

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we celebrate the 30th year of building organs here in Lake City, memories of the many projects we have worked on come flooding back into my mind. While there are many wonderful moments to re-live, I remember especially all the people I've met. I have been fortunate to develop an incredible number of friendships: the organists, architects, pastors and committee members with whom I have had the opportunity to work through the process of purchasing, designing, building, installing and finally celebrating the work we accomplished together. During long times of being creative together, people can't help but become friends. I will always cherish those relationships.

Another treasure to me is my great crew of employees right here in the shop. It is easy to take them for granted as I work with them in my daily routine. Recently I compiled a list of the people who have worked here in the past 30 years so I could invite them all to a special dinner party in their honor on March 27th. During this process I was surprised to find the list wasn't nearly as long as I'd expected from thirty years of doing business.

I realized that I have had the good fortune of having many people come to work here and stay a while. More than half the current crew moved to Lake City for their job; eight hail from home states other than Iowa. Three have been here for twenty years or more and eight have been here between fourteen and nineteen years. When I include the six current employees that have joined the company since 1997 the average tenure is fourteen years. I am certain this contributes to the quality and consistency of our organbuilding.

It is amazing to think about what we have been through together and how our lives have become intertwined as we live and work together in this small, rural town. I've watched several of the crew marry after they came here and then raise their families. Several have built or remodeled their homes. We've cared for each other through the loss of loved ones and various personal or health issues. Many share common interests, have become good personal friends and enjoy doing things together outside of the shop environment.

Each person contributes a special skill or talent to our work. We learn things from each other and learn totally new things together. Everyone takes great pride in what they do and how the organs turn out. One of the most rewarding things for me is the crew's team spirit during organ installations. Our clients often comment about the close, courteous and playful atmosphere



THE DOBSON CREW, MARCH 2004

Back row, l to r: Lyndon Evans, Thom Johnston, Arthur Middleton, John Ourensma, Meridiith Sperling, Antal Kozma  
Middle row, l to r: Robert Savage, Randy Hausman, Dean Heim, Sally Winter, Kirk Russell, Randall Pepe, Gerrid Otto  
Front row, l to r: John Panning, Donny Hobbs, William Ayers, Lynn Dobson, Dean Zenor, Jon Thieszen  
Organ: Op. 80, for St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Rock Creek, Washington, D.C.

amongst the crew during what they would have expected to be a very stressful time. As we visited together at the recent employee dinner and the open house the next day, I was astonished to hear endless stories and memories that were shared of our work and play together. It is a very rewarding thing for me to see what a family we have become.

I am grateful for each of my employees and for what they've contributed to the success of this company.

# LOOKING BACK - 30 YEARS IN REVIEW



Op. 4 - St. Paul, Minnesota



Op. 10 - Mankato, Minnesota



Op. 28 - Burlington, North Carolina



Op. 29 - Northfield, Minnesota

**1974** ~ Lynn Dobson establishes business at 120 West Main Street, Lake City, in November. Op. 1 (II/15), built by Lynn while still in college, is sold to Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Sioux City, Ia.

**1975** ~ The young company's first project is a II/12 residence organ for Antony Garlick, a music professor and composer at Wayne State College, and one of Dobson's former teachers. Lynn becomes a member of the American Institute of Organbuilders (AIO).

**1976** ~ Olivet Congregational Church, St. Paul, Minn., signs a contract for Op. 4 (II/33). The organ's donor gave his gift to the church on the condition that it help launch the business of a promising young organ builder. At this time Lynn is assisted by his late father, Elmer, Jon Thieszen (now DPOB's technical designer), and the late Robert Sperling as voicer.

**1979** ~ The company moves to its current location at 200 North Illinois Street, completely renovating the historic building and adding an erecting room. The firm receives its first commissions from colleges: a practice organ for St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., (Op. 8, II/7; 1978) and a chapel organ for Bethany College, Mankato, Minn., (Op. 10, II/21; 1979). Op. 10 enjoys wide attention in the organ journals. In 1996 it would undergo some tonal additions (to 24 ranks) and a dramatic case revision for a second home in Bethany's new Trinity Chapel.

