



AMICA International

Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

Honor Roll

URSULA DIETRICH-HOLLINGSHEAD

by Bill Knorp

From the AMICA, Vol 8, No 4, 1971

In welcoming roll artists as "Honoraries" in AMICA, we are indebted to those who have supplied us with rare biographical information, as it is hard to find today, and of unlimited interest to AMICAn members. Mrs. Dietrich-Hollingshead has supplied us with some programs, photos and articles pertaining to her career. Ursula Dietrich-Hollingshead was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and she studied at the Rochester School of Music, later becoming a well-known concert pianist who appeared in person and on rolls for various companies. Her career has been put in book form; reminiscences entitled "Ten Cents A Lesson" which it is hoped will soon be published

Ursula Dietrich-Hollingshead at age 79

because it will give a wealth of information concerning a fascinating era. [This reminiscence is replicated below - Web Manager 2006] The reason for the title is that when she was a child of 9 it was difficult for her family to raise the money for her weekly lessons, so in her own words..."so I set forth and solicited all the kids in the neighborhood and taught them what had been taught me for ten cents a lesson .. thus I raised the dollar every week and THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY MUSICAL CAREER." After a period of study, and having become an artist who was gifted with musicianship, showmanship, style, stage-presence, interpretation and drive she had acquired all the necessary attributes. And so then she had an "Impresario" in the form of the Melville-Clark Piano Company in Chicago. After she won a scholarship, the company decided to give tours, providing concerts and "Comparison Concerts" with the artist and the "Art-Apollo" Reproducing piano which they manufactured. Ursula Dietrich-Hollingshead made vast public appearances comparing her playing with her



recordings. She was one of the first to tour in this manner, and later other companies toured with their own instruments and artists. After this interesting period, she recorded for the Ampico and the Duo-Art and concertized in such cities as Buffalo, New York, where she took up residence after getting married. She now lives in San Antonio, Texas, and is presently teaching a fine group of piano students.

In composition, Mrs. Dietrich-Hollingshead has published a number of pieces including the interesting Piano Novelty "Sandman Frolics" which was published in 1927 by the Mills Music Publishers. Another composition, "Ecstasy," was recorded and composed by Dietrich Hollingshead. Regarding this piece, issued amongst the new Ampico Recordings listed in the September 1929 Bulletin, the following is written: "Tunefulness and lilting rhythm will win popularity for this Composer Played number."

70203-F Ecstasy Hollingshead

Unclouded happiness is recreated in the rhapsodic music of this lovely tone poem. It makes abundant

and skillful use of the resources of the piano and will delight with its many pleasing and varied effects. Mme. Hollingshead plays it herself bringing her fine musicianship to a notable interpretation. It may be counted amongst the lighter classics with much of popular tunefulness and lilt to win for it a wide and enviable popularity.

much of popular tunefulness and lilt to win for it a wide and enviable popularity.

In California Mrs. Dietrich-Hollingshead has concertized in Oakland, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego, Los Angeles, Riverside, Pasadena, and has lived in Oakland for a period.

Some of her reviews:

Miss Dietrich has made rolls for the Apollo Reproducing piano, and originated the idea of "Playing duets with herself," as she terms it. A record is placed on the player-piano and Miss Dietrich plays the same composition with the record on another piano. She shows the human possibilities of the player-piano with startling realism, and has appeared before large audiences and was very splendidly received in nearly all the large cities of the United States.

Mrs. Hollingshead is a musician of no mean ability and has studied music for years under the best masters. She is a native of Denver, and has studied in Denver, Colorado, San Francisco and New York...

Miss Dietrich, a pianist of distinction, played with particular brilliancy and sureness, alternating her work with that of the Artapallo. In the "Cantilene Nupitale" of Dubois, played by Miss Dietrich, the lights suddenly disappeared, the melody went on without break. The record used was one made from Miss Dietrich's own playing and it was impossible to tell the difference between the two. In other selections Miss Dietrich played alternately with the Artapallo.

There are many such interesting reviews, and I hope the book will be published very soon. I also welcome Ursula Dietrich-Hollingshead as an Honorary Member of AMICA!

