

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Theatre Organ

JULY | AUGUST 2020

www.atos.org



The Right Man, in the Right Place, at the Right Time

BY DOUG BEACHAM



*Allen Organ Company
publicity photo, circa 1998*

*(All photos courtesy of the author
except as noted)*

In every generation a person comes along who has the right talent, the right personality and is in the right place to make a difference in his world.

God gave Dwight Beacham the first two gifts and the Allen Organ Company gave him the opportunity to use what God gave him to create the sound that was always in his head.

Dwight Beacham was a theatre organist who literally performed all over the United States and in several foreign countries, was a church organist from the age of 14, a music teacher, a choral director, and a groundbreaking organ designer, in a career that spanned over sixty years. The difference he made in the organ world is remarkable.

Dwight was born in Glendale, California, May 14, 1946. His early years were spent in northeast Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. His family went to church every Sunday, just like most kids growing up in the '50s, he played games with the neighborhood kids in the backyard and the family took annual vacation trips to Colorado chasing Narrow Gauge trains...his father loved those trains!

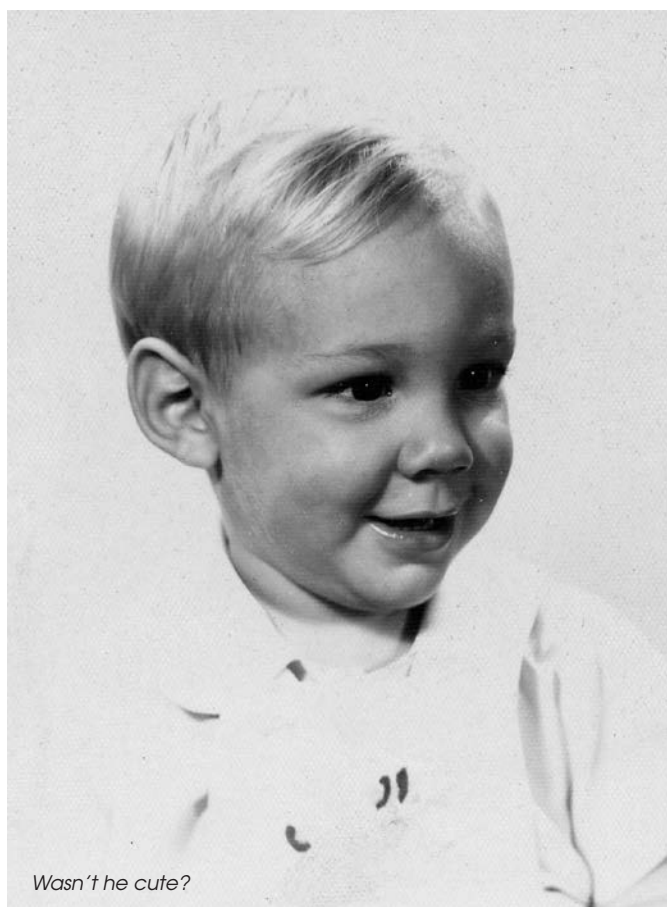
As fate would have it, one year in the early '50s Dwight's father used his Christmas bonus to buy a Hi-Fi system. Remarkably, the system came with two George Wright LPs. Dwight said, "After I heard those, I decided that all I ever wanted to do was play like that, on an instrument like that. When I found out that the instrument could be installed in a home, I wanted one. I was thrilled at the sound and the musicianship." He had found his passion!

His mother insisted he take piano lessons before he got an organ. Even though he really didn't want to play the piano, she said "When you have had two years of lessons, we'll get you an organ." A few months later he stormed upstairs from the basement and told his mother he didn't want to practice anymore. All she had to say was, "Do you want an organ?" "I did a U-turn and went back downstairs to practice."

Dwight remembers, "Growing up in L.A., I went to every George Wright concert at the Rialto Theatre in South Pasadena. I saw more silent movies than sound because Gaylord Carter did a silent movie series at the York Theatre on Figueroa in Highland Park, and I heard gospel music from my Dad's favorite organist, Lorin Whitney. It was a great place to be."

"After two years of piano lessons and true to her word, we went over to the Gould Music Company in Pasadena and bought a Conn Organ. I played that instrument with minimal instruction for a couple of years until the family moved to Van Nuys in the summer of 1960. We traded the spinet Conn for a console Kinsman organ with settable combination piston which could change registers." It was time for organ lessons and that's when his teacher, Del Castillo, came into his life.