**1980** ~ The new decade opens with larger and more diverse projects, including one at home: Lake City Union Church purchases a two manual instrument (Op. 13, II/29; 1980). Dobson is engaged by Westminster Presbyterian Church of Des Moines, Ia., to complete the organ (Op. 14, II/38; 1981) left unfinished by Lawrence Phelps Associates after that firm's insolvency. Nearby Iowa State University, Ames, Ia., contracts for a practice organ (Op. 16, II/3; 1981) and a teaching studio organ (Op. 21, II/18; 1982). Several new employees join the shop during this period: Tom Kult, a cabinetmaker who later becomes shop foreman, and Sally Winter, secretary. Robert Sperling becomes full-time voicer. The firm joins the International Society of Organbuilders (ISO) and is invited to join the Associated Pipe Organ Builders of America (APOBA); Lynn Dobson becomes a member of the AIO board of directors.

**1983** ~ The completion of large two manual organs for the Church of St. Michael in Stillwater, Minn., (Op. 23, II/34; 1983) and First Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, Kan., (Op. 24, II/43; 1983) sets the stage for Dobson's expansion into the rest of the country. Op. 24 is the largest organ built by the firm to date, and is the first organ in the United States to employ a "dual" stop action, one that could be operated mechanically from the stop lever as well as electrically through the solid-state combination action. Op. 28 (II/30; 1985), for The Church of the Holy Comforter in Burlington, N.C., is the first of many Dobson instruments to be located outside of the Midwest.

**1984** ~ The firm celebrates its 10th Anniversary with a shop Open House and a recital by Guy Bovet on Op. 13 at Lake City Union Church. John Panning, an organbuilder from Wisconsin, joins the crew; he will later be appointed the firm's Tonal Director. The shop is remodeled and enlarged at this time.

**1985** ~ From 1985 to 1990, the firm builds twenty new organs in Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina and Virginia, in addition to five Midwestern states. Eight are for university/college campuses, of which five are institutions affiliated with church bodies: Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., (Op. 27, II/19; 1985) St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., (Op. 29, II/30; 1985) Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn., (Op. 42, III/44; 1988) Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., (Op. 44, III/49; 1989) and Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Ia., (Op. 46, II/15; 1989). Op. 42 and 44 are both for new college chapels designed in cooperation with DPOB. New shop personnel by the end of this decade include Meridith Sperling (pipe racking, general organbuilding), Lyndon Evans and Randy Hausman (cabinetmakers), Dean Heim (later shop foreman), Art Middleton (key action and consoles) and Bob Savage (leatherwork and electrical). DPOB hosts the annual spring meeting of APOBA, during which the firm is elected President.

**1989** ~ The first AIO Mid-Winter Seminar is held at the Dobson shop. Twenty organbuilders from across the country participate in lectures on case design and construction, cost accounting, shop administration and equipment. By this time the firm is well known especially for its artistic and innovative organ case design.

**1990** ~ Gradual evolution of the firm's tonal style continues. Although specialized instruments such as the organ in Italian style for Indiana University (Op. 35, II/26; 1987) have been built, most are of eclectic design. Earlier instruments explored the neo-classic aesthetic, new projects blend both classical and romantic influences: Op. 44 (1989) at Calvin College includes a 16' Open Wood in the Pedal, two enclosed divisions and a rich, smooth tonal palette. Joining the firm this year are Kirk Russell (business manager) and Dean Zenor (administrative, key action).

**1992** ~ Two instruments built this year demonstrate the firm's range. Op. 55 (II/32) for St. John Lutheran Church, Storm Lake, Ia., features Kirnberger III tuning, dual (flexible/steady) wind systems and a free-standing case with attached console at the rear of the church. The chancel location and Anglican church music emphasis of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Kalamazoo, Mich., result in Op. 57's (II/42) more romantic tonal design. Op. 56 (II/17), for Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, Calif., is the first Dobson installation on the West Coast. The firm is incorporated as Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd., a new 4,500 sq. ft. wood shop is built, and a pipe shop is set up. DPOB becomes a prize sponsor for the National Improvisation Competition of the American Guild of Organists.

