

*February 21, Sunday, 3:00 pm, Lloyd Hess
Hamm-O-Rama at Joe Patten's apartment in the Fox*

**FEBRUARY AT JOE
PATTEN'S, AND BYOC**

(That's bring your own chairs!)

We will enjoy the sumptuous and distinctive surroundings of Joe Patten's magnificent apartment atop the Fabulous Fox Theatre on Sunday, February 21, at 3 pm, (back to our regular meeting time). And as you know, seating is limited, and Joe does not have access to a room full of folding chairs. So we ask that as many as possible bring chairs with you.

It's Hamm-O-Rama, with Lloyd Hess, the Master of the Drawbars, entertaining on the wonderful Hammond organ. We can also salivate over what most certainly will be an open console time that will feature a Cavalcade of Keyboard stars! Bob Fountain, Rick McGee, Ken Double, Larry Davis, Ron Carter,



Lloyd Hess

Lee Lanier and who knows who else might grace the bench before the afternoon is over. And that doesn't include those who will play the vintage reproducing piano!

IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

ENTRANCE: On Ponce de Leon, about halfway between the Publik Draft House restaurant and the Fox stage door. We will have someone stationed at the gate.

STEPS: ACATOS may or may not have elevator access available so be

aware it is two LONG flights up to the apartment.

CHAIRS: As mentioned, please bring folding chairs which should have feet that will not scratch the floor.

PARKING: There are metered spaces along Ponce de Leon; and, a public parking lot directly across the street. Please note: there are unmetered reserved spaces along side the theatre THAT ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR PARKING FOR THE MEETING. Park in the legal, marked, metered spaces on either side of Ponce de Leon, or in the lot.

FOX SCHEDULE: As of this writing, there is nothing booked on stage at the Fox on this particular Sunday.

REFRESHMENTS: There will be light refreshments available after the formal part of the program.

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**A TRIBUTE TO
JAMES THROWER**

By John Clark McCall



Here we are, again, writing in the past tense about a pillar — a *big stone column* — which has supported ATOS.

I must write in the first person because James was a "brother" to me since our first meeting at the Atlanta Fox in the summer of 1970 or so. For over forty-five years, this southern gentleman and superb musician shared a passion for music and its muse, the theatre organ.

James was quiet about his passion, but it came through in his music. And it certainly was readily apparent when he lent a hand—24/7—to assist me with the first

Keyboard Colossus at the Fox, and later with **The Fabulous Fox Organ Weekend**. At those events, James probably moved more grand pianos and re-set more organ combinations for more artists—collectively—than we would do in a lifetime.

And then, there is the incidental query I made to him on the telephone, "Would you consider donating your Möller theatre organ to the Rylander in Americus?" There was no pause, no "I'll have to sleep on it." There was a

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**Atlanta Chapter,
American Theatre Organ Society**

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Thanks for the Donations

Brad Sorano



***President's
Note...***

Once Again...

There are so many things that are happening in our chapter that are so good and about which we could write, but once again we have experienced an incalculable loss – that of James Thrower. Others will write perhaps more eloquent histories and eulogies but there is no doubt that this man, part of our organization for a half century, and with a half century of knowledge, expertise, history and musical ability, was one of the central members of our chapter for decades. With someone like James Thrower, it is truly impossible to express value of his contributions and of his friendship – we can only conclude that the Atlanta Chapter would be much the poorer had we not been blessed with all that he gave of himself over the many years.

For me, the loss is a very personal one because I have so many memories and because James was such an influence on me personally when I returned to theatre organ in

2003 after a three-decade absence. These are some of the moments that stand out:

Bucky ordered a second pedal cabinet for the Walker, the cabinet that was to go in the upstairs closet. When the men delivered it to the front hallway, which is as far as they would take it, it was in a box and was the size of a refrigerator. James and I wrestled it over to the stairs, laid it down, and together shoved the thing up those stairs, using the box as our inclined plane. We then extracted it from the box, wrestled it across the balcony, and jammed it into the closet after which the door would not close. So we had to remove the door, reposition the hinges and affix it to the other side. What a memorable afternoon! And colorful, if you take my meaning.