The Player and the People

It was a Sunday afternoon and upwards of 3,000 people were assembled in one of the largest auditoriums in one of the largest cities in the United States.

On the stage was an upright player piano, a player grand and a straight grand piano. Presently, a young woman tripped daintily from behind the scenes to the front of the stage and, in a self-possessed manner, informed the audience that it would now hear Tobani's Second Hungarian Fantaisie, as played by Harold Bauer. She then stepped to one side to give the audience a clear view of the player grand, the keys of which, standing out distinctly under the reflected rays of a piano lamp, moved as the music reached the ears of the audience. It was just a cosmopolitan audience, no more or no less musical than an audience that you might find at any firstclass theatre or at a baseball game. The number referred to was the first of an hour's musical program given by the dainty young lady, during which she played a duet with the player grand and alternated with the player grand in playing the same selection, to the great mystification of the audience, and in which she was also assisted in a couple of numbers by a vocalist and a violinist. This audience was held in the closest attention during this performance and to one who moved about afterwards to hear the comments, it seemed that nine out of every ten people there were astonished at having witnessed what they considered a great invention of the hour, something entirely new and something very wonderful. Yet this occurred in the year 1917, in the city of Chicago, where there have been player pianos and electric reproducing pianos on sale for several years. These 'acts are given simply as food for thought. Has the message of the musical perfection of the player piano been carried home to the people with sufficient force? Is not the future of the player full of tremendous possibilities? The pianist and demonstrator on the occasion above referred to was Miss Ursula Dietrich, who has been demonstrating, for the past three years or more, the faithfulness with which the Artapallo reproduces the playing of great pianists. Miss Dietrich has kindly consented to contribute an article giving some observations upon this pertinent subject.

Now that this Music in the Home movement is gaining such headway and that there is a concerted effort on the part of piano men to get newspapers to devote space in their reading columns to music news, it is interesting to note that leading papers in various parts of the United States have featured Miss Dietrich's performances in their columns on scores of occasions. For instance, the St. Louis Republic, in a halfcolumn article, stated that "hundreds of the fashionables went to Buckingham Hotel, despite the rain, to one of the most unusual private musicales given in this city. Miss Ursula Dietrich, an accomplished concert pianist, gave a most uncanny demonstration of the wonderful powers of the Artapallo. At one time she actually played a duet with herself on two pianos."

Way back in 1913, Miss Dietrich participated in one of the first concerts of this kind in Denver, at which, according to a Denver paper, were "1,200 music lovers" and "many persons stood and many were turned away."

But a little over a month ago, in February, the Toledo, Ohio, Blade said, "The large auditorium of the Woman's Building was filled Sunday afternoon for the Artapallo concert. Ursula Dietrich, pianist of New York, gave a remarkable demonstration of the Artapallo and played several numbers with fine technique and musicianship on a grand piano. One of the interesting features was the unusual feat of Miss Dietrich playing a duet with herself, such a performance being made possible by the use of a record of Miss Dietrich's second piano score in connection with her own first piano."



*Miss Dietrich says there is a big field for the sale
of \$2,000 player pianos*

"Ten Cents A Lesson"

By Uesula Dietrich-Holinshead, 1972
All spellings, [sic]

From the AMICA, Dec 1975, Jan & Feb 1976

DEDICATION

I am dedicating these memoirs to my son, Ted, who stood by me so valiantly as a child and as a grown man for years, encouraging and urging me to write my story. He was my greatest critic and strongest advocate in getting these pages together, and if it had not been for him, I probably would never have had the confidence to write the following. I am reminded of a paragraph I read years ago, written by Edith M. Burtis, secretary for a small magazine entitled *The SiZent Partner*, published by F. D. Van Auburgh, February, 1921.