As Dwight tells it, the first time Del and Dwight met was interesting. Del said, "OK, play something for me." He did, and then they had a lesson. At the end, he thumbed through a music book he had and found *Embraceable You*. "I knew how to play



Wasn't he cute?



High School



Above: The family in Eagle Rock, circa 1960

Below: Dwight on his first pipe organ—a Robert Morton, circa 1964



1969 in Paso Robles, California. They had moved their 2-manual, 8-rank and added a three-manual console



the chords and the melody.” Then Del said, “Okay, but you know the composer had ideas on how the left hand should go. You need to look at those.” He then continued, “I want you to play the same song with an arrangement next week.” Dwight asked, “What’s that?”

He responded to that, “It has to have an introduction, play it through twice, and an ending. The two times have to differ from each other.” “I don’t know how to do that,” said Dwight. Del came back, “You’ll learn.”

At this point Del said something Dwight has never forgotten. “I will give you two critiques. One is musical, which you cannot argue with. It has to be according to the music. You do all of that right. If I were to change combinations on something, I had to time it so it didn’t delay the piece at all.”

The other point was Del’s opinion. Dwight could either agree with it or do it his way, but it was sage advice: “You know silence is part of the music. It’s like a pause in a speech to give emphasis. You don’t always have to be playing. Sound does not always have to be coming out. There need to be breaks.”

In the early ’60s Dwight purchased his first pipe organ, a Robert Morton. He stored it in the family garage, waiting for a place to install it, while he continued taking lessons from Del Castillo on the Kinsman. Even though Dwight now had a pipe organ, Del told his young student he wanted to continue lessons on the Kinsman because something always went wrong with a pipe organ.

Del had learned years ago as a theatre organist that if organ broke, the theatre manager would ask him to fix it. If he fixed it, the manager would never call the repair man. He would be expected to repair it. So, he fixed nothing again!

When the family moved back to Eagle Rock the Morton was sold, and Dwight bought his heart’s desire: a small eight rank Wurlitzer pipe organ he found in a local church. His father and he put the pipes in their one-car garage and there was a small side room for the console. There was also a backyard pool right next to garage so, “I could work on the organ and go jump in the pool. It was a great place to work, practice and cool off.” Dwight smiled.

After graduating high school, Dwight enrolled at Glendale Community College where he found a wonderful music department. He studied music theory and continued his organ lessons with Del. More importantly, he met the love of his life. It was love at first sight. He told his mother, “I really like this girl.” With his mother’s encouragement and finding out where she parked, he finally dated that fellow musician who became his wife. Gini and Dwight have been together ever since.

Dwight and Gini eventually transferred to Chapman College in Orange, California where Gini played violin in the orchestra and they both sang in choir. William (Bill) Hall led the widely respected choral department. Dwight has often said, “Bill Hall taught me most of what I know about choral directing.” That would hold him in good stead during his short career as a high school teacher and later as a church choir and music director.

While a student at Chapman, he met local theatre owner, Norm Goodin. They became friends and Dwight eventually made a deal with Norm that allowed him to practice on his theatre organ any time he wanted, so long as he played the Friday and Saturday night intermissions. It was a great opportunity and fun for a young college student who loved theatre organs.

“It was a two-manual, eight-rank Wicks theatre organ that sounded far better than it should have, because of the work Ron Mitchell had done, but it was a joy to play. I practiced there more than I ever have anywhere, only because it was available to me anytime I needed it, and I was all alone!” Dwight recalls. At the



From 1968 Wiltern concert program

same time, he was studying piano and organ at Chapman under Norm Thompson, a fine pianist, and an incredible theatre organist.