**1993** ~ Op. 60 (III/49) for First United Methodist Church, Mesa, Ariz., the firm's seventh three manual instrument, features a Solo as the third manual rather than a more customary Positive or Choir. Voiced on 6" wind pressure with mechanical action, this division includes: 8' Harmonic Flute, 4' Flute Octaviane, Cornet V, and 8' Bombarde.

**1995** ~ The mid-'90s see an even wider variety of projects, ranging from Op. 62 (II/11), a residence organ for Rich Wanner in Berkeley, Calif., to the renovation of the important four manual Schlicker organ at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind., and its enlargement to 102 ranks. Other notable organs delivered are Op. 65 (II/36) for the University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C., Op. 67 (II/32) for Wartburg College, Waverly, Ia., and Op. 69 (II/31) for Pakachoag Church, Auburn, Mass. Voicer and pipemaker William Ayers joins the firm during these years.

**1998** ~ The organ for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, Minn., (Op. 70, II/45) unabashedly combines classical and romantic tonal elements in a fresh and original way. This same line is followed in the large three manual instrument for West Market Street Methodist Church in Greensboro, N.C. (Op. 71, III/58; 1999), voiced in collaboration with Manuel Rosales. A somewhat more classical course is taken with the instrument at St. Joseph Abbey in St. Benedict, La., (Op. 73, III/38; 2000) which is greatly enhanced by the Abbey church's five seconds of reverberation. Joining the firm by the end of the decade are Scott Hicks (general organbuilding), Gerrid Otto (windchests, general organbuilding), John Ourensma (voicing, pipemaking) and Randall Pepe (wood pipemaker and general organbuilding).

**2000** ~ The firm's work at the beginning of a new century includes the large instrument for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, Calif. (Op. 75, IV/105; 2003) and the company's first contract for a major concert hall, Verizon Hall, Philadelphia, Penn. (Op. 76, IV/126; 2005). These high-profile projects bring Dobson into collegial working relationships with world famous architects: José Rafael Moneo for the cathedral project and Rafael Viñoly for the concert hall. Along with these huge organs, more modest instruments are delivered to churches in Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, and Minnesota. Joining the firm during the first years of the century are Antal Kozma, (technical design), Thom Johnston (cabinet-maker) and Donny Hobbs (general organbuilding, voicing, pipemaking).

**2004** ~ In its 30th anniversary year, Dobson is busy designing and building organs to be delivered within the next few years, Op. 80 (II/26), for St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., will be installed in late spring. The second phase of the installation of Op. 76 (IV/126) in Verizon Hall will take place over the summer, and Op. 79 (II/23), for Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church, Ellison Bay, Wisc., is scheduled for completion in the fall. Design work includes another significant concert hall instrument, this time for the new Symphony Center in Atlanta, Ga., designed by architect Santiago Calatrava of Zürich, Switzerland. Several additional contracts for projects in Pennsylvania and North Carolina have the firm booked through the end of this decade.



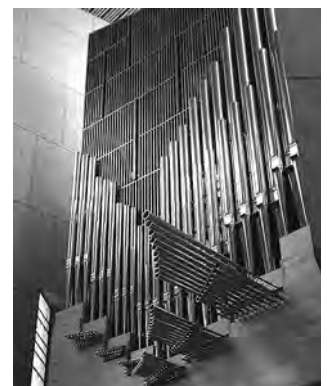
*Op. 55 - Storm Lake, Iowa*



*Op. 65 - Columbia, South Carolina*



*Op. 50 - Minneapolis, Minnesota*



*Op. 75 - Los Angeles, California*

# A CELEBRATION IN LAKE CITY

To celebrate 30 years of building organs in Lake City, Ia., Lynn Dobson threw a party and hosted an open house. The employee dinner party took place on Saturday, March 27, at the elegant new Carnegie Café, formerly the Lake City Public Library. The shop open house took place Sunday afternoon, March 28, and was attended by over 600 friends of the company from across the country. Additional pictures of both events may be found on our website.