Then there was the time that we were picking up James in Bucky's car – I was driving – and Bucky had a CD on but didn't know which one it was. James got in the car and we mentioned that we didn't know what organ we were hearing. He listened for 5 seconds and said, "That's a Barton. Listen to those Tibias." What!!?? Well, he was right, it was the Rhinestone Barton. What an incredible ear!

Back a few years ago, when the Fox Möller's 16' Diaphone chest had been rebuilt, James, George Miller and I were returning the resonators to the chests and tuning them, but the low C wouldn't tune up to pitch. After we struggled with it, including dismantling and reassembling the vibrator, the unfortunate Dave Wickerham called up from the console, "It's still not sharp enough." James, annoyed and worn out by this time and maybe a little low on sugar, thundered out, "The only way I can make it sharper is to cut the top of it off!!" Dave dared say no more, and we got it all working properly a few minutes later.

His influence on me came about this way: when I returned to

theatre organ and was first starting to play again after so long an absence, I was terribly intimidated at the idea of playing publicly and liked to limit myself to noodling around when only a couple of people were present and hopefully if they weren't paying attention. After several months of this, I had the opportunity to play at an open console and, as usual, demurred. James growled at me in that bass voice, "If you don't play in front of people, you're never going to play in front of people." Well, coming from him, considering Who He Was, his reproof got my attention. So a short time later, when Bucky asked me to join Jim Wingate and Wanda Carey to play the Page (from the old console) for a chapter program, I consented, and that event opened my mental door. That one sentence, coming from James, was the single most important factor in re-starting my playing career.

My final story is a memory from James. I asked him once, "How did you get into theatre organ?" He told me that when he was a child, he was at the Fox for a children's movie and the film featured a song at the end that repeated over and over so that the kids were able to join in singing – and they did. James said, "As the song came to its last chorus, suddenly, this huge sound enveloped the room, joining with us as we sang to the music from the screen." and he saw the grand gold console rise from the pit, in the capable hands of Stan Mallotte. That was the thrilling moment that drew James into the world of theatre organ.

The theatre organ world is much, much the richer because of that day. I shall soon have a the sad occasion to raise a glass to the memory of a great man - and come to think of it, that glass probably should be an Absolute tonic with a lime twist. Farewell, my friend.

Larry Davis

Gordon Johnson

By Ron Carter



I had the privilege of sitting down with Linda Johnson, Gordy's wife of 65 years, recently to discuss their long-time involvement in the theatre organ world!! It is quite an interesting story that I am sharing with our Atlanta Chapter members in this ACATOS Newsletter. The Johnson's were long-time members of our chapter for over 40 years!

A Tribute to James Thrower

(Continued from page 1)

resounding "yes" and many months later, it was James who called me to relay the first sounds he and John Tanner had coaxed out of the instrument. I've never seen a prouder man than the night Ron Rhode brought the organ to life, playing to a full house that included our former president, Jimmy Carter, and his first lady, Roselyn.

That event was certainly one of many where James rubbed elbows with legendary folk. Perhaps my favorite recollection is when we were sharing duties at the Möller for Mickey Rooney's live show at the Rylander. During rehearsals, Mr. Rooney wanted to take his pianist into the house to check acoustics and balance. We were sitting quietly in the auditorium. Rooney asked, "Could one of you come take over the Steinway for a few minutes so we can do a sound check?" I literally grabbed

Gordy and Linda met in Chicago and were married there in 1950. Gordy had one sister, Marian. Marian gave Gordy his first theatre organ record and the artist was none other than George Wright. Gordy loved that record!

Gordy had four daughters, five grand children, and five great grandchildren.

Gordy took piano lessons but really didn't care for the piano. Interestingly his lessons cost the whopping sum of 25 cents! In his youth Gordy was more interested in sports but his teacher told his parents that he did have musical talent.

In 1958 Gordy and Linda bought their first organ, a Hammond Spinnet where he got 10 free lessons with the purchase and Linda and the two older children did too! Soon they moved to Elgin, Illinois and they bought a Hammond B3 with a Leslie external cabinet. The local Hammond dealer played at the local Moose Club and

James by the collar and said emphatically...GO! Minutes later, I felt like *Gypsy's* Mama Rose listening to James flawlessly playing with Mickey's musicians...as if they had been touring for a decade.

