

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since the last newsletter was published, several things have occurred that have caused me to reflect on the years since I began my career as an organbuilder. The impressive opening of Verizon Hall in Philadelphia, the death of my father, the start of the Cathedral installation in Los Angeles, and the celebration of the 25th anniversary of our Opus 4 all happened within six weeks. Through mixed emotions I am grateful for where we are as a company, excited about its future, and mindful of at least two of the many people who had a profound influence on me.



On December 18, 2001, Elmer Dobson died after a year-long illness. His relationship to me and my business was strong from the very beginning. In 1972 and 1973 he indulged me with a year off from gainful employment and supported me as I built an organ in his shop on the farm. He was proud of my work on that instrument, which has ably served Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux City, Iowa, since 1974.

When I decided to start this business, as far-fetched as it probably sounded to a Midwestern farmer, my father was very encouraging. He assisted my fledgling company by co-signing for loans and even guaranteeing some of the early contracts. This demonstration of his confidence in me certainly made the difference to bankers and lawyers; I was still in my early 20s and organbuilding seemed like a risky business to these people.



Elmer was an accomplished carpenter and cabinetmaker, working with me on many of the early organs. In 1978, Elmer

oversaw the renovation of a condemned, derelict building into our beautiful new shop. In recent years he was less involved in the business, but took great pride in seeing the company develop into its present position, now involved in exciting and prestigious projects that were simply unimaginable in those early days.

A month after Elmer's death, Olivet Congregational Church, St. Paul, Minn., invited me to attend the 25th Anniversary Celebration of Opus 4. Worship was followed by a dinner at which Rev. John Marcus Cox, Pastor, and Dr. Arthur Kaemmer, organ committee chair, reminisced about acquiring the organ and what it has meant to the life of the church. I summarized the accomplishments of my company since Opus 4 and related how Robert Tucker, the organ's donor, gave his gift to Olivet Church on the condition that the contract help launch the business of a young and promising organbuilder. Mr. Tucker, a founding member of 3M Company who died in 1998, remained committed to me over the years by mentoring me in business matters. He generously made 3M engineers available to help with technical problems and even had a senior 3M photographer offer advice on advertising. This celebration was a wonderful day of remembering for me, particularly in the context of these other current events.

The confidence, advice and opportunities that both Elmer and Bob Tucker bestowed on me have tangible results in my organbuilding enterprise. Both of these men came of age during the Great Depression and, having had to overcome many obstacles in achieving their own successes, were determined to help the next generation be successful. The instruments we've been privileged to build are a lasting tribute to these men and the lessons I learned from them.

## PROFILES



**S**ally Winter remembers the day she was hired. “It was September 6th, 1983. Lynn interviewed me on the 6th, a Sunday, because the entire crew was leaving for an installation in Manhattan, Kansas, the very next day. The office was torn up for remodeling, so I worked at a desk in the shop. Lynn gave me some pipe orders to type, which looked like Greek to me. I was completely confused, had no one to ask, and wondered what I had gotten myself into.” Fortunately, not only did she survive this early chaos, but she thrived, and the company with her.

Sally arrived at a pivotal moment in the company’s history. Our previous secretary, Karen Gaddis, left when her husband accepted a job in the Des Moines area. Coincidentally, Sally inquired with Lynn about a job only a few days later. At the time of her interview, the shop employed just eight, but was starting to attract national attention, having just signed a contract for an organ in Burlington, North Carolina, the firm’s first project outside of the Midwest. Two decades later, the company has almost twenty employees and is undertaking a greatly expanded variety of projects, including several instruments that dwarf the earlier ones.

Coordinating the various administrative aspects of a shop our size requires a significant amount of work. As the company has grown, so has Sally’s job description. In addition to the secretarial duties she has had from the beginning of her tenure, she now makes all of the company travel arrangements, assists Business Manager Kirk Russell with the accounting, handles the mailing and shipping, gives tours, and handles the countless other things that no one thinks about but which everyone expects to be done.

