



The Buckeye Backcheck

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Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the
Piano Technicians Guild



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From the Editor

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I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.
Mark

...

Meeting Minutes (excerpts)

Thanks to Dave McDonald for hosting the meeting, giving the technical, and for providing refreshments afterwards.

Everyone is encouraged to submit their dues on or before 12/31/2005. Doing so allows taking the deduction this year.

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas... as we discussed the annual Christmas dinner. This year's event will take place at Bucca di Beppo located at 60 E. Wilson Bridge Rd. at the corner of High St. in Worthington, **Saturday January 7th, 2006 at 6:30.**

Please RSVP to Marilyn Ritchie to make your reservations no later than Jan 1st, 2006 (please earlier if possible) 614-855-7704 or via email at ritchiepiano @ aol . com

There will be no regular PTG meeting in December. January's meeting will be held at the dinner.

We need your email address and input on this subject. Considering the cost of stamps next year and production costs, we think it would be more cost effective to email the newsletter. If you do not have email and wish to receive the newsletter by mail please contact Mark Ritchie. Mark and Kim are researching PDF software to facilitate the newsletter via email. Newsletter costs about \$35.00/ month for printing and stamps.

Dwight Hansen has completed his membership application and a motion to accept his application was passed.

The Chapter is planning to offer the Technical Examinations. Kim and Mitch will announce when and where they are to be held. A projected time would be the end of February or March of 2006. Any RPTs who wish to help please contact Kim.

The Written exam is free of charge and must be completed first. The Technical as well as the Tuning exams are \$90.00 per test.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Varrone



From left:
guest Andy
Launer,
Mike
Varrone,
Kim
Hoessly,
Victor
Wolfe, and
Chapter's
newest
member
Dwight
Hansen.

Chapter News & Notes:

Saturday January 7, 2006 Christmas/New Year party 6:30 pm Mark your calendar now!!!

Ron Kenreich performed an organ concert Nov 15 at First Congregational Church. This is part of their noontime concert series. Violinist, Bob Pforsich was featured on 2 selections. A church member provided \$500,000.00 in her will to have the organ restored. Ron said that it was the best 12 reed stop, 4 manual instrument he has the privilege to perform on. It is so much fun to play

Butt's & Flanges

There is a new meaning to the proud phrase “My piano never goes out of tune”

A question was raised as to why older pianos seem to “hold” their tune. One reason may be the piano has little or no crown. The age of the strings may also contribute to this condition, it just might be a good stable piano.

Victor brought a tunable tuning fork. Hmm... I wonder what we use to tune the fork? It was very interesting.

Ron brought in a decibel reader (from Radio Shack). He uses it to discern which hammers are louder than others. He said that the drawback was this. The technician had to make certain that the key stroke was delivered at the exact same force etc. He said, that of course, was impossible. He uses it as an approximation.

Technical - A few cleaning secrets

The darkened, stained tuning pins became “like new” as a 2700 rpm drill with a wire brush attachment was aggressively applied to the unsuspecting piano. It was handled with such expertise you almost expected him to blow smoke from it like a six shooter. Dave McDonald, owner of The Piano Warehouse, demonstrated various cleaning and restoration secrets he has learned over the years. He then showcased all the “Glitz and Glitter” of his trade... Well actually the “Flitz and Glitter” ... okay just the Flitz.

3M Imperial Glaze: Apply this on a soft cotton cloth to rub out swirl marks on the polyester finishes. Auto supply stores carry this item.

Sharpie: Medium oil based marker. This covers scratches in polyester resin pianos. This can be found in art stores.

These are just a few of the cleaning and touch-up “secrets” Dave McDonald shared with the Chapter.

If you missed this meeting / you missed some good information and great refreshments.

Thanks Dave-



Dave MacDonald demonstrates cleaning secrets

Flitz: Brass polisher that can be found in hardware stores.
This versatile cleaner also adds minor repairs to polyester resin.



From Virgil E. Smith

This interesting article comes from *The Wippenpost*, The Official Newsletter of the Chicago Chapter, J. Stanley Ryberg -editor

VIRGIL'S EXPERIENCES VI

by Virgil E Smith, RPT, M. Mus.

