

THE SOONER TUNER

Newsletter
Oklahoma Chapter 731
Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.

March 2010

Spring is around the corner and so is the next tuning season. Come and fine tune your skills at the next meeting of the Oklahoma chapter of the PTG.

This month's meeting will be held at

Saint Luke's United Methodist Church

222 NW 15th

Oklahoma City, OK 73103

Thursday, March 18th 2010 at 8:30 am

405-232-1371 (main), 405-232-2391 (children's dept)

The presentation will be given by David and Barbara Bonham on the maintenance and detailed cleaning of your customer's piano. For those of you looking to earn more revenue, this is a great way to expand your billing invoice, and your customers will love you. Also, David will be giving a presentation on tone building on a set of very weak Steinway hammers in a Steinway grand piano.

And now a message from our President:

I have recently been reading a book by Edward Quincy Norton called The Construction, Tuning and Care of the Piano Forte - Copyright © 1915. It is interesting to compare the piano technology of 1915 to today's technology. For instance, here's the recommended way of repairing a sluggish key in 1915. "Should any keys stick, press back the bushing by carefully inserting the pointed end of a tuning fork." Or, here's an iron and rust preventative. "Take one ounce of camphor, dissolved in two pounds of lard; skim and mix in black lead to give an iron color. Apply and let remain 24 hours, then dry with a clean cloth."

This book is filled with various procedures involving hand made tools, and strange chemical concoctions. One remedy mentioned for cleaning piano strings is to use kerosene and coal oil. Considering that smoking was a popular habit of the day, it makes me wonder how often pianos were suddenly transformed into kerosene lanterns!

A century ago, piano technicians had to work with very limited tools and supplies. Home remedies were a must, and communication amongst technicians was probably limited as well. How fortunate we are today to have the Piano Technicians Guild and have access to so much

information.

Even a half century ago, however, there were many accepted means of repair that are frowned on today. For example, the remedy for loose tuning pins was to simply drive the pin deeper into the pin block, or, worse yet, pour a mixture of anti-freeze and alcohol around the tuning pin causing the block to rot! Pin block replacement was almost unheard of, but if one elected to do so, the supply house pin block planks were less than wonderful to say the least.

Today, we have a variety of hammer weights, densities, and moldings, a choice of grand hammershanks and wippens like never before, and tools to make our work much easier. So, then, who can we thank for raising the bar, so to speak? The Piano Manufacturers? Supply houses? How about our fellow Piano Technicians, especially RPT members of The Piano Technicians Guild? Here's a favorite quote by G. K. Chesterton. "Get out of the well lit prison of a closed mind"!

Most of the tools and supplies we have available from the supply houses today came from the innovations from technicians in the field. The genius of the tool inventors like Bill Spurlock, Laroy Edwards, Frances Mahaffey, and Bob Marinelli, the scale and design innovators like David Stanwood and the Fandrich brothers, are just a few of the names that come to mind. All are members of the Piano Technicians Guild, and all have been willing to share their knowledge. Without their help and the communication engine of the Guild, we might still be easing keys with the end of a tuning fork or cleaning with kerosene. So, doesn't it make perfect sense to read the Journal and attend at least one major PTG function each year??

Bob

NOW FOR THE TOPIC OF THE MONTH QUESTION.

This question comes from a Retired concert technician.

In my long career, one the most formidable, often embarrassing and ultimately time-consuming tasks I ever faced would have to be tuning obstinate Baldwin grands. The pinning on so many Baldwins that I encountered over the years was beyond anything I'd ever found in any other make of piano.

Surely this has something to do with the multi-laminate pinblocks that Baldwin used or the fact that the pin holes were not drilled properly or a combination of both? I was just wondering how other concert techs have managed to deal with this problem successfully. I should elaborate, as well, that I don't mean a long, drawn-out fix in a shop or a customers home, I'm talking about on-the-spot, concert and recording venues when your time is most valuable and limited. I'm referring mainly to those awful pins that jump with a sudden, loud cracking sound when you try to tune them either flat or sharp. And, no matter how many times you think you're closing in on a good pin-setting, they suddenly jump a half step flat or sharp. I think you know the ones I mean.

This Question should be nearly answered at the next PTG meeting. Come and find out.

What is a Registered Piano Technician, [click here](#)

Oklahoma Chapter Website, [click here](#)

The Oklahoma chapter officers of the PTG are:

President – Bob Scheer

Vice President – David Bonham

Secretary – Jordan Bruce

Treasurer – Gary Bruce

Newsletter Editor – Eric Williams

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