

The Buckeye Backcheck

Newsletter of the Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

Volume 38 Issue 8 October 2013



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Fall is here, schools are in session, and the crazy schedules of late August and September may be easing up a little. Hopefully this allows for some time to enjoy the season. Poison ivy and virginia creeper are the stars of the early season for me, turning the tree trunks and fencerows a dramatic scarlet and purple. The beauty of self employment is that we can schedule in a bit of time to take in the sights. I have the good fortune of tuning out in the distant countryside from time to time, where I can simply park on the side of the road, eat lunch, and listen to the fluttering leaves of the cottonwood trees. It makes a nice break from tuning unisons all day long.

For our technical this month, Marlene Hartzler will talk with us about business practices, including databases, client reminders/scheduling, as well as the S-Corp and LLC organization of a piano business and the savings and protection these can offer. Pretty neat stuff; maybe she can give us a few pointers to make life easier.

Bryan Hartzler, RPT

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Chapter Meeting Minutes September 17, 2013

The meeting was held at Graves Piano & Organ Co., and President Bryan Hartzler called the meeting to order at 8:25 pm following the presentation given by Paul Graves.

Attendance:

Bryan Hartzler, John Schmoll, Ron Kenreich, Chris Burget, Kim Hoessly, David Stang, Tim Thompson, Ben Wiant, and host Paul Graves.

Treasurer's Report:

The Chapter has \$3,334.83 in checking.

Old Business:

Chapter elections were held in May:

Bryan Harzler - President

John Schmoll - Vice President

Chris Burget - Secretary

Ron Kenreich - Treasurer

Kim Hoessly updated the ads for the OMTA and AGO directories.

The chapter also decided to place a \$50 full page ad in the OMTA Pianorama Program Guide and Kim Hoessly was going to design the ad and come up with a slogan for that as well.

New Business:

There was a discussion of the Chapter's funds and some possible uses for some of that money. Bringing in an out-of-town experts for technicals was mentioned, as well as possibly making more charitable donations in the future. This is part of the reason for increasing ad sizes in pamphlets and directories because as much as it is advertising the Chapter it is also supporting those organizations.

The Chapter also agreed to increase the amount donated to the OMTA Summer Scholarship. The Chapter authorized Bryan Hartzler to increase the amount from \$100 up to a possible \$250.

Butts & Flanges

Kim Hoessly mentioned that in addition to recent state-wide increase in sales tax of .25%, Franklin County will be adding another .5% to that bringing the total sales tax to 7.5%. According to the Columbus Dispatch, the increase, which takes effect January 1, 2014, is actually in two parts. One consists of a permanent raise of .25% to cover county operating expenses, and another temporary .25% increase to pay for a morgue, a jail, some water line improvements and economic development programs in the area. The temporary portion is slated to stop at the end of 2018. For more information go to: <http://goo.gl/vMI5hV>

I, Chris Burget, showed a bottle of Titebond's Molding and Trim glue to the group. Some were already familiar, but I thought others may benefit from hearing about it. I wanted to find a glue for rehanging hammers in the field. Hide glue is still the best but the cold formulas take too long to set and I didn't want to deal with a hot glue pot, even though mine is small. This is a PVA glue and it is thick, doesn't run, has a strong initial tack, and starts to set within minutes. It also is reversible with heat, which was one of my main desires. The collar isn't quite as hard as hide glue but I still found it to be effective where time was an issue. I tested a few hammers and found that after five minutes I could pound a table with the hammer and it didn't budge at all. I tried to twist a hammer off and found the the shank wanted to twist and splinter after using a good deal of force. However, on another, the glue gave way after holding the hammer in a hair straightening iron and it quickly



reset within a minute or two depending on how long heat was applied. That hammer stayed put after hard pounding on the bench. Some members stated they also use it for some felt gluing because it doesn't wick into the felt. For more information go to: <http://goo.gl/8AUi5b>

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The Life & Times Of Paul Graves

by Chris Burget

For the September meeting we had another installment of "The Life & Times Of..." and this time Paul Graves told us about his journeys in the piano business from the perspective of a piano retail store owner with over fifty years of experience.

After graduating from high school in Leon, Iowa in 1958, Paul moved to Birmingham, Alabama and got a job moving pianos. Most of the pianos were old uprights, many of which were the heavy, unwieldy mirror pianos. He worked six days a week and made a weekly wage of \$35. He also received \$27.50 per week for hotels and \$3.50 per day for food as the job required quite a bit of traveling throughout the state, much of it in a two-ton truck with bad brakes.

He told us a story of a delivery to the town of Jasper. Upon delivering a piano to an elderly lady, a neighbor came over and said she wanted to purchase the same kind of piano for herself. It so happened that there was another one on the truck and Paul offered to sell it to her. After returning to Birmingham and telling his boss that the neighbor had bought the other piano, his boss said, "I didn't know you were a piano salesman!" Thus began his piano sales career.

