, polish-

ing, and tuning of the Egyptian horn pipes! In fact, you may want to even compile a full-length documentary to show in the various art theaters around the country & world. Working title - "The Senator's Masterpiece, episode II: Reborn".

*Dave Goggin*





I lived 50 years on the Jersey peninsula. My memories of the grand ol' gal go back to pre- WW II days. Mom and Dad used to pack us kids in a friend's car and head to Atlantic City. We stopped at Steel Pier for the rides, slides, and shows like the General Motors exhibit, a visit to Planter's Peanuts to

see Mr. Peanut, some saltwater taffy, and if we heard it playing, a side-trip into Convention Hall to listen to the organ music.

It was in the '39-40's era, I believe, when all the chambers were functioning, and while I was just a lad at the time, I can remember music from the ceiling, sides, and front. I was literally dumfounded by the sound. I was no stranger to

organs since a few of the local movie houses in Wildwood had theater organs, but the Midmer-Losh was something completely different, and I can remember Mom asking me if I was trying to catch flies -- my mouth was hanging wide open!

*G. L Heitzmann  
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

More than 40 years ago, I studied organ with Richard Weissmuller. He was a graduate of the Paris conservatory and studied under Charles Marie Widor. He told me that he was the organist at the ACCH during WWII for the Army. I've seen a photo of him seated at the main console.

One story that he told me was that he was rarely allowed to play the bombard trumpet stop (100 inches of pressure he said) since it could be heard all over town and up to 8 miles out to sea.

Would you happen to have any records of him? And yes, he was related to Johnny Weissmuller (Olympic gold medalist and Tarzan).

*Thanks,  
Den Ciul  
Claviers Baroques -  
Upper Canada Harpsichords  
109 Fuller Ave, Toronto ON  
Canada M6R 2C4*

BTW, I'll put up a link to your very fine site.



Robert F. Leys



## ***Recollections And Comments About the Midmer-Losh Pipe Organ in Boardwalk Hall***

- “In letters to his grandmother, Mrs. C.M. Tobias, and to his uncle, J. Ellis Tobias, Tremont, Jackie described the big organ as “the most magnificent instrument in the world.” He said, “Mr. Evans turned on the high voltage for me and I really opened it up full.”

- “It’s as though heaven and the angels appeared to us mere mortals with the breath of God and spoke in God’s magnificent voice - ‘You are Lord’!!!”

- “I dare venture that if the ACCH instrument could be heard in its entirety, it would transform the thinking of an entire generation of organ folk in a heart-beat.”

- “A tour through this job is an eye-opener as the pipe-work is some of the most beautiful imaginable. With such talented contributors as Henry Vincent Willis, Roscoe Evans and Anton Gottfried, not to mention the highly-qualified Midmer-Losh staff, could the result be anything other than glorious?”

- He [Robert Elmore] said it could “move men’s souls as no other organ anywhere.”

- “Unbelievable... quite an adventure for an organ-builder to see such a monument to our art first-hand ... one can hardly imagine the effect when all is restored and working perfectly.”

- This instrument is so far beyond the development of the ordinary organ that the programs could be adjusted perfectly to the occasion and contained very little organ music — about one number in eight selections. The organ numbers of typical rolling majesty diversified the program beautifully.

The intense orchestral color, the immense volume, the key action speed and especially the swell section speed, bring powers of expression hitherto unrealized in an organ. The articulation of the pipes, the convenience and flexibility of the console arrangements and the generally increased range open up the whole field of music to the organ in a new way.

Symphony, Opera, Violin and Piano literature, Songs, Quartets, Military Marches and the whole marvelous treasure house of music find a new and powerfully expressive medium.

Noble Diapasons and Reed choruses, masses of Strings of undreamed range and beauty, Brass effects impossible even to the brass itself, Pedal stops of a depth and sonority impossible to conceive - each contribute a new factor in organ music and with corroborating harmonics at intervals never before used, and in an intensity fully equal to unison pitch, provide a Brilliance and Cohesion of Ensemble Superbly Colossal.