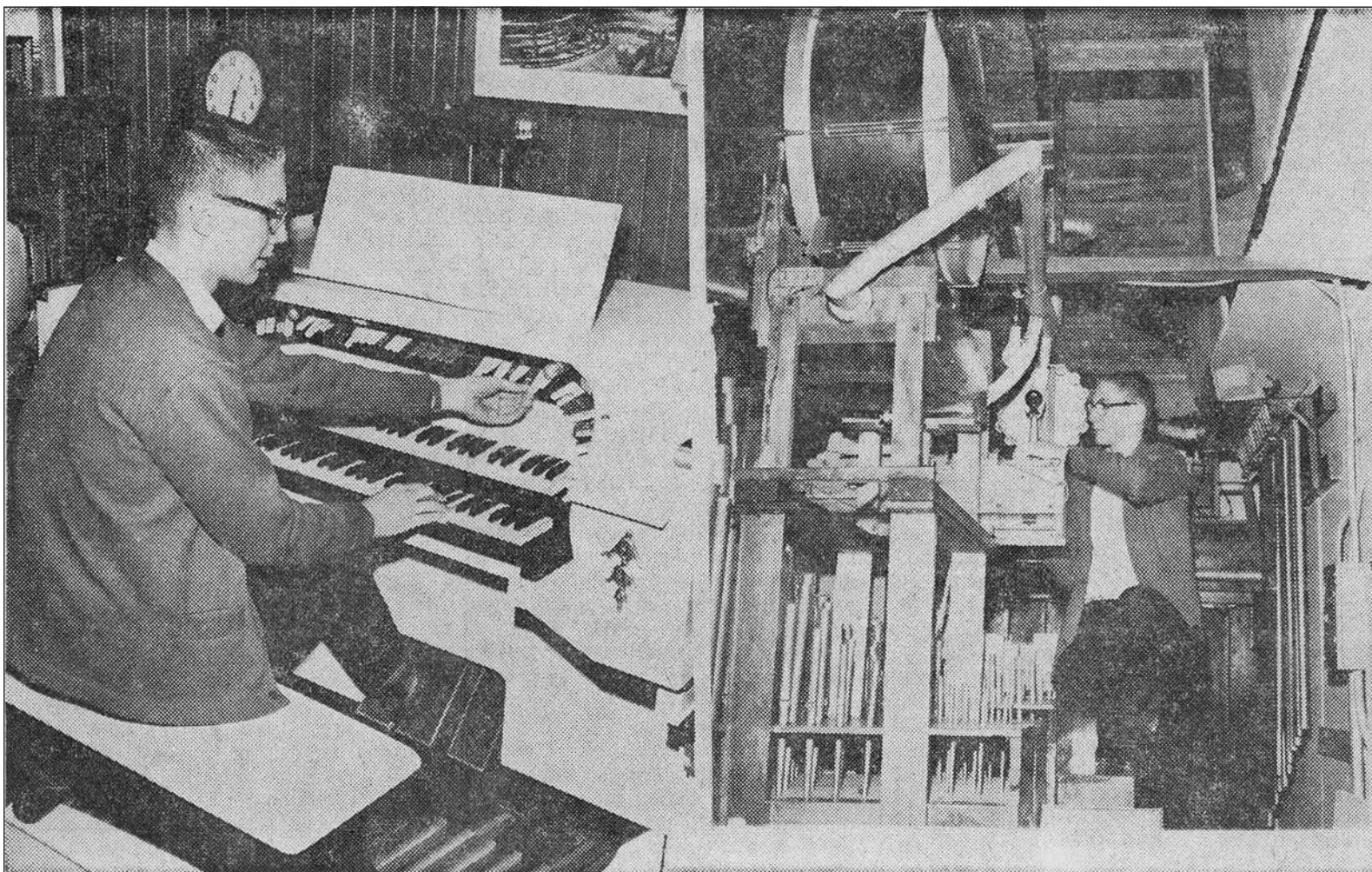
After graduating from Chapman in 1967 and six months of study to become a teacher, the now-married Beachams moved to Paso Robles where Dwight taught for a couple of years and their daughter Holly was born. Besides teaching music, he led the band, choir, and taught history.

He finally left teaching because he found he was not cut out for it and the pay was so low they kept going further and further in debt.

Dwight and Gini moved back to Los Angeles where he worked for Maas-Rowe Carillons for a short time. Then fortune shined on Dwight. In 1971 he was hired by the Gould Music Company in Pasadena, the same company where his family had purchased their Conn Organ.

At the time Gould carried both Conn and Allen electronic organs. Dwight confessed that, “I really had my nose up in the air about electronic organs. I wouldn’t soil my fingers with one of them.” Two years before he went to work for Gould he was looking for a home organ and after looking at what was available, even his wife Gini had said, “If that’s what electronic organs sound like, I’m not interested in one.” This came from an accomplished violinist and singer.