On Memories

*Memory is the treasure box of the mind the bitter-the sweet-the sad-the joyful . . . the pictures it holds, the sounds recorded on its indestructible cylinders .. Memory records to fit our moods, to supply our needs, to urge us on or to hold us back. What a storehouse of comfort, what a fund of knowledge, what a **source** of pleasure, what counsel, what supports-our memories. Make memories while you can, else later years will be barren indeed.*

As I write my autobiography I feel it only expedient that my readers should share a few of my memories, plus what I later gleaned from the public library, covering some of the history of the Queen City of the West-such books entitled Wildest of the West.

In 1870 Denver was transformed from a wide-open frontier boom town to a boom city by the coming of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, a railroad with which my father later became associated. Gold poured into the city from the Pike's Peak gold rush and the rich silver mines of Central City.

The brave new Western world boasted the most extraordinary characters. They had plenty of money and many ways to spend it-real estate, mining stocks, or amid the red lights of Holladay Street-the most wicked street in the West's most sinful city.

In 1888, when I was less than two-years-old, my parents moved to Denver, having emerged from a lost cause, prospecting in the mines of Butte, Montana. We lived in a respectable part of Denver, in a two family terrace, with only a wall dividing the two dwellings. I remember so vividly hearing the ragtime piano playing next door.

I must have been six or seven years old when I would glue my ear to the wall, completely enchanted by the playing of our unknown neighbor, whom we later learned was the leading pianist in the Red Light District.

As a little girl I remember that our family seemed to be always facing financial catastrophe. My father was a railroad man and strikes occurred so often that we were never sure of a steady income. Fortunately, my mother had the indomitable spirit of a pioneer and, undaunted, never gave up. Blessed with an admirable faith in God, plus the will to survive, she hung out her shingle and took in dressmaking.

We owned an old ebony New England Piano, and to this day I doubt that a more superior sounding piano was ever manufactured. Its rich quality of tone was unexcelled. By dint of circumstances, my parents managed to give me music lessons for the huge sum of \$1.00 a lesson. Even as a little girl of nine I was poignantly aware of the supreme sacrifice my parents had to make in order to pay for the lessons. This awareness, coupled with inborn ability and insatiable drive, opened the door to what subsequently proved to be the beginning of my professional and business career. For the princely sum of *Ten Cents A Lesson*, I solicited and taught all the kids in the neighborhood keyboard fundamentals fashioned according to the lessons I was being taught. For ten years I studied with the best teachers and won several scholarships, one of which was donated by the wife of the owner of the Moffat Railroad.

The financial worry of my family continued to be a hurdle, however, and I took a course in shorthand and typing, and worked nights as a telephone operator to pay for my music and the business course. Finally I secured a position in one of Denver's leading music stores, the Knight Campbell Music Company. Since my surging ambition far exceeded my ability, this firm was about to replace me. However, I sold them on the idea that they could increase their sales revenue if their pianos were properly demonstrated, and I convinced them that I was well qualified to fill that role. My job was saved-[not only demonstrated the player pianos, but had charge of the player piano roll department and sold huge quantities of rolls at a good profit.

I became so absorbed in improving my status that I encouraged this fine music firm to send me on an educational trip to New York and Chicago so that I might meet the powers that be, learn all I could about the manufacture of their instruments, and thus become a more valuable asset to their business. This project naturally entailed some expense, but since my father was still employed by the railroad company, I assured them that he could provide transportation to

any part of the United States if, in turn, they would cover other expenses. Finally this was arranged and as a reward for my present success in their sales department, it was agreed that I should make the trip.

Even up to the day of my departure we were not quite sure that my father could get the railroad pass. Like expectant fathers in a hospital waiting room, we nervously paced the ticket office floor. Finally, half an hour before train time, my father showed up with the pass. We had exactly fifteen minutes to make the station. Frantically we chased my father down the busy street, magnetically directed by the precious pass he was waving over his head like a flagman aboard ship. By dint of good luck and good timing I was finally aboard the train, my luggage thrown after me, en route to my date with destiny.

I arrived in New York parochially preened with unfashionable frills, ruffles, plumes, and high heels, while Manhattan's Madonnas stylishly sported tailored suits, sailor hats, and flat heels. My mother could not possibly have been wrong in her selection of my wardrobe. I was, of course, right-New York was wrong-why not? As a nineteen-year-old girl from Denver I had all the answers in style and aplomb.