A lifelong resident of Lake City, Sally is the youngest of Tom and Audrey Williams’ three children. Her mother, a choir director and music teacher active in the Iowa Choral Directors Association, instilled a love of music at an early age. She sang her first solo in church at age four. In high school, she was a member of the All-State Chorus, and learned to play the guitar and alto saxophone. She remains an active member of the Lake City Union Church, singing soprano in the choir and play-

ing handbells, and is frequently called upon as a soloist for weddings and funerals.

Sally is married to another Lake City native, Daryl Winter, who is employed by an area agricultural cooperative. They have three grown children, Stacey, Leslie and Andrew, all of whom live in Iowa. Several years ago Sally and Daryl renovated an historic, century-old house in Lake City, complete with a large yard and extensive gardens of flowers, vegetables and herbs. More than one fortunate visitor has witnessed owls perching on the garden fence on a summer’s evening.

Sally is active in the Lake City community. She is involved in Entré Nous, a local music club, and the local chapter of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, an international philanthropic educational organization that owns Cottey College, a two-year women’s college in Nevada, Missouri. She is also active in AFS, the international student exchange organization.

“My kids were in school and I was looking for something worthwhile to do with my time,” Sally says. “Lynn took a chance on me. I had no secretarial experience and didn’t know anything about organ building.” She does now. With Dobson crews occasionally working on opposite ends of the country, Sally remains the steady hub in the middle of a swirling constellation of activity. She handles the constant demands with grace and good humor, and it’s difficult indeed to imagine how we’d get along without her.

# PHILADELPHIA FESTIVITIES

The Grand Opening of the **Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Philadelphia**, took place the week-end of December 16, 2001. It was a spectacular event, beginning with two black-tie, gala preview concerts. On Friday evening members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, pianist André Watts, opera singers Denyce Graves and Frederica von Stade, and Sir Elton John performed. On Saturday night the Philadelphia Orchestra debuted in Verizon Hall, performing Beethoven, Ravel and a premiere by Philadelphia native Aaron Jay Kernis. Guest soloists included violinist Itzhak Perlman, cellist Yo-Yo Ma and pianist Emanuel Ax. An elegant, eight course dinner concluded what Lynn Dobson described as “the most impressive and memorable event of my life.” The public opening of Kimmel Center then took place on Sunday, with an estimated 40,000 people visiting the Center just that first day. A full two week celebration with a wide variety of free concerts and events followed.

*The first public viewing of Verizon Hall interior*



*Wood-clad Verizon Hall under Kimmel Center's glass canopy*

Through it all, the gleaming façade of Dobson Op. 76 in Verizon Hall elegantly took in all the festivities, silently waiting for the day when the complete IV/125 instrument will add its own voice to the music making activity. The organ façade, installed last fall, contains the 32' Prestant from FFFF# and the 16' Octave. Visible in the upper left corner of the façade, as pictured at left, are the 20 bells and silver leafed star of the Zimbelstern. The largest bell is 10 inches wide at the bottom and the star is 32 inches in diameter. A portion of the adjustable acoustical canopy, also containing stage lighting and sound equipment, is shown level with the case top.

In recognition of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists' 100th Anniversary, the Regional Performing Arts Center, which actually manages the Kimmel Center complex, sponsored a special event for the Guild in early March at which Lynn Dobson made a presentation about Op. 76. His talk included pictures and narrative of the façade installation last fall, and offered a detailed description of and rationale for the proposed organ in the context of a major concert hall setting. A similar presentation will be made at the National Convention of the AGO, to be held in Philadelphia, July 2-6, 2002.

Additional pictures, a complete description and stoplist of the proposed instrument, and a convenient link to Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts may be found on our website at [www.dobsonorgan.com](http://www.dobsonorgan.com).

