

History of the Schober Orphans

by Fred Henn

Please bear with me - I feel like "meandering" and I feel the following "background" is necessary for understanding the *why* and *how* of our Schober group.

Sometime in my pre-teen years, my Dad (who was a professional musician) decided that I should experience THE pipe organ. THE pipe organ was the "incredible" Shea's Buffalo Wurlitzer. (That organ is another tale). Anyway - I fell in love with pipe organs. Years later I had the opportunity to hear a "special" recording of the grand old church organs of Europe. At the time I was part owner of a Hi-Fi store and the gentleman who made the recording was interested in hearing the recording on our big Altec-Lansing "Voice of the Theatre" speakers. Hearing those organs rekindled my enthusiasm and prompted me to begin my search for a "suitable" electronic organ (a "real" pipe organ being totally "out of the question").

I think I listened to every commercial electronic organ that was available at the time - but not one of them approached the "sound". Then another customer asked if he might listen to a record on our speakers. It turned out to be the Schober Demo record and the section he wanted to hear was the Schober Theatre Organ. I listened too ... it wasn't pipes but it was "closer to pipes" than anything I had heard up to that time. Voila! my introduction to Schober.

I picked-up a very old Marr and Colton console ... installed Schober Theatre electronics in it ... set up a somewhat elaborate stereo amp and speaker system for it (in my basement) ... and proceeded to fantasize that I was playing a "real" Theatre organ.

Just prior to Schober's demise, I purchased their single board tone generator and put it on a closet shelf (pending the day I'd need it). That day arrived many years later - when I decided that the organ should "be upstairs". The Marr and Colton was too HUGE for the intended room so a different console "was in order". I found a smaller Baldwin "home" console and proceeded to move the "electronics" into it. Part of the transition included assembling and installing the single board TG. That's when I discovered that the package didn't include installation instructions. The only Schober lead I had was Jim Ramsey's home address. Knowing that Jim had "passed away", I wrote to Mrs. Laura Ramsey and explained my problem. Laura kindly spent the time and effort to locate the info I needed. That's when the thought hit me that perhaps there were other Schober owners with similar problems.

Another letter to Laura and I had Jim's "customer list". I started writing letters and the fact is - I didn't have a "plan" when I embarked on the "Schober Survivors" idea - it, like Topsy, just-kinda-grew. While the group was still in its infancy, a number of folks felt that we should have some sort of vehicle for communication. I don't recall whose idea it was, but a "newsletter" appeared to be the logical solution. Sometime in the mid-nineties I purchased a "desktop publishing" program for my Timex computer and shortly thereafter the first issue of ORGAN NOTES was mailed.

ORGAN NOTES pretty well documents the history of our group from that time forward. Now - I can answer your specific questions: No - there is no planned organization of the group. No - I'm not the President (except perhaps "by default"!). Yes, THE SCHOBOR ORPHAN'S GROUP is one of my hobbies and any "out-of- pocket" expenses come from my "hobby fund". Fortunately those expenses are small (and few) because that's also the condition of my "hobby fund". My newsletter (and group) "staff" is me. There have been occasions when I wished I had help but, for the most part, it's been a lot of fun!

SO - what about Bill Kohrumel?: The "masters" for our newsletters are "printed" by Bill

Kohrumel with his '386' computer and a laser printer (my 9 pin printer left a lot to be desired). I send the text to Bill on a computer "floppy disk". Incidentally Bill lives in Saint Peters, MO - so I "set-up" the text - mail it to Bill - Bill loads the disk into his computer - prints the master with his Desktop-publishing program and laser printer and mails the print to me. I then have the copies made for mailing to our group. (So I guess I do have a staff of one - in St. Peters, MO). Most of the newsletter "text" comes from folks in the group - as do most of my "bright" ideas. For example: A Jack Gildar suggestion simplified the "handling" of many items in ORGAN NOTES. I think? the cost of producing and mailing the newsletter is covered by the stamps, etc. donations of those folks who receive Organ Notes. (I haven't kept a close check on the figures because it's a hobby).

Re the "incoming shipping charges" of Schober parts, etc. - so far my system has been to pass-along those costs by informing the person who is interested in those parts that he'll be responsible for my "incoming shipping charges" as well as my "outgoing shipping cost". So far - it has worked to everyone's satisfaction. I doubt very much that we'll see the day when the group measures in the thousands - but obviously, should that day come, some adjustments will have to be made.

Your question re: What happens to the group, in the event of my death or disability, is certainly a valid one and I can't claim that I've done a great deal to provide for that exigency. A few folks in the group have been receiving copies of our entire "membership" list (with occasional updates) and, as a result of your question, I'll make a note to publish their names in a future newsletter. (Perhaps a "WHO TO CONTACT" list should be compiled? What do you think?).

You posed the question of whether "owners of other kit organs" are, or should be, included in our group and you also made reference to it on your tape (that I haven't found time to answer yet). To date - only Schober owners (and/or "previous" Schober owners) have been invited to participate. Occasionally I receive a "communication" from an owner of "another make" so "expansion" thoughts have crossed my mind - but no conclusions have. For the present - "my hands are full"! (Perhaps someone? could form a sort of subsidiary group or groups?). What do you think? To sort of "sum-up" and to give you some idea of "where I'm coming from": I'm a retired small business-man and I'm doing the Schober thing as a hobby. As long as it's fun - I'll continue pursuing it (I must admit in a somewhat "directionless" manner!). If there is any structure to the group - it just kinda' happened it wasn't "planned".

However - I have absolutely no regrets regarding my participation - I've "met" a large number of warm, considerate, and interesting people in our group - which in itself is reward enough - but in addition - my "education" has been greatly "enhanced" and I am having FUN!