

Stop & Reed

75th Anniversary edition-part one

April 2021
San Joaquin Valley Chapter American Guild of Organists

*San Joaquin Valley Chapter of
the American Guild of Organists*

75

October 16, 1945-October 16, 2020

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From the Dean

75th Anniversary SJVAGO Dean's Report

Dear San Joaquin Valley Chapter AGO Members,

Wow! 75 years is quite an accomplishment. Since organizing, our chapter has remained active and supportive of all things organ (and beyond!). It is evident that the SJVAGO has always had a commitment to excellence and sharing the organ with everyone. One of the things I am most grateful for has been this chapter's dedication to young people. I know from experience that this chapter has always encouraged youth to share their talents, continue learning, and be a part of the process. It is wonderful to have had so much support as a young person "growing up" in this organization. I think of the legacies left behind by members like Aran Vartanian who would dress as J.S. Bach and introduce the organ to kids, or Richard Cencibaugh who taught and encouraged so many of us. I am grateful for these names, and so many others, who might not be with us, but have left lasting impressions on our chapter and its members.

As we look to the future, I hope that we can continue to follow in these footsteps of the past, while sharing the organ in new and exciting ways. We have made it to our diamond anniversary, and like diamonds, may we stay strong and continue to bring beauty to the world!

Dean Cactus Sam Harris

Our Chapter in review

THE CHARTER MEMBERS

October 16, 1945

Dick Cotell
Joseph O. Edwards
Florence Gonser
Frances Hansen
Betty Jane Johnson
Ella Kohler
Margarette Larwood
Nellie Stanley

Arthur Luckin
Arthur Manter
Helge Pearson
Gertrude Randleman
Mayno Rish
Ruth Rockwood
Gladys Seaman

CHAPTER DEANS

1945-2021

Ruth Rockwood.....1945-1947
Margarette Larwood.....1947-1951
The Rev. Mr. Tryon Richards.....1951-1952
Margarette Larwood.....1952-1955
Jane Keene.....1955-1957
Hazel Petersen.....1957-1960
Margarette Larwood 1960-1961
Hazel Petersen.....1961-1962
Margarette Larwood.....1962-1963
Richard Galloway.....1963-1966
Lola Eisenbise Armye.....1966-1968
Richard Cencibaugh.....1968-1970
H. R. Fishback, Jr. MD.....1970-1972
Richard Cencibaugh.....1972-1973
The Rev. Mr. Raymond Anderson.....1973-1974
Catherine Walker.....1974-1975
Dillon Throckmorton.....1975-1977
Frances Hein.....1979-1980

Lynne Rodriguez.....1977-1980
Ardelle Bakkegard.....1980-1982
Aran Vartanian.....1982-1984
Faye E. DeLong.....1984-1986
Margaret E. Rouf.....1986-1988
Stephen Vincent.....1988-1990
Howard Latta.....1990-1991
Faye E. DeLong.....1991-1994
Zella Woods.....1994-1996
Laurell Huber.....1996-1998
Aran Vartanian.....1998-2001
Roy McMeen.....2001-2004
Ruth Andersen.....2004-2009
Catherine Walker.....2009-2012
Laurell Huber.....2012-2014
Michael Varlas.....2014-2018
Cactus Harris.....2018-

Remarks from past deans

Catherine Walker dean from 1974-1975 and 2009-2012

In July, 2009 I was elected Dean of the SJV/AGO Chapter. I had finished out a year's term of a previous Dean in 1974, but that year had no special memories connected to it. My first activity was attending the Regional Convention in Phoenix, AZ. There was so much motivation connected with being at that convention, that I happily took on my duties. Here are some highlights of these three years:

- Members enjoyed the 2nd Annual Organ spectacular at the Warner's Theatre and it was indeed spectacular! Ten students were enthralled with the organ and with Richard Cencibaugh's presentation. The following two years the activity continued as Warner's Open Console.
- The three Hymn Festivals during these years were very well attended and enjoyed. Our directors these three years were Dr. Roy Klassen with the San Joaquin Chorale at University Presbyterian Church and Fowler First Presbyterian Church, and Dr. Julie Carter, with her choir and brass ensemble at First Presbyterian Church. We were always excited to see our members take part as organists for the hymns, and special music.
- Our Organ Artist Series recitalists continued with two concerts each year; Christoph Bull, Carol Terry, James David Christie, Angela Kraft Cross, Ty Woodward and Dr. Alison Luedecke. Members were thrilled with their expertise and musicianship.
- A special recital, "Six Guys and a Doll" with student organists from our chapter reminded us how important it was to spotlight these "up and coming" musicians. The "Doll" is now an active member of our chapter, Hannah Zentner! Members Laurell Huber, Jacquie Johnson and Helga Medd deserve so much credit for giving extra volunteer hours to plan and carry out Central CA Young Performance Awards, Pipe Organ Experience and Pedal Pushers. POEx had 42 students enjoying the Martin Ott organ at CSUF.
- In addition, member recitals, a workshop with composer/pianist Kevin Memley, Guild Sunday services, and the annual Twelfth Night Social were very enjoyable.

During these three years I especially remember two "reasons for being a member" that I tried to promote. Our chapter runs on volunteers. Some members are willing to give back to this organization that has benefitted them and provided inspiration. Others are just sitting on the sidelines. I feel certain that those who volunteer to expand their skills and contribute to our chapter, benefit from their membership and our shared experience in many ways. In addition, I encouraged organist friends to "Live Your Life Splendidly!" This was not original with me, but the quote is from the armless pianist, Liu Wei. He accomplishes the amazing feat of playing with his toes by imagining the positive results from that quote. I do not know the Chinese word for splendid but the beauty and punch of the word was enough to spur me on to three splendid years with my organist friends.