Many of the pianos for sale were often repossessed or used, with some new ones. Piano teachers were also offered \$15 commissions toward sales to their students. In those days, even for piano stores, it was very common to sell pianos from the back of a truck as many people may have lived outside of town in the countryside where road travel was a little more difficult for some. So, taking the product to the customer was often a necessity. Therefore, a traveling piano salesman working alone also had to learn how to move pianos alone. On top of that, it was common to have to remove an old piano from a household to make room for the new one.

After a couple of years, Paul opened his own store in Tuscaloosa and rented the building right next to a Kimball dealer. Paul then had the opportunity to become a licensed Baldwin dealer but had to overcome one obstacle first. He was still under the age of twenty-one and was still considered a "minor" in regard to this kind of business responsibility. He then went to court and a judge removed his minor status upon payment of a \$100 fee and he has been a franchised Baldwin dealer ever since. He had about thirty pianos and \$700 to spend on fixing the place up and first month's rent. After that he had a little over \$30 left and has never looked back. He operated that store for a couple more years then, in 1962, he decided to move up north.

He chose Columbus due to its centralized location and its proximity to Cincinnati and the Baldwin factory. However, soon after moving here, Baldwin moved its operations to Arkansas. He opened his first store in town in August 1962 on Broad Street. It so happened that on his Grand Opening, Liberace was performing in town. He was able to convince the star to visit the store, where he stayed for a good while signing autographs and chatting up the would-be clientele. That location was a successful one until 1979 when the store caught fire. Arson was determined to be the cause. Paul related how fire investigators observed, and took pictures of, the people watching the fire and this helped lead them to find the perpetrator. The man received a five-year prison sentence, however, Paul saw him walking free after serving ninety days. After this, Paul opened a string of stores throughout the Central Ohio area including locations on Hamilton Rd. and Refugee Rd. and Lazarus Department Stores downtown, as well as stores in Zanesville and Chillicothe, among other places. Eventually, Graves consolidated and moved into the present location on Karl Rd. on the north side of Columbus where he's been for more than two decades now. He is still a Baldwin dealer and has been a Steinway dealer since 1986. He was also the first one in town to franchise any European brands. At one point, Ben Wiant was his European purchasing manager and facilitated relationships with makers like Bechstein, and was the first American technician allowed into the Steinway Hamburg factory.

He says the Karl Rd. location has been a very good one all these years and not many piano stores nowadays are able to keep the numbers and variety of quality instruments under their roofs, let alone a fully functioning auditorium with several very fine concert pianos ready to go. And because of all this, he has met thousands of kids and hundreds of teachers and many wonderful people through all of the various recitals and competitions held there over the years. All of which were free to attend. He says that business has slowed down some in the last handful of years, but seems to be picking up. The used piano warehouse has been, and still is, consistently moving pianos. He does, however, lament a perception that not as many kids today seem to be taking lessons due to the many forms of entertainment and sports that all clamour for young people's attention. The increase in adults taking lessons seems to counter that some, though.

He then answered a few questions including those in regard to Chinese made pianos. He says they are getting better and better, but that is bittersweet because that means fewer American made pianos. He also says that he always tries to treat customers like they are always right - even when they are not. He'll do whatever he can to make them feel satisfied because they are making long-term investments and he wants them to be happy. When asked what else he would like to have done he told us that there are many things he could say, but that one of them wasn't so far removed, "To be honest, I often thought I might like being a piano technician."

The Columbus Piano Technicians Guild would like to sincerely thank Paul Graves for being such a staple in, and supporter of, the music community in this city and beyond. He has done so much for so many people over the years and gave many people, including many in this chapter, their starts in the piano servicing industry. Thank you Paul for all your years of service.



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www.ptgcolumbus.org



"Your playing was so-so, but your facial expressions were absolutely phenomenal!"

Pablo Helguera

Columbus Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

President Bryan Hartzler, RPT
Vice-President John Schmoll, RPT
Treasurer Ron Kenreich
Secretary Christopher Burget

*Contributions and pictures for
the Buckeye Backcheck and the
web page are always welcome,
(even if they are only
peripherally related to pianos)!
- Chris Burget*

Upcoming Events

Chapter Meeting
Tuesday, October 15, 2013,
7:30 pm

**North Unitarian
Universalist Church**
1574 Franklin Street
Lewis Center, OH 43035

Topic: Maintaining A Piano Tuning
Business by Marlene Hartzler

Map Link: <http://goo.gl/maps/oENFV>
South of Lewis Center Rd. next to the
railroad tracks.

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Disclaimer:

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Comments, articles, and advertising requests may be sent to the editor:

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