*Photographs by Antal Kozma of Dobson, and Gordon Rowley and Carl Jackson, members of the organ committee, Ellison Bay, Wisc*



*Past and present employees and spouses after dinner*



*Clockwise from lower left: Shannon & Donny Hobbs, Scott & Amy Hicks, Patty & Bob Savage*



*The President reminisces*



*Clockwise from lower left: Todd Kauk, Judy & John Panning, Meridith Sperling, Joan & Bob Werner, Art Middleton*



*John Panning demonstrates Op. 80*



*Former employees, back row, l to r: Brad Bendickson, Todd Kauk, Chad Mussig, Bob Werner, Bill Picht, Paul Iverson, Steve Morton. Seated: Dana Garrett, Lynn, David Storey*



*Bill Ayers explains the voicing process*



*Thom Johnston shows off the façade toeboards for Op. 79*



*Jon Theissen offers a toast in memory of the late Elmer & Muriel Dobson*



*Meridith Sperling answers questions about pipe construction*



**Calvin Institute for Christian Worship**, Grand Rapids, Mich., sponsored the 17th annual *Symposium on Worship and the Arts*, January 28-30. Op. 44 (III/49; 1989) was heard in various worship settings in the Calvin College Chapel including *From the Heart to the Heavens*, a hymn festival with conference organist **John D. Schwandt**, Indiana University. The Chapel has been the site of many conferences since 1989, including those of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. Sharing the space is Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church, which hosts its own hymn festivals, the most recent with the Hymn Society's executive director **Carl Daw, Jr.**

**Faith Lutheran Church**, Des Moines, Ia., home of Op. 61 (II/24; 1993), was a stop on the Fall 2003 tour of the St. Olaf Cantorei, **John Ferguson**, Organist and Director. The 75 voice choir from St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., led the assembly in *Ikons in Song*, a hymn festival designed by Ferguson.

**Presbyterian Homes**, Evanston, Ill., has announced its "Gift of Music" Series, featuring Op. 64 (II/24; 1994) in Elliott Chapel. Recitalists include **Karel Paukert**, **Andrea Handley**, **Sygmunt Strzep**, **Derek Nickels**, **Edward Zimmerman**, and **Brenda Heck**. 2004 marks the 100th year of the Evanston retirement community, and the 10th anniversary of Op. 64.

**Wartburg College**, Waverly, Ia., sponsored a number of events featuring Op. 67 (II/32; 1996), located in the college chapel. **Karen Black**, College Organist and Associate Professor of Music, played a faculty recital on February 17. On Sunday, February 22,



**Carl Schalk**, Concordia University, River Forest, Ill., led a hymn festival following a weekend of serving as keynote speaker for the *Mid-Winter Workshop for Church Musicians*. On March 26, **Paul Jacobs**, The Juilliard School, presented a master class on Op. 67.

Op. 73 (III/38; 2000) at **St. Joseph Abbey**, St. Benedict, La., was part of Minnesota Public Radio's first *Pipedreams* broadcast of 2004. From the 2001 dedication recital, **Marcus St. Julien** was heard playing works of Franck, James, and Widor.

Op. 75 (IV/105; 2003) at **The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels**, Los Angeles, Calif., will be featured in several events

during the 2004 National Convention of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) in Los Angeles: Saturday, July 3, 7:30 p.m., "Introduction to the Organ," a pre-convention event with organ-builder **Lynn Dobson** and Cathedral Organist **Sal Soria**; Monday, July 5, 8:00 p.m., **Martin Jean**, Yale University, in concert followed by a festive choral program directed by **Paul Salamunovich** with **William Beck**, organist; Friday, July 9, 8:30 a.m., a "mini-recital" by **Sal Soria** prior to the AGO Annual Meeting, and a concert by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, **Grant Gershon**, director, **William Beck**, organist. The regular Wednesday mid-day recitals at the Cathedral continue to attract crowds numbering up to 500. Sal will present a solo recital on Saturday, May 1, 7:30 p.m. Op. 75 is the subject of an article by **Jonathan Ambrosino** to be published in the May issue of *Choir and Organ* magazine.

**St. John United Methodist Church**, Augusta, Ga., celebrated the inaugural year of Op. 78 (III/42; 2003) with programs including: September 2, **David Higgs** in the dedicatory recital; November 16, **John Ferguson** in a hymn festival; January 25, **Keith Shafer**, organist and **Vonda Darr**, harp; February 15, **John Ourensma**; March 14, **Alvin Blount**; April 4, **Jim Nord**.