James had studied with my former boss at Georgia State University's Department of Music, Tom Brumby. James had a trunk full of stories about "Brumby" and always recalled Tom using a pink plastic *The Flintstones* club to "beat" his students when errors of notation or tempo were committed. James said that he might as well have filed a report for assault and battery.

James transferred his piano skills effortlessly to the theatre organ (and to classical organ as well). His work with our Ron Carter was legendary and as a solo artist, he showed solid musicianship and a masculine—pull out all the stops—playing style. But, then, he could exhibit a different side of his talent. No greater example was

asked Gordy to help. Ken taught Gordon organ playing and how to register the Hammond B3. Gordy was payed \$5 an hour. This same year Gordy took a job with the Kewanee Boiler Company. His job required him to travel a lot and he found out about ATOE and joined. The Johnsons also moved to Kewanee, Illinois during this time.

Soon Gordy heard of a 2/7 Wurlitzer that was located in Columbus, Ohio. He rented a U-Haul truck and trailer and he and Linda drove in a snow storm to pick the instrument up. Linda said that during their trip the trailer hitch almost came off! When they arrived back home the organ was stored in the garage. It was in perfect condition. Later Gordy installed the instrument in the basement of a beautiful and large 1920's home with the swell shutters in the floor of the music room. Linda said the instrument sounded

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than a solo concert on the Alabama Wurlitzer. As he took "Bertha" down, we expected a rip-roaring Thrower showstopper. We got George Gershwin's *Soon* and it ended, literally, with a single note played on a single rank of pipes. Effective was an understatement, demonstrating, once again, that James was a professional in any endeavor—whether at the console or behind it. Setting combinations for artists that included the great Jelani Eddington and Simon Gledhill at Atlanta's Fox was a good example of his willingness to wander from the spotlight.

His keen ear helped voice many an organ but moreover, his love for our art form transcended the musical and technical side. His greatest talent, I believe, was his ability to make life-long friendships that will always remain very much alive.

John Clark McCall, Jr.



Gordon Johnson (Continued from page 3)

wonderful. It was in this location for five years.

In 1964 Gordy took a job with The Electronics Corporation of America and another move for the Johnson family was happening. Gordy and Linda packed the 2/7 Wurlitzer in another U-Haul and off they went to Kansas City. And wouldn't you know it moved again in a horrible snowstorm that was so bad they had to take the train back to Kewanee. While living in Kansas City Gordy installed the organ again in the basement. After several years Gordy decided to sell the Wurlitzer to a man who played for the local Hockey Team who sold it to a Botany Professor at Cal Tech who lived in Pomona, California. Linda and Gordy visited the professor while on business in Pomona and found that of all the houses in the neighborhood the Professor's stood out because the roof had been raised for the 16 Ft pipes!! Gordy then purchased another Hammond B3 but after a couple of years got the itch for a real theatre organ.

Gordy found out that the University of Missouri had the organ from the Kansas City Plaza Theatre and wanted to sell it. Gordy put in a bid and low and behold got the instrument a beautiful 3/11 Wurlitzer with French Style Console .

In 1972 the Johnson's moved to Marietta where Gordy had taken a position with EC of America. They

installed the 3/11 in the basement of a beautiful home in NE Cobb. At that time Gordy became very active in the Atlanta Chapter of ATOS and served as Treasurer along with President Bob Van Camp and VP, Joe Patten! The Johnson's had many wonderful chapter programs in their home, silent films, and Bob Van Camp many times at the console.

Gordy then decided to sell the organ to Ron Weimere who at that time was living in Cincinnati, Ohio. Lyn Larsen and Tony Fenlon dedicated the organ at a wonderful program that Gordy and Linda attended.

Of course after a time Gordy got the organ bug again and purchased a Gubransen Rialto. They then sold their NE Cobb home and moved into a condo on Manning Road in Marietta.

Gordy then heard of a 2/7 Wurlitzer in Augusta. He went with his son-in-law Kenny and brought it back to the Marietta condo and stored it in the Garage. Linda says it was a real basket case and Gordy spent hundreds of hours restoring the instrument and having to completely rewire the relay!