Faye E. DeLong dean from 1984-1986 and 1991-1994

I served from 1984 to 1986 and again from 1991 to 1994. I had good and competent board members, many of whom are still active now. We all planned and carried out the usual activities, i.e. member recitals, Guild Sunday programs, hosted many Organ Artist Series concerts, etc. Our AGO chapter is fortunate to have members who were and are so willing to carry on the work of an AGO chapter.

Remarks from past deans

Laurell Huber dean from 1996-1998 and 2012-2014

It is amazing for me to realize how I have been personally affected by our San Joaquin Valley Chapter for 65 of its 75 years (a majority of its existence!). Chapter member/teachers who have generously mentored me at the organ since childhood are Miriam Tietjen (Michael Hembd's mom), Eunice Kronberg, Lee Burtner, and Aran Vartanian.

-My memories over the years are a blend of really good people and outstanding programs. We are family!

-My earliest excitement for the Guild began at very informative master classes held at First Congregational Church covering Johannes Brahms through William Albright.

-A chapter highlight for me was a tour of a wide variety of organs in the Bay Area, carefully arranged by Dean Aran Vartanian and other colleagues.

I was fortunate in my early years as a board member to observe and learn from our departed "Angel" Deans Margaret Larwood, Richard Galloway, Richard Cencibaugh, Ardelle Bakkegard, Aran Vartanian, and Zella Woods in their expertise at directing the various issues of chapter business, each in his or her own way.

Our chapter formerly had the resource of a chaplain which I found to be a great blessing, especially in Rev. Frank Baldwin. He was a very enthusiastic supporter and enabler to the activities of our chapter, always bending over backward to offer assistance.

We have also been blessed by a talented team of reception hosts who served selflessly at our major events for many years—Jo and Ray Dull and Lynda and Terry Roberts. The fellowship at our OAS Concert Series, 12th Night Dinners, Baroque Festivals, etc., were enhanced by their efforts of setting up, serving, cleaning up, storing "hardware," even sharing their fabulous punch recipe.

We achieved great success in promoting organ playing among youth with Education Coordinator Richard Cencibaugh overseeing our Competitions and POE Scholarship Awards, our own mini-POE events and Guild Sunday performances. After leaving our nest, many of these young organists continue to make mighty music as adults.

I would like to share some photos I found of invited Organ Artist Series artists and our members in action that reflect moments I have personally treasured. (Editor's note-other photos will be posted on SJVAGO.org)



OAS artist Yuko Hyashi, New England Conservatory of Music, Aran Vartanian, Laurell and Wayne Huber



Aran Vartanian with Martin Ott, Organ Builder at the installation of the organ at CSUFresno.

Remarks from past deans

Ruth Andersen dean from 2004-2009

I had the privilege of being the dean of the Fresno Chapter of the AGO from 2004-2009. Working with church musicians throughout the valley, different denominations, different organs, but all with the intent of serving our Lord and the church through the gift of music, was most memorable.

The musical conventions held each year in various parts of the nation are well worth attending. I attended three conventions; Los Angeles, CA, Tucson, AZ and Colorado Springs, CO.

At the Los Angeles convention I introduced myself to Paul Jacobs, whom our chapter had already contracted to play a recital that winter. Lee Todd and Claire Hampton were also in attendance. Thus, when he arrived in Fresno, we were already acquainted and had an enjoyable time hosting him. An interesting experience came a couple of years later when Claire and I were in Hawaii, picked up a newspaper and saw that Paul was playing a recital there. We went to the recital and had a reunion with Paul. He later went on to be the organ professor at Julliard.

I did enjoy my years as dean and the many lasting friends made from that time.

Michael Varlas dean from 2014-2018

Serving as dean of the San Joaquin Valley Chapter has been one of the finest experiences and greatest honors of my life. Never have I been involved with a finer group of people who are united in the interest of organ and choral music, not only as a performance art, but more importantly, as an expression of the divine within us.

As a dean, I felt a great sense of responsibility to make sure that we remained a growing, professional and collegial enclave that was feeding the souls of our members and of the larger community. What a joy it was for me to see us bring organ virtuoso performers to our area. Performing in member recitals was also a joyful time for me. How I enjoyed being a part of the performance, and getting to spend time with other players. It was also wonderful to see how our young organists were growing as musicians.

If I had to choose one event that we host each year as our apex it would be the Hymn Festival. The reason I selected that one is for the way it brings people of all denominations together to lift their voices in praise. I am always amazed at how the committee manages to come up with hymns that reach deep into our souls, all within the theme of the festival. Our members have always been generous in their support of the chapter and our mission. As a part of the chapter, I can't help but feel that we are a family. We enjoy getting together for our annual dinner, our Twelfth Night (afternoon) celebration, our OAS concerts, recitals, Evensongs and even our monthly board meetings.

I know that this has been a trying year-plus with COVID-19 impacting all of us. But, in looking for a positive, we are finding ways to continue life, but in a different way. We are learning to embrace technology as a way to stay in touch with each other and as a means of sharing organ performances with each other and with our friends.

One inescapable reality that I have seen is that our chapter is growing older. Our next challenge is to continue to bring the younger generation into leadership in order to keep the chapter going. I close with my signature...Blessings, always!

P. S. I love all of you!



Franz Liszt Birthday recital at the Episcopal Church of the Saviour

CELEBRATE!!!

San Joaquin Valley Chapter AGO

75th

ANNIVERSARY
VIRTUAL
HAPPY HOUR

COME CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY

Sunday, April 18th at 5PM

ZOOM LINK AVAILABLE AT WWW.SJVAGO.ORG

Pour a yourself a glass, and share your AGO
memories with friends!