But, interestingly enough, he discovered that Norm Thompson, his teacher at Chapman, played a large custom Allen organ for a



World's noisiest hobby

Dwight Beacham and his father, Ed Beacham of 4462 W. Ave. 42, Eagle Rock, like many father-son teams work hard at their hobby. Only their's is probably one of the most unique in existence — two years of removing an aging Might Wurlitzer from a motion picture theater and installing

it in their home. Dwight (pictured above) plays the huge instrument, and will appear on television at 7:30 p.m. channel 2 on Nov. 24. Organ fans who want to try out the noisiest hobby in the world are invited to visit the Beacham home.

Article in the local newspaper of the day

church at Leisure World in Laguna Beach, and he liked it. While at Gould, Allen introduced a theatrical-type first generation digital organ called the "Music Scene." The first time Gini heard Dwight play the Music Scene she said, "Now that's beginning to sound like it should." The sound wasn't perfect, but the change to digital was DRAMATIC, Dwight recalls.

Gould was excited about the organ and decided to make a demonstration recording. Once again fate smiled on Dwight. He made the recording for Gould in a small auditorium in the back of the store early in the morning. Allen heard Dwight's tape, used it for its own demonstration purposes, and in the process became aware of this young organist in California.

In 1974 Dwight made his first a trip to the Allen Organ Company headquarters in Macungie, Pennsylvania, and then met intermittently with the company President, Jerome Markowitz, throughout 1975 whenever Jerome was in California dealing with the Rockwell lawsuit (more on that later). They had dinner several times and Dwight felt he was being recruited.

Gini Beacham and Jerome hit it off famously, both having a tremendous interest in English history and literature, and one night they talked the whole time, leaving Dwight completely out of the conversation. It took a long time, but on his last trip to California Dwight took Jerome to the airport and asked, "Well, so when are you going to hire me?" They hired him, and when Dwight went to Larry Gould and told him Allen had hired him, Larry said, "I thought you always worked for the Allen Organ Company."

Dwight started out in the Allen sales department promoting their home organs and theatre line, traveling one or two weeks a month demonstrating the organ and playing programs. At some point, however, Allen decided they needed someone to help Jerome with product design. He was getting sidetracked. Dwight was moved from sales to engineering to work on a new set of organs that had to be completed in a year. The federal government had put restrictions on computer devices that went into effect in a year.

Until the early '70s all electronic organs had been operated using analog technology. Analog tone generation in organs was very much an approximation. Analog circuits created a waveform that was not



Dwight's GW4 at the end of the concert for the 2004 Milwaukee ATOS Convention (If this console looks very familiar, it should. It is now in the Holiday Hills Ballroom near Denver, where it is used extensively by the Rocky Mountain Theatre Organ Society)

necessarily related to the pipe sound, and then circuits were added to try to modify the waveform into useable sound. It was a hit and miss proposition.

Digital technology which was used extensively in the space program converted waveforms into a limited set of numbers and recorded them. Unlike analog, digital technology allowed creation of any waveform you wanted. Ultimately, recording a pipe and playing it back.

North American Rockwell owned this technology as the space program wound down and was looking for other markets to exploit. One of their engineers had the idea that ended up being the basis of digital organs. They approached several companies trying to sell their product, and Allen bought the idea.

A whole other article could be written about how Allen got to be the first digital organ on the market and the contentious lawsuit between Jerome Markowitz and Rockwell. A good place to start would be Jerome's own account of the struggle in his book entitled, *Triumphs & Trials of an Organ Builder*.

Dwight the Innovator


Getting back to the story, Dwight would help create a totally new digital tone generation system. The first in-house designed tone generating system was called the ADC series, and from there they marched on to other designs and finally to the MDC organ.

The biggest change came in the mid to late 1990s and it is the one Dwight feels the most responsible for, the "Renaissance" series. It took a long time to develop because it was a whole new series. The church organ came out first. A year later, the theatre organs were brought to market. "They were very smooth-sounding instruments. It was very high-quality sound," Dwight proudly recalls.

They also developed the ability to do what is called "unification." Dwight explains that, "It was important because theatre organs draw multiple pitches from one rank of pipes or one rank of generators, and they could not do that before. It was all new."