# WORK IN PROGRESS

Installation of the much anticipated Op. 75 (IV/105) for the **Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles** commenced on Monday, January 14, 2002. Six semi-trailers of organ components have been delivered to this immense edifice and are being assembled with assistance from professional riggers.



*A myriad of parts awaits installation*

An 80-foot scaffolding tower on the left-hand side of the instrument and a shorter tower on the right side provided initial access to the steel structure and facilitated installation of the exterior casework. A system of winches installed by the riggers first hoisted the eight main windchests into place. These were followed by wind system components, three expressive division enclosures, offset windchests and the lowest pipes of the 16' Open Diapason, 32' Contra Trombone and 32' Contra Bourdon. The remaining casework and pipe shades were in place by the end of March.



Installation of the 32' tin façade pipes began after Easter. Carl Giesecke & Sohn of Göttingen, Germany, built these incredible pipes, the largest tin pipes on this continent. Fabricated of heavy 83% tin and reinforced with copper, these pipes were delivered in one piece with the exception of Low C, which was

*Uwe Dohrmann, foreman from Giesecke, steadies 32' D in its sling as it is hoisted into place.*

too long to fit in the 40' shipping container. Weighing approximately 1,200 lbs. and with a foot 7 feet tall, it was soldered together on site. A special carriage was shipped with the pipes for moving them once unloaded from their shipping containers. Three men from Giesecke were on hand to direct their hoisting by the rigging crew and installation by Dobson.

The final component to be installed in the imposing façade will be the polished tin 16', 8' and 4' horizontal trumpets of the Fanfare division.

Completion of the organ's physical installation is anticipated for early May and tonal finishing will begin immediately thereafter. A weeklong series of Cathedral dedication celebrations is scheduled for September, with the actual organ dedication festivities planned for later in the year.

*Using a support cradle, 32' C# is muscled into vertical position*



# NEWSBITS

**Olivet Congregational Church, St. Paul, Minn.**, celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Dobson Op. 4 (II/24; 1976) in January. An anniversary CD featuring current organist **Paul Boehnke** and former organists **David Engen** and **Tom Klug** is now available. For information, please contact the church at 1850 Inglehart Ave., St. Paul, Minn., 55104.



**Wartburg College, Waverly, Ia.**, is celebrating its Sesquicentennial in part with a May 25th recital by College Organist **Karen Black** on Op. 67 (II/31; 1996), premiering *Fantasy on Ein' Feste Burg*, a work by **Pamela Decker** commissioned for the occasion.

**The Presbyterian Homes, Evanston, Ill.**, continues its "Gift of Music" series of recitals each third Monday afternoon of the month on Op. 64 (II/24; 1994). An evening recital is planned on May 9 by **Jan Hora**, of the Prague Conservatory, Prague, Czech Republic.

**Pakachoag Church, Auburn, Mass.**, recently presented a duo organ/piano recital with **Alanna Rantala**



and **Brett Maguire** on Op. 69 (II/31; 1997). Brett is winner of the AGO/Quimby Region I Young Organists Competition, and a student of **James David Christie**. Op. 69 was also featured on a recent recording of works by J. K. Paine with Harvard University organist **Murray Forbes Summerville**. It is available from the OHS at [ohscatalog.org](http://ohscatalog.org) (OAR460).

**West Market Street United Methodist Church, Greensboro, N.C.**, has begun a "Tuesday Midday Music Series," half-hour lunch time programs, many

featuring Op. 71 (III/58; 1999). Recent full recitals have included **John Mitchener** of Winston-Salem, N.C., and resident organist **Susan Bates**.

Op. 73 (III/38; 2000), at **St. Joseph Abbey, St. Benedict, La.**, was a stop on "A New Orleans Organ Odyssey," a tour of the area's noteworthy organs sponsored by that city's chapter of the Organ Historical Society on the first weekend in February. Over 100 attendees heard a demonstration of the instrument by **Fr. Seán Duggan**, Abbey Organist.