As a business representative of the leading Denver firm, I was given the red carpet treatment. For a teen-aged, impressionable girl, it was an Alice-in-Wonderland experience. The tall buildings dazzled me. The exciting shows, the beautiful restaurants, were magic to my soul. The mark of immaturity convinced me that this unending shower of attention was due exclusively to my captivating charm and personality.

On my return trip I was unaware that my railroad pass was good only on certain lines, and of course I boarded one of the most elite "Specials" pulling out of New York for the West. I was ingloriously escorted off the train in the middle of the night. Fortunately the sympathetic conductor realized that here was a passenger who did not know her way around, so he went through the motions of escorting me off-and promptly escorted me back on again!

When I arrived in Chicago I learned that there was a piano convention in progress at one of the largest auditoriums, where leading piano manufacturers were displaying their instruments. There was one exhibit that was fairly mobbed with spectators, where they were holding auditions of different pianists, recording their playing electrically for the Art Apollo. This amazing instrument reproduced their selections exactly as played by the performer..

I pushed my way through the crowd and announced that I was on a good-will tour from the West, representing the leading music store in Denver. In turn, I was invited to make one of those recordings, which turned out to be such a true reproduction of my rendition that I was utterly transfixed by joyous amazement.

On my return to Denver, I could hardly wait to apprise my firm of this fantastic instrument which, up to that time, had not been heard of in the West. I sparked such interest in this product that eventually they took on the agency. It was gratifying to feel that I was instrumental in bringing about such a productive and pleasant relationship between two leading dealers. But my sights were set on higher horizons, although I enjoyed many happy and lucrative experiences with this fine Denver firm.

The Apollo instrument was gradually becoming nationally acclaimed and I wanted to be in the forefront in introducing it to the music-loving public. Two years later I reached my goal and was hired by this very piano manufacturer in Chicago, who launched me on a concert tour sponsored by their various representatives throughout the country. It was my job to compare my playing with my recordings in solo and double piano numbers. My associates at the home office in Chicago were men of unique character. Anyone who had ever met Mr. Tom Pletcher, the vice-president and sales manager of this company which manufactured the Apollo piano, could not help but be impressed. He was a person with a dynamic personality and had the talent to win the confidence and respect of anyone he met. It is not often that one meets a person who has the rare combination of sagaciousness, knowledge, and wit as did this very personable man. It was said that in his early days he sold patent medicine on the streets. He certainly was a showman of no mean prowess, and could probably have sold toothpicks to a tiger. As an executive of one of the largest piano manufacturers, he was sought after as a public speaker because of his ability to fairly electrify an audience in the sales. business. His spirit infected everyone who came in contact with him and, for me, it was almost an unbelievable advantage to become one of his associates.

Another outstanding personality in this organization was Mr. Lee Roberts, manager of the recording department and an officer of the company. No doubt everyone must remember that very popular song, Smiles. Lee wrote that song and it became a sensation overnight. Lee was a complete contrast in personality to Tom Pletcher, and they made a great team. Lee was a handsome man of the most endearing personality, and everyone who met him was immediately captivated by his quiet charm.

What more could one ask in aspiring to greater heights than to become an associate with this company and its peers. I indeed considered myself a very lucky lady. In retrospect, I often wonder how strong an impression Tom's philosophy made in helping me plan my professional course in the right direction. He was quite a "guy."

MY CONCERT TOUR-1 was first launched on my concert tour on the west coast, with San Francisco as my base of operation. I arrived in San Francisco sometime in July, and was surprised to find the weather really cold and chilly. I was not accustomed to fog and immediately set forth in the morning with an umbrella and a warm coat. It didn't take long, however, before I was well adjusted to the climatic conditions, with the brilliant sun coming out every-day around noon and its invigorating atmosphere in the clean, crisp air.