A couple of years into the development process Allen Organ President Steve Markowitz came up to hear what they were working on and said it sounded like a Hammond organ. "Wonderful, he

George Wright
SIGNATURE
FOUR MANUAL
RENAISSANCE™ UNIT ORCHESTRA



Artist:
Dwight Beacham

1. I Know That You Know	Younans	2:24
2. Cuddle Up A Little Closer	Hoschna	2:26
3. We Saw The Sea	Berlin	2:16
4. Someday My Prince Will Come	Churchill	3:15
5. April Showers	Silvers	2:53
6. Chimes of Liberty March	Goldman	3:42
7. It's Been A Long, Long Time	Styne	3:28
8. Sugartime	Phillips & Echols	2:54
9. I Could Write A Book	Rodgers & Hart	5:38
10. On A Little Street In Singapore	Scott	4:26
11. Sleeping Beauty	Tchailkovsky	3:57
12. Sleepless Medley		14:35
As Time Goes Bye	Hupfield	
A Kiss to Build A Dream On	Kalmer, Ruby & Hammerstein II	
Stardust	Carmichael	
Makin' Whoopie	Donaldson & Kahn	
An Affair to Remember	Warren, Adamson, & McCarey	
Bye, Bye Blackbird	Henderson	3:45
Miss Celie's Blues	Jones & Temperton	3:45
13. Where or When	Rodgers & Hart	5:56
	Total Time	62:17

Allen Organ Company
P.O. Box 36
Macungie, PA 8062-0036
TEL: 610-966-9202
FAX: 610-966-3098
www.allenorgan.com
aosales@allenorgan.com

Recording Engineer:
Dwight Beacham
Recorded at Allen Organ Company

© 1998 ALLEN ORGAN COMPANY



George Wright 319EX with the Signature Series Master Builder and Corey Fridinger, now Allen Organ National Sales Manager



Dwight doing his schtick at Holiday Hills for the Rocky Mountain chapter on his former personal GW-4Q

volunteered, we've spent all this money and what we have is the world's most expensive Hammond organ."

"Engineers many times will use sine waves to test out the clarity of a system and that's what was demonstrated to Steve," Dwight explained. They went on from there to introduce church organs, and in 1997 they produced the Renaissance Classical church organs.

Also in 1997, Dwight began negotiations with George Wright to make a theatre organ of his design, which would become the GW-4 model. The negotiations took several months, but once the agreement was finalized, they sampled and recorded all the ranks of the pipe organ in his home to create the "George Wright Signature Organ."

When Dwight traveled to George's home they had not seen each other in 20 years. Dwight recalls, "He was standing outside his front door waiting for me. I was overwhelmed, and I gave him a big hug. With tears in his eyes he said, 'He's a hugger!'"

That GW-4 was introduced at the ATOS Convention in San Francisco in 1998. They kept what they were doing under wraps, so it was a total surprise to everyone. They had asked George to play his namesake, but alas, he said he didn't feel well and shortly before the convention he passed away.

So, Lyn Larsen and Dwight did the program. Because there were recordings of Wright playing his pipe organ at home and he had a record-playback system, they were able to use one at the convention with pictures of him from high school accompanied by "George Wright." It was quite a show.

Years before the creation of the Renaissance organs, one of Allen's engineers (a good friend of Dwight's) had demonstrated a way to make very realistic/natural reverberations. The problem was it required very high-speed processing and needed to be "real-time." Over the years Dwight would ask the engineer, "Are we there yet?" Finally, when working on the creation of the Renaissance tone generation, he said he thought it was time. Allen could introduce "Acoustic Portrait" with the Renaissance organs.

Ultimately, the "Quantum" technology was at the end of a long progression of improvements. Dwight was always looking for something better and with the Allen team they were capable of accomplishing that. They had a great team. Dwight remembers, "I was the musical input then the team of digital engineers and I would negotiate on what we could come up with. That was the fun part!"

The Quantum series came out in the early 2000s. By 2006 Dwight was winding down and building a house in Hawaii. Though he left Macungie in 2006, he spent the next two-and-one-half years sampling more organs and massaging those samples via computer to put in the organ. He retired completely in 2008.

Dwight the Performing Artist

I asked Dwight to talk about his performing career.

His first organist job, he recalls, was at the Eagle Rock Christian Church when he was 14 or 15 years old. He played there for two or three years while taking lessons from Del Castillo. "Del was a fine organist," Dwight said. "I didn't realize until years later that he was teaching me college level music theory."