- “Following the ballroom it was ‘The Big One.’ This instrument defies description. Just the organ work room with about 20 large reservoirs hanging on the wall or mounted on racks 30 or 40 feet over your head is mind-boggling. And the winding! Damn near looks as if you were in the engine room of a large steam turbine power ocean liner. We toured 1 & 2. Wonderful workmanship. Huge steel I-beams support much of the organ which seems to be stacked 4 or 5 layers high and a couple deep. You are literally walking through canyons of large organ pipes. The huge zinc 32' open diapason in chamber #2 is unbelievable when you have to look *up* to the mouth of the first several pipes. The 64' Diaphone is in Chamber #1 and I am now a member of a rather small select group that have seen and photographed both of the two 64' ranks in the world...the other being in the Sydney Town Hall. In this case they go up, and up...and up to eventually miter 90 degrees across the top of what I would call the woodwind chamber just due to the fact that it had several orchestral reed ranks.”

- “The basic layout of the instrument was strikingly advanced for its time. It was the organ equivalent of a quadraphonic stereo system with front speakers, side speakers and rear speakers, with each “speaker” being several divisions of the instrument. Shade/shoe selectors could not only couple various divisions to each shoe, but either open — or close — shades as the shoe advanced. Thus, opening a single shoe could move an immense wave of tone left to right, back to front, side to side or diagonally. Manipulating three shoes could rotate the music around the Hall in either direction. These were only a few of hundreds of special effects available on the 7-manual console.”

- “It is highly understandable then, when I got the word I would be privileged to not only see but play that instrument, that I would skip classes or whatever was necessary to get down there from New York to have this experience.

That was 54 years ago and I still have the most vivid recollections of the event. Sitting at that console with its 1200 stop tabs and seven keyboards is an image of awe and disbelief still etched in my mind. My recollection is that I had no music with me, which was not important because I was in Seventh (manual) Heaven just sitting there improvising, experimenting, hearing what came out, even in the smallest exploratory way on that vast instrument.



- “30,000 persons witnessed the dedication of our new Convention Hall, in June, 1929. Vice-President of the United States, Charles Curtis, was one of the principal speakers and Mayor Ruffu was the Master of Ceremonies. “A Temple Of World Peace” ... “The Geneva Of The Americas” ...that was the prophecy of national and world statesmen at the opening of the new \$15,000,000 structure, at Georgia Avenue and the Boardwalk.”

- “I visited the organ several times in the “Old Atlantic City” before they tore down all the hotels to build new casinos. Several [ATOS] Chapters used to band together on a Sunday to come down and hear the two organs in Convention Hall. The last time I heard the whole organ play was at a meeting in the early 1960s, just before the windlines in the string chambers in the ceiling were disconnected for air conditioning for the 1964 Democratic Convention.

## Flashback



In 1952, Marilyn Monroe was Grand Marshall of the Miss America Pageant and got a tour of the Midmer-Losh organ from Roscoe Evans, the Curator at the time. That same year, Mimi Smith, “Miss Pennsylvania” did her talent act on the Midmer-Losh playing “Tico Tico”!

## Army Engineers Kept Organ In Top Shape

I visited the organ several times in the “Old Atlantic City” before they tore down all the hotels to build new casinos. Several [ATOS] Chapters used to band together on a Sunday to come down and hear the two organs in Convention Hall. The last time I heard the whole organ play was at a meeting in the early 1960s, just before the windlines in the string chambers in the ceiling were disconnected for air conditioning for the 1964 Democratic Convention.

The organ saw its best days during WWII when the hall was used for USO dances on the weekends and the organ was used to spell the orchestra while on break. It then had a full company of army engineers who kept it in top shape.  
—Robert Balfour

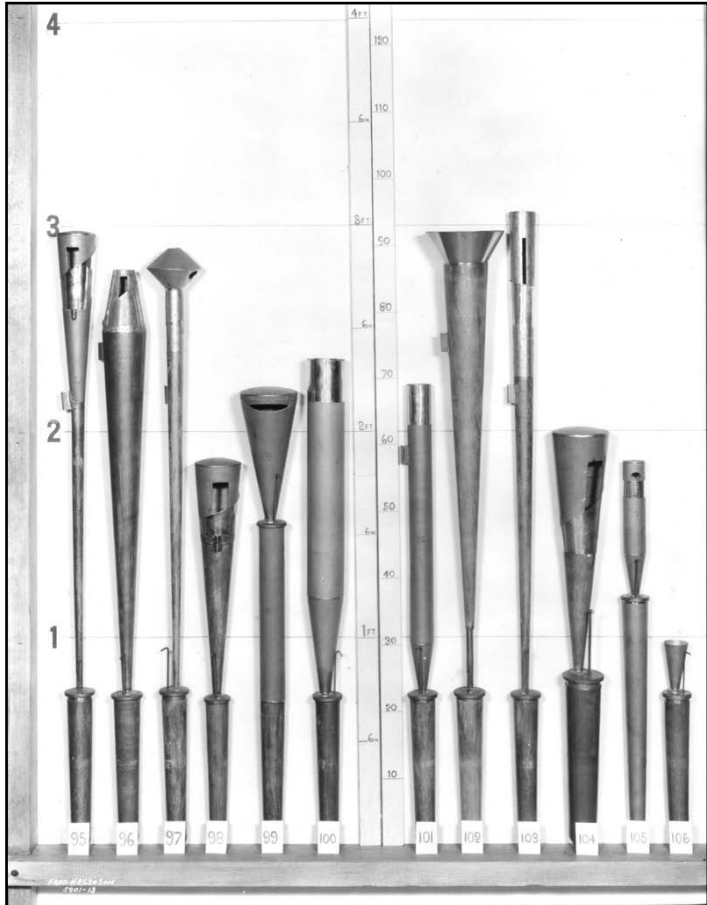
## Pope Benedict's thoughts about the Pipe Organ