Op. 74 (II/22; 2000), at the **University of Delaware, Newark, Del.**, completed a second concert season with an October recital by **Jeffrey Brillhart** of Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, Bryn Mawr, Pa., and a March program of 20th century American music by **David Herman**, resident Professor of Organ.

**United Lutheran Church, Red Wing, Minn.**, hosted its first post-dedicatory concert on February 3 featuring Op. 77 (II/19; 2001). **William Kuhlman**, Professor of Organ at Luther College, Decorah, Ia., was the recitalist, assisted by faculty colleague, **Laura Chesher**, trumpet.



**Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, Ia.**, had their Easter Sunday worship service nationally broadcast. To accommodate ABC's production schedule, the church celebrated an Easter service on February 23, complete in every way. Organist **Ruth Harris**, presides over Op. 14 (II/38; 1981).

**St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Fort Dodge, Ia.**, hosted a concert by the Fort Dodge Area Symphony on March 3. **Tom Shadonix**, organist from Ottumwa, Ia., was featured on the II/30 Dobson rebuild in a program of concerti by Handel and Poulenc.

**The DPOB website** has undergone substantial revision with much more information about our exciting projects. Please visit us at [www.dobsonorgan.com](http://www.dobsonorgan.com).

## LOOKING BACK

**25 Years** - A large share of 1977 was devoted to a complete rebuilding of the 1903 Hinners (II/17) for the United Methodist Church, Rock Rapids, Ia. The original façade was retained, and the instrument enlarged to 28 ranks in sympathy with its original tonal design.

**20 Years** - Op. 17 (II/30) for Trinity Presbyterian Church, Indianola, Ia., was finished early in 1982. Two I/6 portative organs were built: Op. 18 for Bethany College, Mankato, Minn., and Op. 19, ultimately sold to St. James Catholic Church, Ferndale, Mich., in 1986.

**10 Years** - 1992 began with the installation of Op. 55 (II/32) at St. John's Lutheran Church, Storm Lake, Ia. Work during the summer months culminated with the installation of Op. 56 (II/17) for Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, Calif., in August. 1992 also marks the incorporation of the company as *Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd.*, the building of a 4,500 sq. ft. addition to the wood shop, and the setting up of a pipe shop.

## RECORDINGS

**John Ferguson** accompanies the St. Olaf Choir, Anton Armstrong, conductor, on a recent CD "Great Hymns of Faith." His trademark hymn playing serves as a wonderful demonstration of creative possibilities in accompanying congregational song. The organ is Dobson Op. 51 (II/26; 1991) at St. John's Lutheran Church, Northfield, Minn., for which Ferguson served as consultant. Available from St. Olaf Records, 1520 St. Olaf Ave., Northfield, Minn. 55057, or [johnsonm@stolaf.edu](mailto:johnsonm@stolaf.edu).

**Aaron Burmeister**, Professor of Organ at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., has recorded works of Buxtehude, Distler, Bach, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Langlais on Dobson Op. 10 (II/21; 1979) at Bethany's Trinity Chapel. Available directly from Mr. Burmeister at Bethany College, 734 Marsh Street, Mankato, Minn., 56001, or [aburmeis@blc.edu](mailto:aburmeis@blc.edu). Op. 10 was moved, slightly enlarged and revoiced for Bethany's new Trinity Chapel in 1996 after serving in an earlier campus location since the organ was built in 1979.

# THE ORGANBUILDER

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2002

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Des Moines, IA  
Permit No. 4839

Return Service Requested

**DOBSON  
PIPE ORGAN  
BUILDERS, LTD.**  
200 North Illinois St.  
Lake City, IA 51449  
T 712 464 8065  
F 712 464 3098  
[info@dobsonorgan.com](mailto:info@dobsonorgan.com)  
[www.dobsonorgan.com](http://www.dobsonorgan.com)