His first official public concert was for ATOS in May 1968 at the Wilmet Theatre in Los Angeles. Dwight recalled that, "People actually paid money to see me play. It was a monthly concert series, and I played on a nice four-manual Kimball organ. I was so excited! I did so well they asked me to play at the national ATOS convention in Los Angeles. Somehow they fit me in!" Lew Williams told Dwight years later that he attended that convention as a 14-year-old. He



On tour in Australia—concert in Perth



Dwight and Tony Fenelon before his concert in Melbourne



Marcia Andrews and Dwight at Bellevue Heights Church, Sun City—circa 2012

said, “You know what, you and Lyn Larsen are the only organists left alive from that performance.” “Thanks, Lew,” Dwight sighed.

He also played at the Haven of Rest studios in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles. The studio looked like a ship and was called the “Good Ship Grace.” It was used for the Haven of Rest Radio Program and his job was to play a 30- to 45-minute program for the people who came around on a bus tour.

When he first joined Allen, he was constantly on the road all over the country playing in stores and houses promoting Allen for the dealers. He was the only guy willing to go out and play those things. Dwight smiles when he remembered that, “I was the new guy, I had the time and I was cheap.”

By the late 1980s, he decided he wanted to do a few other concerts.

Dwight describes one of the best times ever was a concert he gave at the Coronado Theatre in Rockford, Illinois. As part of an ongoing series he played a four-manual Barton organ that was louder than all get out. “I was nobody to them, but they had done such a good job of promoting me and they filled the 1,800-seat auditorium. We had a sing-along like I’d never had before. The audience, all 1,800 of them, were singing out of their minds to the words on the screen above. I could do no wrong. It was one of the biggest crowds I ever played for. It was electric. They went nuts and I have never forgotten it.”

He played four times at various ATOS conventions including the 1975 and 1986 LA ATOS, and the Hall of Music at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana. At Purdue, they elected to use Rodgers, Baldwin, and Allen organs. Jonas Nordwall played the Rodgers; Tom Hazleton played the Baldwin, and Dwight the Allen. “It was a great idea and a lot of fun,” Dwight remembers.

He said playing for audiences was always fun. There was the concert he did in a doctor’s home in Virginia. Though he was only in his 30s, the doctor had bought a theatre organ and put it in a good-sized room. He invited 30-40 of his friends, whom Dwight bet were expecting to hear classical stuff. So, he did most of his upbeat music. “It turned out to be one of the best audiences I ever had. They were relieved it wasn’t an afternoon of Bach and really enjoyed the music.”

Dwight also played the 2004 Milwaukee national ATOS Convention with his own GW4 four-manual theatre organ. There is a funny story behind that performance in that he did a trial run a few months earlier at Octave Hall in Macungie at the Allen Headquarters. Unbeknownst to him, Lyn Larsen showed up for the run through.

Dwight recalls with a grin, “I have this shtick I do for these Macungie concerts that I never do for conventions. Lyn came up to me after seeing the show and said, ‘You have to do this for the convention.’ Come on. I thought about it and finally decided to do it. I received one of my best reviews. It went something like ‘Dwight was having a party up there and he invited us.’” That was the last ATOS Convention he played for.

In 2014 he was invited to Australia and New Zealand to play. There were 10 concerts, which he thought were received pretty well. “Those are the most wonderful people and I have wonderful memories.” Dwight fondly remembers, “I did a concert in Hobart, Tasmania. It’s beautiful and the last land mass before Antarctica. I had the best salmon I ever had. Tasmania is magical. Go in our wintertime. They were so nice to Gini and me. It could not have been better.” It was the last time he performed.

I then asked Dwight about the people he met along the way.

The earliest musical influence in his life was his church organist at Cypress Park Christian Church in Los Angeles, Mildred Crawford. "She was a fantastic musician who loved to lead the congregation in singing hymns. Del Castillo always talked about the importance of pauses in music. "She played hymns like you sang them. She let up on the organ so you could breathe, then came back to the verses."

"I think about Jerome Markowitz (founder and CEO of Allen Organ) and why he let me build the George Wright organ. It made no economic sense. I estimated that we would probably sell three of four of them in a year."

Dwight believes Jerome did it for two reasons. One, he liked George Wright, and two, he wanted to keep Dwight happy. It became Dwight's avocation at Allen. He spent hours that weren't on company time coming up with plans and ideas for theatre organ. Jerome and Steve let Dwight do his thing. He tried to let the engineering department do their thing as well, and he thinks that's why they were reasonably successful at it.

Allen sold over 50 GW organs in the first year and Dwight estimates it probably amounts to 150 to 200 now. In his wildest imagination he never conceived that would be the case. It's been a very popular configuration.

