

PIPE ORGAN: HOW MUCH?

Fulton Lewis Jr., Choir Boys Construct One That Glorifies Christmas Eve

By LEN LeSOURD

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Dinner was over, Fulton Lewis, Jr. arose from the table and started to his study for a long evening of work on a special broadcast—a task already postponed too many times.

"Tonight," the broadcaster announced with that determined look his family knew so well. "Tonight I'm not to be disturbed for anything—not even for St. Peter himself."

Once in his study, he closed the door firmly and settled himself at his desk. But his mind still rang with the shouts of some thirty hum-scarum youngsters whom, as their choir-master, he had gathered together that afternoon and conducted on a 60-mile trip to Washington, D.C., for special singing instruction.

Outside he heard the doorbell ring. Rigidly he tried to concentrate on the papers before him, but the sound of youthful voices talking to his wife filtered through.

"Say, we've got something really important to ask Mr. Lewis."

"I'm very sorry, but he just can't be disturbed."

Fulton Lewis sighed, laid down his pen and went out.

"Okey, kids," the broadcaster said dryly, "what's so important?"

15-year-old Bobby Adams, son of a local bricklayer, spoke up.

"None of us ever heard anything as beautiful as that pipe organ today. We decided to chip in and buy one for our church. How do we go about it?"

"Do you know how much a pipe organ costs?" Lewis asked quizzically.

"As much as \$500?"

"About \$25,000—for a small one."

The youngsters looked stunned.

"Golly, aren't there any good second-hand ones for less?" wistfully queried 15-year-old Sumpy Readmond, who aspired to be a mechanic. "I'd be glad to help repair it."

Lewis shook his head. "If you want a pipe organ bad enough, you'll have to go out and build one yourselves. Goodnight, kids."

Puzzling Question Posed

Back at his desk, Lewis squirmed uncomfortably in his chair. "How did I get myself in for all this?"

"All this" referred to the local children and their choir project which music-lover Lewis had taken on months before. It started when many of his neighbors, disturbed by the spiritual drought throughout St. Mary's county, banded together and built a Methodist church outside of the little town of Holly-

wood, Maryland. Fulton Lewis Jr., who lived with his family two miles away at Placid Harbor, helped dedicate the sanctuary on his 1947 Christmas Eve broadcast. As a last minute idea, he gathered together a small group of kids for a junior choir.

This new church was a healthy spot in an area peppered with more bars than grocery stores, more gambling joints than churches and many more poor than well-to-do.

Youngsters from these families were in the group that approached Fulton Lewis Jr. several days after the broadcast to ask him to be regular choir-master for their planned junior choir.

Something in their faces grabbed his heart as they came timidly before him with their proposition.

His own youngsters, Betty, 17, and Buddy, 14, had also been working on him. Sure—he'd be glad to train them, but they would have to work harder than ever before.

Who would have imagined that these untrained and often unattended youngsters, ranging from 9 to 17 years, would through persistence, patience and practice, quickly learn some 200 hymns by heart, take to four-part harmony and become a disciplined, imaginative singing body?

Second Appeal Wins

But now for his broadcast. As he picked up his pen and bent over his papers, the doorbell rang again.

"Mrs. Lewis, could we see Mr. Lewis again for just a minute?"

The broadcaster threw down his pen. "What can you do with a bunch like that?" But there was a twinkle in his eye by the time he reached the front door.

were cramped and aching. . . or twisting wires around contact pins until fingers were raw. The total of 15,000 needed electrical connections seemed staggering.

Mrs. Lewis, Toggias Woos

Mrs. Lewis, resigned to her home becoming a recreational hall, set up her own school—for managers. It wasn't unusual to hear her kind but firm voice lining them up in fives and sixes and instructing them in the art of meeting new people, and introducing each other to strangers. Dedication to their choir and pipe organ projects gave the youngsters a sense of purpose and belonging, something they never had before.

Sumpy Readmond suddenly assumed a mantle of responsibility and leadership. His mechanical ability stood out—for the first time he excelled at something. In his case it was the beginning of a career now underway. Teddy Adams, for another, taught himself to play the organ. Buddy Lewis, the broadcaster's spirited son, was already a skilled organist.

When expenses soared, Choir-master Lewis became Lecturer Lewis to raise funds. Then, the seemingly insurmountable problem of the "stop list" reared up. The "stop list" is the selection of pipes for various ranks, of which every pipe organ has many, including the flute, trumpet, oboe, chimes, vox humana, reed and diapason. Every rank contains a whole range of pipes, each with a different tone in much the same manner as a piano has a whole range of keys. Keen sensitivity is needed in the selection of the organ tones will be flat.

Friend In Need Appears

One day a visitor took outside the Lewis door.

"Joe Whitefield!" Fulton Lewis cried as he spied his lawyer friend from Washington, D. C. "You're an answer to prayer."

Joe was an ardent and experienced amateur organist. He hardly had his coat off before he was down in the basement listening to problems involving the "stop list."

Snatched up by the fervor of this project, he forgot his mission, his job, everything, for days of continuous work. Together with kids and two grownups "voiced" over one thousand pipes, separating them into various ranks, testing them again and again for just the right sound.

