



AMICA International

Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

Honor Roll

O. Frank Rydeen

The AMICA, July 1964

Mr. O. FRED RYDEEN who lives in the Bay Area, is Vice President of Aeolian Corp., and he was very active in the company in those halcyon days when the Ampico and Duo-Art were at their height. He knew Gabrilowitsch, Ornstein, Bauer, Ihevinné, Godowsky, Rachmaninoff and many others. He hopes to attend the August AMICA meeting. He has been with the company 45 years.

The AMICA, August 1964

We will be particularly honored at this meeting on Sept. 3rd by having as our guest MR. O. FRED RYDEEN, Vice-Pres. of the Aeolian Corp. Mr. Rydeen has been with the Aeolian Co. for over 45 yrs, and therefore is uniquely qualified to tell us about the rise and much-lamented fall of the reproducing piano.

The AMICA, September 1969

There are at least two versions of the historic occasion when Rachmaninov audited his first recording for Ampico, during World War I. One claims he said, "Gentlemen, I have just heard myself play!", and that the Ampico stock went up five points the next day. The other version is reported by AMICA Honorary O. Fred Rydeen, who was there. "We had difficulty in getting Rachmaninov to make a recording because he did not realize we could reenact his playing. The first time he played the Prelude in C Sharp Minor, he listened to it with his head buried in his hands. When it finished he did not say a word; but called some of his friends to listen to it. One of the artists said, 'This is perfect', and Rachmaninov said, 'This is even better than I can play on the stage, because when an artist plays on the stage sometimes there are blue notes put in that the audience cannot detect.'" Suskind was also there, but doesn't recall the exact words. However, he agrees that the latter account is more likely, as the composer was an extremely taciturn, almost dour man, and given more to grunts than dramatic pronouncements. Although he praised Suskind behind

his back, the most enthusiastic praise addressed directly to him was usually limited to "pretty good", and "not bad". So keen was his interest in accurate reproduction, however, that he frequently invited Suskind to his summer home in the Atlantic Highlands to work on the editing. The American Piano Company provided him with an Ampico piano (although Suskind himself never owned one).