George Wright

For some reason Dwight and George got along. He attributes that to two things. His wife Gini and George hit it off famously, and Dwight worshiped the ground he walked on. He was really good at what he did. Not only was he an outstanding theatre organist, but an excellent musician. "He played like Fred Astaire danced and Sinatra sang. There was an inner rhythm. He was the best there ever was!"

During the preparations for a recording session at George's home in the 1970s, George asked Dwight to play for him while George fixed lunch, but he was listening. He came back in the room, looked him in the eye and said, "Who was your teacher?" Somewhat timorously I forced his name out of my mouth, "Del Castillo," he uttered. "Oh crap, I thought, here it comes." He said, "You couldn't have taken from a better teacher."

Wright and Dwight got along well. When Dwight had his first heart attack, George called at least once a week and told Gini to make sure he did what the doctor ordered. He was always very nice to Gini.

George called Dwight the week before he died and said he just didn't feel right. "He was calling to talk to a friend. It had nothing



*Dwight, Steve Markowitz and
Lyn Larsen, with the Lyn Larsen
Signature Series LL-324, designed
using samples from Lyn*



Gini and Dwight in Melbourne, Australia, taking the Puffing Billy Railroad

to do with the organ business or anything else.” He died shortly thereafter.

In the late '60s Dwight was asked to play a couple of numbers before a Del Castillo concert on Lorin Whitney's studio recording organ. Dwight told Del he needed some practice time, so Del gave Dwight Lorin's number. He called, and Lorin had some time on Sunday. Whitney met him on Sunday, showed him where the organ was, turned it on, and said, “See ya.” He went to play for a church and came back about noon. “For a teenaged kid that was a great opportunity,”

Stu Green

One person Dwight wanted to make sure I mentioned was legendary *Theatre Organ* magazine editor Stu Green. Stu and his cohort Peg Nielson did a review of his first concert at the Wiltern in 1968. It was VERY complimentary, and Stu also made sure he played for the National Convention that year. “When I graduated from college, my parents had a thing in Huntington Beach for ATOS. Stu was there for that. When Gini and I moved to Paso Robles he came by to visit. He wanted to know what I would do with my life, and he always wore red socks!”

Jerome and Steve Markowitz

Dwight spoke glowingly about Jerome and Steve Markowitz. They gave him the opportunity to create the instruments that had always been in his head. He thought Jerome saw a bit of himself in him and wanted to create a place for this kid to grow. They encouraged him to use his artistic talents and innate engineering skills, and while they could have said no to his ideas because they involved a lot of money and risk, they never did. Dwight said he owes them a lot.

Gini

Then there is his wife Gini. Dwight said being married to a fine musician and wonderful singer helped immeasurably along the way. He might never have worked at Allen if Jerome and she had not gotten on so well, and George Wright adored her. There might not be a George Wright organ, were it not for her. She sat through innumerable practices and rehearsals supporting the man she loved. Their marriage is a wonderful love story.

Finally, I asked three of Dwight's close friends and his former boss to share their recollections of Dwight.

Walt Strony

Walt Strony met Dwight when Allen introduced the George Wright Series of organs, that's when their professional relationship and friendship began.

In 2001 he was hired to both voice and play the largest theatre organ Allen built, dubbed the Silver Cloud, better known today as the TO-5. It was temporarily installed in Indianapolis Circle Theatre for that year's ATOS Convention. Dwight worked at the computer and Walt at the console. The result was a sound that some feel was the best ever!

Dwight later called Walt and asked him to design a new four-manual theatre organ—a Walt Strony signature model organ. He told Walt, “You probably know this organ better than anyone, since you own one and have worked on many.” Dwight said, “Design the best organ you can.”



Dwight and Gini just before church on Sunday

Walt said, "It was the first time anyone had built a complete digital organ based on samples of one existing organ. It turned out to be fabulous. I'll forever be indebted to Dwight and the Allen Organ Company for giving me this opportunity."

"Many in the theatre organ community benefited from Dwight's talent and work on their behalf in creating home instruments that allowed them to achieve their dreams. And yet, he never stopped being a humble and sensitive giving person, no matter what happened."

John Nelson

John Nelson, longtime Northern California Allen dealer, was one dealer who heard Dwight's recording on the Allen organ in the early 1970s and as a result flew back to Allentown and made a deal with Bill Kemmler to sell for Allen.