In 2006, when he blessed the new instrument at the Alte Kapelle in Regensburg, Pope Benedict XVI remarked, “The organ has always been considered, and rightly so, the king of musical instruments, because it takes up all the sounds of creation... and gives resonance to the fullness of human sentiments, from joy to sadness, from praise to lamentation. By transcending the merely human sphere, as all music of quality does, it evokes the divine. The organ's great range of timbre, from piano through to a thundering fortissimo, makes it an instrument superior to all others. It is capable of echoing and expressing all the experiences of human life. The manifold possibilities of the organ in some way remind us of the immensity and the magnificence of God.”

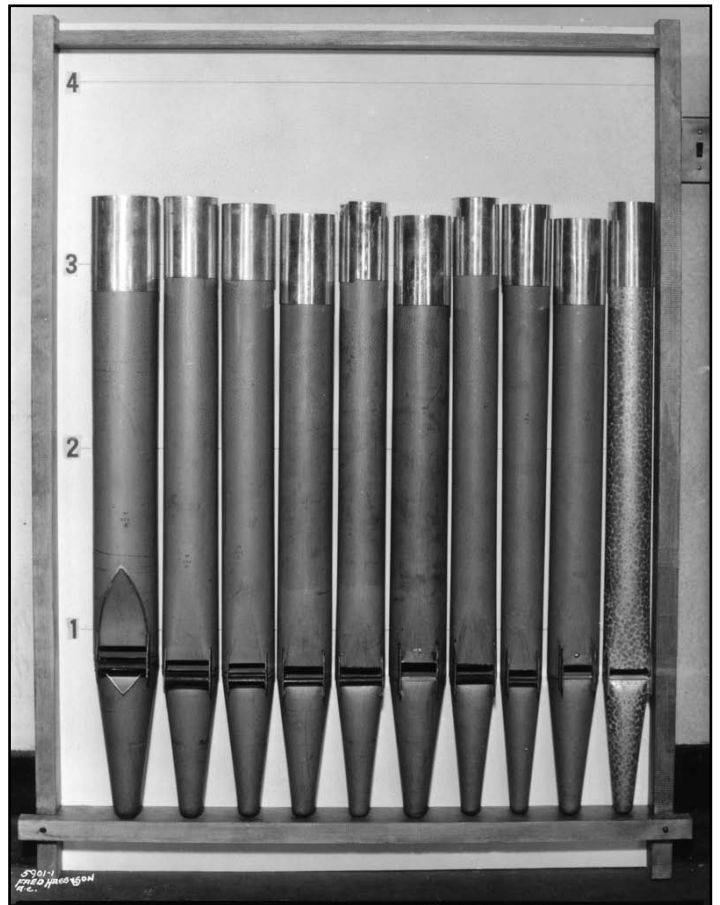


Boardwalk Hall was also used for recruit training during WWII.