In 1985 Gordy and Linda had a home built in NE Cobb on Dara Drive. At this time Gordy was with a company, Power Flame. The home was built for the organ by taking out one bedroom and installing the instrument in the basement where it spoke through swell shutters on the main level into the dinning/great room. The chapter had many wonderful programs at the Johnson residence for almost 10 years.

In 1996 Gordy and Linda sold the Dara Drive residence to the Tracy family and moved to a retirement community in Florida. After several years the Dara Drive home went into foreclosure. I happened to be in the neighborhood one day and wanted to see if the organ was still there. As I approached the front door I spotted the Bank Trespass Notice and the



heavy lock on the front door. I peered through the front window and low and behold there was the Naughty Marietta Wurlitzer Console still sitting in the living room! I notified Larry Davis who was Atlanta Chapter President giving him the bank information and the rest is history. The bank was so thankful we had called about the organ because they had no idea what to do with it!! Of course it was then moved by Atlanta Chapter members back to Augusta for future installation in the Imperial Theatre its original home!!

While in Florida, Gordy found a Rogers Trio which he purchased for their Florida home. They lived in the Spring Hill community which was about 45 miles from Tampa. While in Florida, Gordy eventually traded the Trio for an Empire Digital instrument and after 10 years. moved back to the Atlanta area in 2006 and purchased a beautiful patio style home in Seven Hills, located in Paulding County.

While in Florida, Gordy had retired from Power Flame. Of course, the Empire Theatre Organ came with them! The Johnsons' have lived in Seven Hills for the last ten years!

Well, this brings the story of Gordon and Linda Johnson to an end. What a story of moving, purchasing and playing all kinds of theatre organs both electronic and pipe and having the entire family involved.

Gordy we will never forget you my friend. It was an honor to know you, Linda and the entire Johnson family! I Know you are playing the theatre organ in Heaven!!

Ron Carter

Ken and the Grande Page – a Double Delight !!



Sunday, January 31st, 2016, at 4:00 pm, a treat was in store for the attendees. Chapter members, guests, and two VIP out-of-town visitors made for an afternoon to be remembered.

President Larry Davis greeted the attendees, making announcements of events and future happenings, a few of the upcoming programs, and announcements concerning the recent loss of James Thrower – a vital cog in the history and continued existence of the Page organ, and remembrances for Bucky Reddish, Gordy Johnson, Fred

Boska and Kenn Fields – a season of loss for the chapter. Then, the business at hand, Larry introduced our guest artist... Mr. Ken Double !!

The music got under way as the console rose from the pit, with “I Want to Be Happy” and we all were. Now 21 ranks (of the planned 22) speaking out as if for the very first time – all voiced, regulated, and – “happy !!” The music continued with a variety of selections to demonstrate the vast changes in the make-up and sound of the Page: “If You Knew Susie,” a demo of the new voices, “Rock-a-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody” to show the ppp (very, very soft) to fff (the really loud) capabilities, and he even included the rarely-heard verse to the song. A selection for Bucky, Fred, Gordy, James and Kenn “The Song is Ended (But the Melody Lingers On)” – a fitting tribute. Next, the traps and percussions had a play-fest with “Lady of Spain.”

A special moment: Happy Birthday Jack Sandow on his very spry and youthful 94th Birthday. The ACATOS Amalgamated Chorus was in full voice !!!

“You’ll Never Know” as arranged by Radio City organist Ray

Bohr – showcasing the wonderful sound of the Tibia voices was next. A blues selection to demonstrate the saucier voices, and a favorite (for member Bob Fountain,) “Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life” showed the lush ballad capabilities now available.

An encore was called for, and ‘jazz’ concluded the program!!

Thanks, Ken, for a great showcase of the Page and its new voice!!

Goodies and cake, and open console followed.

Now, the special mentions: our two out-of-town visitors were Carlton Smith (Indiana) and Clark Wilson (Ohio) who brought their special brand of magic, regulation and voicing skills, and patience to bring the Page to a new level of life and excitement !! I believe they accomplished their tasks – yes ????

A special treat – Clark performed Richard Rodgers suite from “Victory at Sea” for Jack – with Jack standing at his side at the console taking it all in – Jack’s favorite selection – for his birthday !!!