"Allen Organ would never have been the same without Dwight Beacham," John stated unequivocally. "His contribution was enormous; his influence substantial."

"I thought the world of him. He was a wonderful guy, and a fine Christian man. A prince, really! He cared about what he was doing, and the Markowitz's always backed him up. Thank goodness Steve Markowitz realized if Dwight walked out, he was in a precarious place." [Author Note: That happened, but just for a day!]

John recalled, "When Dwight had his first heart attack, Steve [Markowitz] and vice-president of sales Barry Holben signed in as brothers to see Dwight in the ICU at the hospital. Can you picture that?"

Lyn Larsen



Dwight and lifelong friend and fellow organist Lyn Larsen first met at the Wiltern Theatre in 1968. They were both unknown young organists, and even though they both practiced at the Orange Theatre, they never ran into each other.

"Sometimes in those early days around L.A.," Lyn remembers, "Dwight and I would run into each other playing a little at social events for ATOS. We also played the Bell Friends Church, Tubes Inc. (a warehouse off the 101 freeway), and the big Elks Club Auditorium in Macarthur Park."

Some years later, Dwight introduced Lyn to the Allen Organ Company after a concert in Connecticut via a free company airplane flight to the factory. He really liked what they were doing. He remembers, "Allen ended up continually refining and improving their classical and theatre organs, and I can state without reservation that those models of organs would have never existed if it had not been solely for Dwight and his influence."

"I can remember several times Dwight and I tried to point out to Jerome features we felt needed to be changed, improved or developed and added to the organs. The Boss would get a scowl on his face, but in the long run begrudgingly agreed to make the major changes."

"One major change Dwight and I pressed for was a feature of theatre organs called 'Second Touch' After a rather tense meeting in Jerome's office where Dwight stressed the importance of this feature as it applied to the authenticity of theatre organs, and I tried to back Dwight up with my two cents, The Boss finally agreed that Dwight and I could work with the engineers to develop a prototype."

"I'm very proud of that moment with Dwight, as it was a major leap in realism for the theatre organ manuals at Allen."

"During those years I got to spend time sharing meals with Dwight and Gini away from the factory and saw how loving Dwight and Gini were together."

Steve Markowitz

Steve Markowitz, current Allen CEO and Jerome's son, met Dwight when his father hired him.

Steve reiterated that Dwight was in sales initially. Later, when they found out that Dwight not only had musical skills, AND self-taught engineering skills, he was moved into digital technology.

In my interview with Steve he informed me that his father had been the preeminent analog sound engineer in the 1960s. When the decision was made to go into the digital arena, Jerome had worked himself out of a job. Dwight had the digital knowledge.

Steve also thought it astonishing that while Dwight was helping Allen transition into the digital age, he was living in what Dwight and Gini lovingly called "The Chouse." It was a church built in 1861 complete with graveyard and no insulation in the walls. He remodeled The Chouse while he was doggedly working at Allen. Steve found that to be an extraordinary accomplishment.

Speaking of Dwight again, he said, "It is quite a remarkable statement that someone picks up a passion at a young age and it ends up defining his whole life. It's sort of an American story. He turned a passion into a profession. Dwight's combination of artistic talent and Technical skills is rare."

Steve observed, "Dwight and my father dedicated their lives to making a pipe organ without pipes."

I told Steve that Dwight does not consider himself to be that great an organist. His immediate response was, "Bull---t. His talent as a theatre and church organist was exceptional. I completely disagree with that statement!"

Dwight shared about the encouragement and help his father gave him. Ed Beacham loved music, and organ music in particular. "The music he played on the record player when I was a child and the demos he got with the Hi-Fi system he bought one Christmas directed my course in life."

He took him to concerts, bought pipe organs, and arranged for his first teacher. "You know, he wrote George Wright and asked him to teach me. He couldn't play the organ himself, although he tried, but he encouraged me every way he could. I am eternally grateful."

Finally, when Dwight was creating organs he would sometimes stop and think, "I'm creating instruments to be played in churches every Sunday. One of my favorite things has always been playing hymns for a congregation singing in church, so it was the biggest reward when I heard an Allen organ playing for a congregation and saying to myself, I helped create that. It was always amazing to me."

Dwight Beacham was the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

Dwight at home in Arizona just after I told him I really didn't like organ music!

Inset: Earlier this year at home with his Award for Industry Achievement in the development of the George Wright digital organ