**Kenilworth Union Church**, Kenilworth, Ill., was the venue for a recital on February 22, sponsored by the North Shore Chapter of the AGO. Area organists performed winning compositions from the Holtkamp-AGO Organ Composition Competition on Op. 81 (II/29; 2003).

**Valparaiso University**, Valparaiso, Ind., presented **Craig Cramer** in recital on February 10, 2004, at the Chapel of the Resurrection. The Reddel Memorial Organ (IV/102) was rebuilt by Dobson in 1996.

**The Twin Cities Chapter** of the AGO and Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis recently took delivery of a I/2 demonstration organ built by Dobson. "PipeWorks-Twin Cities," a joint venture between TCAGO and WPC, will use the instrument to introduce children to the pipe organ. Schantz Organ Company donated the pipes and DPOB made a substantial commitment in design, labor and materials. Pictured are **Lynn Dobson**, and from WPC, **Phil Asgian** and **Melanie Ohnsted**.



**The Grand Rapids Chapter** (Mich.) of the AGO recently hosted Dobson employee **John Ourensma** in a presentation on the work of DPOB and a workshop on "Conducting from the Console." He presented this as well as workshops on children's choirs and organ maintenance at the *2004 Symposium on Worship and the Arts*, held at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, in January.

# RECORDINGS

Two CDs to be released this spring by Raven Compact Discs ([www.ravencd.com](http://www.ravencd.com)) feature Op. 73 (III/38; 2000) at **St. Joseph Abbey**, St. Benedict, La. One disk, by Houston organist **Marcus St. Julien**, includes Bach: *Toccatà in F Major (BWV 540)*; Clérambault: *Basse et Dessus de Trompette, Récit de Cromorne et de Cornet*; Alain: *Postlude pour l'office de Complies*; Walther: *Concerto de Signor Meck*; James: *Méditation à Ste. Clotilde*; Bach: *Passacaglia (BWV 582)*; Yon: *L'Organo primitivo*; Franck: *Prélude, Fugue et Variation*; Mulet: *Tu es petra*. On another disc New Orleans organist **Marijim Thoene** plays Bach: *Prelude in a minor (BWV 543)*; Jay Vosk: *Songs of Creations for Native Flute and Organ* (commissioned by the performer); Gordon Atkinson: *Adoro te*; Messiaen: *Dieu Parmi Nous*.

Delos International ([www.delosmus.com](http://www.delosmus.com)) has released the premiere recording of our Op. 75 (IV/105; 2003) at Los Angeles' **Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels**. Performed by Cathedral Organist **Samuel Soria**, the recording includes Wyton: *Fanfare*; Vierne: *Naiades*, from *24 Pieces de Fantasia*; Reubke: *Sonata on the 94th Psalm*; Bach: *Prelude & Fugue in C, BWV 547*; Messiaen: *Alleluias Sereins, Transport de Joie*, from *L'Ascension*; and Howells: *Psalm Preludes, Set 2, No1*.

Morningstar Music ([www.morningstarmusic.com](http://www.morningstarmusic.com)) has released a live recording of an Advent/Christmas hymn festival with organ-

ist **Michael Burkhardt** at **Westwood Lutheran Church**, St. Louis Park, Minn. The program was part of the year-long series of events rededicating the 1964 Holtkamp renovated by Dobson in 2002.

## NEW CONTRACTS

**The Chapel of the Cross**, Chapel Hill, N. C., recently signed a contract for the construction of Op. 82, an organ for the parish's historic chapel, which dates from 1848. The II/17 instrument will employ mechanical key and stop actions, and have an attached console. It will be our third instrument in North Carolina, and is scheduled to be installed in early 2006.

**The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd**, Lancaster, Pa., has signed a contract for the construction of Op. 83. Housed in a free standing oak case, the II/28 instrument will employ mechanical stop action and electric stop action. It will be our sixth project in Pennsylvania and is scheduled for installation early in the summer of 2006.

# THE ORGANBUILDER

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2004

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