Offered by **Biz E. Body**, a completely unbiased ear! Remember, the walls / chambers, and lobby have ears !!

It’s Time To Pay Your Dues — Do It Now, Don’t Put It Off

Calendar-year 2016 dues of \$35 per household (Students \$17.50) are now due and payable. Article VIII, Section 2 of our By-Laws state “Dues shall become payable on January 1st of each year and shall be paid within the first two months of the year.”

Although not stated in the By-Laws, we have made it a practice to consider payments made during the last quarter of the preceding year to apply toward the following calendar year; therefore, if you paid during the last quarter of 2015, you are considered a member for 2016. Please use the Membership Application on Page 6 noting the instructions and address therein.

FEBRUARY AT JOE PATTEN’S, AND BYOC

(Continued from page 1)

It’s been more than two years since we last enjoyed the opportunity to share time with Joe (who now sports a long, flowing beard - Atlanta’s Hemingway!) and we

look forward to a great time, great fun, great music, all spent with a great man, Joe Patten, who February 9th celebrates his 89th birthday!!

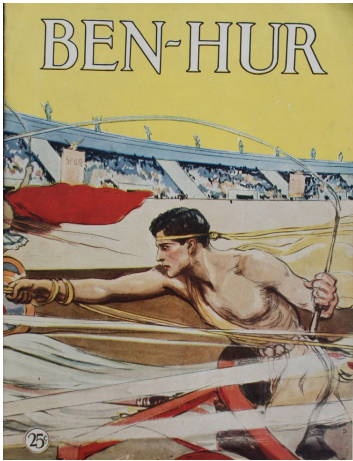
See you Sunday, February 21st, 3 pm, at the fabulous Joe Patten apartment in the Fabulous Fox!

Upcoming Meetings & Events (*Mark your Calendars*)

- Feb 21, Sunday, 3:00 pm, Hamm-O-Rama at Joe Patten’s apartment in the Fox theatre. (See Page 1)
- Mar 5, 7:30 pm, Richard Hills in Concert at the Grande Page organ, Stephenson High School.
- Apr 17, 3:00 pm, The McKoon Residence with Larry Davis and John McCall.
- May 15, 3:00 pm, The David Burud Residence with our host, David, at his own Allen GW-IV.
- June 12, 3:00 pm, The Tivoli Theatre, Chattanooga, artist TBA.
- A Musical Tribute to Dr. Fred Boska, Larry Davis and John McCall at the Steinway and Allen 317, Westminster Oaks Retirement Center, Tallahassee, FL., Monday, April 25, 2016. For more information: 229.560.7540.

Here are some Strand movie dates where the Chapter organ will be played:

- Feb 6, **Sing Along with Mamma Mia.** Pre-show at 7:30 pm, Organist TBA.
- Feb 13, **Casablanca.** Pre-show at 7:30 pm, John McCall organist.



The Strand has just added the silent classic BEN HUR, A Tale of the Christ, to its calendar for Sunday afternoon, March 13th at 3 pm accompanied by Ron Carter and the Strand's Mighty Allen Theatre Organ.

BEN HUR: The 1926 Silent Masterpiece was a production and financial disaster but yet a technical and popular triumph. This film still captivates and astounds. It took four years and 4 million dollars to make which is equivalent to 20 million in today's dollars! Starring Ramon Novarro and Francis X. Bushman the film is based on the novel which had sold more copies in its time than any other except the Bible and was blessed by the Pope. Now, more than seventy five years after its blaze into film history, the grandeur of this film and its famed blunders cannot fail to excite our awe and curiosity. The famous chariot race was not topped in the 1959 version. Instead it was copied!! Forty-two cameramen logged 53,000 feet of film on race day with thousands of extras!

Atlanta Chapter, ATOS - Membership Application

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State/ZIP _____ Email _____

Do you own an organ? _____ If so, description _____

Membership Category (check one): Patron (\$300 and up) Sponsor (\$200 - \$299)

Contributor (\$100 - \$199) Donor (\$36 - \$99) Basic (\$35) Student (\$17.50)

Send Newsletter via email: Yes No

Please make check payable to **Atlanta Chapter, ATOS**

Mail to: Atlanta Chapter, ATOS, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 426, Marietta, GA 30061-0426