Probably my most horrible experience as a piano tuner happened with our own Moody piano. We finally gave up on our old Baldwin and purchased a new Steinway D for \$7500 with the school discount. Steinway was having trouble with their pianos at the time and ours was no exception. I still hated the sound of an over-lacquered hammer, so I refused to let them put any lacquer on our hammers at the store. The tone was nice but had no power for several months. The tone finally became uneven enough to require some voicing and I scheduled a tuning and a voicing on a Friday evening when the Society of American Musicians was using it for a contest

the next day. Two of my private tuning students came to watch me do the voicing. I finally learned to balance the action between the edge of the keybed and my knee for voicing, but at that time I was setting it on the artist bench to voice. When I turned my head to speak to one of my students the action slipped off the bench; when it hit the floor about 30 hammers broke off. I was sick; I had no new shanks, could not buy them on Saturday, the contest was the next day and the piano was unusable. My Guardian Angel was really with me that night. One of the students had a Steinway D on which he had just replaced new hammers and shanks and he had kept the old ones. He drove home and got them for me and the other student and I stayed until 3:00am putting the hammers on his old shanks. They were not Teflon, so the touch was pretty uneven, but every note played and the contest went on the next day. We knew something had always been wrong with the action, because it would not regulate the same as the Orchestra Hall Steinway. It was finally sent back to Steinway where the action was completely rebuilt, covering all my sins.

I had a very happy relationship working with Steinway when my friend, Ed Hendricks was there, but I had one very unfortunate experience with them after Ed no longer had the franchise. One of my customers was playing a concerto with a local orchestra on a Sunday afternoon. They rented a Steinway for the performance and the regular Steinway technician serviced it Friday. Since there was a Rock concert there Saturday night and the doors would be open a lot for moving equipment in and out, they got permission for me to check out the piano Sunday morning. When I arrived Sunday morning the orchestra director was already there complaining about the piano being tuned below A440. The pianist had already complained to me about the weak treble, so I polished the treble hammers with fine sand paper to give the treble more power and retuned the piano to A440. They were pleased with the piano in performance, but the director wrote a letter to the Steinway dealer complaining about their tuner's work. Joy Collins wrote a nasty letter back claiming that they had to replace the hammers because I had ruined them by over-lacquering them. I also had tuned the piano so high that they had to tune it three times to get it down to pitch.

One of my joys was to travel to Colorado Springs once or twice a year to service pianos at my customers' expense. Three of my local customers retired to the Colorado Springs area and arranged for me to come there when they had difficulty finding satisfactory piano service. It was a city of 600,000 with no one who did more than tuning and basic repairs. Other musicians soon heard about my work and I soon had difficulty limiting my trips to no more than 2 weeks. I loved the area; I could look out the window of the customer's home where I stayed and see Pikes Peak. Driving across the mountains to two customers who had homes on the other side was a real treat. They still occasionally urge me to come out and service their pianos, but as much as I would love to, it is just physically impossible.

My next story began in Bloomington, Illinois. I went there to service the Steinway for one of my former customers who was teaching at the University. They also asked me to service a new Steinway D at the dealership; everyone was talking about how terrible it was. Fortunately some proper service made it into a beautiful instrument and Mr. Slan, the dealer, never forgot what I did to that piano. He later transferred to the St. Louis dealership. When one of my students going

to school there needed work, he went to Steinway. When Mr. Slan found out he was my student he hired him immediately to do his top Steinway customers. He also had him doing some rebuilding in his shop. When my student moved his family back to Washington, Iowa, he had planned to continue his Chiropractic practice and do piano tuning on the side. Mr. Slan began sending him so many Steinways to rebuild that he closed his practice and did piano work full time. He was already a fine tuner, but he wanted to aim his local practice to top musicians in the area, so he invited me to come out and help improve his tuning to the highest level. We began by having him do his best tuning on a Steinway D that he had there for rebuilding. I then retuned it by using only natural beats. Half way through the tuning he began to hear the difference in the overall sound. When I was through he was so excited about the increased resonance, warmth, and vitality of the tone that he wanted me to guide him through a tuning like that. I guided him through a couple of tunings on church grands before I left and he tells me that it is now much easier. What I would love to do now in my retirement years is to help excellent tuners raise their tuning skill to a higher level. I am most grateful for what piano tuning has done for me. It has provided contacts, opportunities and rewards that I could not have had otherwise. The two tune-offs with Jim Coleman were a lot of fun. Being a teacher I loved my opportunities to teach for so many years at the conventions, at regional seminars and various chapters around the country. Thank you for letting me share some of these experiences with you these last few months.

Virgil.



The Buckeye Backcheck

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