## Special Pipes – Special Sounds



**GREAT-SOLO REEDS, L-R 95 Oboe-Horn, 96 Saxophone, 97 English Horn, 98 French Horn, 99 Vox Baryton, 100 Krummhorn, 101 Clarinet 8, 102 Orchestral Saxophone 8, 103 Orchestral Oboe 8, 104 French Horn 8, 105 Vox Humana, 106 Kinura 8**



**Pipes from each of the unique set of 10 unison Diapason ranks on the Great organ. I & II are voiced on 30 inches of wind. III is on 20 inches, IV-VI are on 15, and VII-IX are on 10. Note the distinctive spotted metal of Diapason X, a Schulze-type voice speaking on only 4 inches. Diapasons I-III are double landguld ranks.**

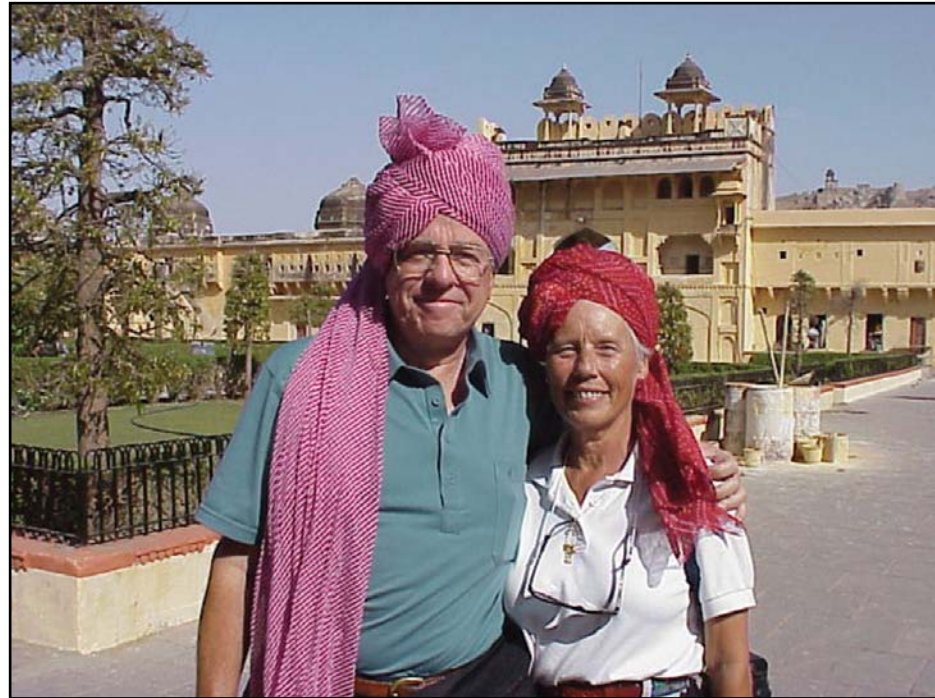


## Jack Haring

Jack Haring was the first “Angel” to appear and support the work of ACCHOS in a significant way. He was an IBM engineer for many years, as well as an organ enthusiast and an accomplished organist who played many organs in his lifetime including the Wanamaker Organ and the West Point Cadet Chapel organ. He was organist and choirmaster at Valley Forge Chapel, and his wife, Virginia, fondly remembers his playing the National Anthem at Valley Forge that always resounded in a spectacular way.

Among his numerous contributions, Jack loaned funds for ACCHOS to produce the first CD, *The Auditorium Organ*. He conceived the idea and generously funded a large mailing of the second issue of *The Grand Ophicleide* (Winter 1999) that was sent to all members of the Organ Historical Society, the American Theatre Organ Society, and the American Guild of Organists. He provided funds for the Pictorial Essay about the Midmer-Losh organ along with Stephen Smith’s book, *Atlantic City’s Musical Masterpiece*.

He promoted the idea of installing a 24/7 Webcam system in Boardwalk Hall so all could



Jack Haring and his wife, Virginia, during a visit to India in 2000.

see what was happening at any given moment in time, and constantly offered many suggestions to help further the work of ACCHOS. Jack was always full of creative ideas and was a source of great encouragement and inspiration to ACCHOS.

Sadly, Jack passed away after a battle with cancer in late 2001, and his presence has been deeply missed. His wife, Virginia, underwrote a sig-

nificant portion of the production of the DVD, *The Senator’s Masterpiece*, in his memory.

The one thing that Jack always wanted to do was play the “Big Organ” in Atlantic City. Unfortunately, due to the renovations on his last visit to Atlantic City he was not able to do this. He never got his “Heart’s Desire” as he passed away before he got back to Atlantic City.



Jack’s high-resolution photo of the Ocean One Mall Exhibit



Jack’s clear view of the Exhibit from a distance

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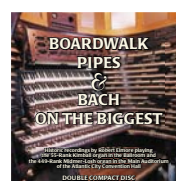


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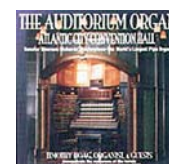


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