Days later Joe Whitefield left, his eyes newly lighted from a labor of love. He went back to Washington, quit his career as lawyer and several weeks later phoned Lewis long distance.

"I never did like being a lawyer," he said. "I just needed to rub against some of the fervor of your kids to set me off on the right track. A man's a fool not to work at what he loves." Joe took a job with the Aglian Skinner Organ Co. of Boston.

Church Has To Be Altered

Deadline for completion of the pipe organ was set for Christmas—in time for a Christmas Eve broadcast. Schedules were stepped up, and heads threatened to split over the confused jumble of wires, pipes, magnets, bellows, and connections. In November the process of moving all these from the Lewis basement to the church began.

Then it was discovered that part of the church would have to be redesigned before the organ would fit. Walls were knocked down and choir pews rasped. The organ chest was found to be the wrong size and would have to be rebuilt!

Lewis came home that night convinced he'd have to cancel the special broadcast. It was a grim household with little conversation and edgy nerves. After dinner, as both he and son Buddy often did when upset, Lewis sat down at his small electronic organ. He started to play jerkily, belligerent and a bit bitter. Then the music softened.

At the end, the powerful yet simple strains of "The Lord's Prayer" cast a hush over the whole house. It would be hard to imagine a more eloquent prayer for God's help and guidance.

The planned Christmas Eve broadcast was not canceled. Instead, activity redoubled. Thursday, December 21st was over. Thursday, the organ, though installed, needed endless adjustments. Choir members, drained of energy, beset with doubts, were completely listless. After dismissing them all with an optimism he didn't feel, Lewis worked far into the night and all the next day with the organ tuner.

Hours before the service was to start that December 24th, 1948, the little church by the side of the road began to fill. There was leathery

Johnny Green, oysterman and blacksmith; old Doc Greenwell, still country doctor at 88; and some 300 others—all that could jam inside the small church. They came to hear a \$35,000 pipe organ built by faith and tenacity—yet, would it play?

Lewis took his place at the organ and nodded to Merrill Dean, local merchant, who was stationed inside the organ loft to manipulate the swell shades that regulated the organ sounds. There hadn't been time to fix the automatic control.

Triumph Of Endeavor

At 7 p.m. the N. Y. radio technician nodded to Lewis. Then the soft strains of Adesle Fideles floated through the church. Garbed in maroon and white gowns, big black collars and white windor ties, the junior choir marched down the aisle, their exultant voices joining the triumphant organ strains.

Lewis, feeling the surging tones of the organ respond to his slightest touch, was lifted by the pride and devotion in the faces of his 30 "choir brats."

They had called these voices immature. If so, then the pipe or-

Air Raid Warning Set-Up In Oregon Readied For Alert

PORTLAND — (AP) — Oregon's air raid warning system is complete and could be alerted immediately.

Louis Starr, the state's civil defense chief, said that the system was "activated" eight days ago. That means, he said, it is on call

24 hours a day. If alerted, it would be on duty full time.

He said he had no comment on whether the warning system in the northwest would be put on the alert. But all telephones are installed, radar scanners are functioning and personnel is available to man the observation posts, he said.

The goal, he added, is to have no observation post no farther from another than eight miles so "there are some wide open spaces in central Oregon which aren't that well covered as yet."

Once the system is alerted, Starr said, "nothing low enough to be visible to the naked eye or high enough to be within reach of radar," could enter Oregon unnoticed.

He said the radar net has had 14 tests in recent weeks. A warning from the coast to the key center in Portland was received in 88 seconds on the 13th test. That, said Starr, is not considered fast

enough and a time lapse of less than a minute is expected.

Reports from visual observation posts are expected to take longer because of communication problems, he said.

Cholera Epidemic Takes Heavy Toll In India

NEW DELHI, India — (AP) — More than 1,000 persons are reported to have died from a cholera epidemic, apparently spread by sufferers who made a pilgrimage to Orissa state in quest of a miracle cure for the dread disease.

Reports published here said the epidemic was spread by thousands of afflicted persons returning from Rantali, a small Orissa village, where they sought treatment from a 12-year-old shepherd boy whose "wonder" herb has been banned by government order.

The reports said a 400-mile area has been affected.

Dayton Kaiser Plant Receives Plane Contract

DAYTON, O. — (AP) — The Dayton Daily News Wednesday said Kaiser-Frazer Corp. has contracted to build cargo planes for the air force at Willow Run plant near Detroit and to assemble Boeing jet bombers at Marietta, Ga.

The newspaper said Edgar Kaiser, president of the automobile firm, signed final papers Tuesday in a fast visit to nearby Wright-Patterson air force base.

A Kaiser-Frazer spokesman at Willow Run said there was "absolutely no foundation" to the report as it concerned Marietta and "nothing official" on the Willow Run end of the report.

The newspaper said the contract signed by Kaiser calls for production of Fairchild C-119 cargo planes, the latest version of the "flying boxcar," at Willow Run, Kaiser's own plant.

Assembly work on Boeing's six-jet XB-47 bomber, said the paper, will be done at Marietta, Ga., in a plant now owned by the air force.

Merry Christmas

Happy New Year!

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