Only a woman would be cognizant of the well dressed women that one met in the shopping centers, restaurants and parks. Tailored suits, matching footwear, beautifully gloved hands, were not the exception but the rule. To walk down the main thoroughfare and find flower vendors on every corner, selling at a price within the reach of most people, setting off a beautiful picture of nature's gayest colors with mountains of beautiful fresh flowers. Flowers seemed to be as important in every man's budget as the real necessities of life. To me it was a revelation to stand by

and watch the purchase of even a half-dozen daisies by a person in frayed clothing and run-down shoes-yet flowers reflected his joy of living.

My new-found friends took me on a tour on China Town. To me it was frightening. I had been told long before I arrived in San Francisco to beware of the Chinese colony. A Caucasian could be swept off his feet into the dark recesses of those opium dens and never be heard from again. If you went on a conducted tour you held close to your guide lest one of its colony sneak up and swallow you up. Gay colors and banners adorned the various buildings, artificial flowers adorned the balconies, and fish were strung out to dry on lines suspended from roof to roof. Chinese men and women shuffled about in their national costumes and braided pigtailed. Gas lanterns swung from otherwise unlighted street corners, which really added an eerie reaction as you strolled through China Town.

My first performance was booked in the open gardens of the St. Francis Hotel. The audience was warm and appreciative, and it was there I got the inspiration for one of my first compositions, *Echo d' Amour*. There seemed to be so much love-not directly manifested, but from afar-sort of an echo from nowhere. I got the feeling of a gay exuberance, thus inspiring my real reaction, and I wrote *Echo d' Amour* which I recorded for Ampico and Duo-Art several years later.

At the same time, my first introduction to the public in San Francisco was through the local manager of the Melville Clark Company's branch from headquarters in Chicago. A_Mr. Joe Baker was in charge, and I was to become a temporary part of his staff. Joe was a pleasant enough person to meet, soft-spoken and friendly in a disarming sort of way. He was middle aged, corpulent, but unfortunately, near-sighted physically and short-sighted in good business protocol.

It was his plan to attract the public to a demonstration of my performance, comparing my playing with the reproduction of same by the Art Apollo. He proceeded to send out handwritten invitations over my signature, to all the doctors in San Francisco, inviting them to call at a specific address (which happened to be his place of business) and to ask for the writer, Miss Dietrich. His idea was that once they could be induced to drop in his store, I in turn could turn on my charm and inveigle them to listen to my demonstration for the purpose of purchasing the Apollo piano.

I was appalled by this undignified approach, and naturally did not react very kindly or cooperatively. It was devastating to watch certain cars drive by with their occupants casting suspicious glances at the address, and then pick up speed and drive away. It became obvious that some of the occupants were spouses surveying the terrain that posed as a potential threat to their vested and exclusive interests. Others were men whose furtive glances betrayed the prospect of seizing the bait.

I was thankful to be released eventually from this post and sent on an extensive tour throughout the states and many climes-including parts-of California, Oregon, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, New York, Washington D.C., Louisiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Colorado, Utah, Ohio, and Texas. This covered a period of over three years.

I would be remiss if I passed over some of the less bright experiences of my concert tour. Loneliness had not been heard of, and meals were not always, served aboard. We would very often have to depend on the Harvey

Houses en route where the train would stop long enough for us to rush out and hastily eat our meals lest the train pull out without us.

These appearances were sponsored by the various music companies who carried the Apollo and QRS line, and I was scheduled to appear before various music clubs, country clubs, and fraternal and business luncheons. My program consisted of alternating my playing with the Art Apollo in solo, and then playing two-piano selections with the electrically operated Art Apollo taking the second part. The crowning achievement on this program was the two-piano concerto, which created a delightful response from the audience. One gentleman came up to me afterwards and said, "I was so awed by your incredible performance that at times I got chills, especially when you played the two-piano concertos, where you and the Art Apollo seemed to answer different movements back and forth."

As an added attraction, some outstanding local artists would appear on the same program in a violin and vocal solo, accompanied by the Art Apollo, which rounded out a most interesting program. Engraved invitations were sent direct from Chicago to the mailing list of each community, thus adding prestige to the occasion. All these bookings were arranged in advance by my impresario at the head office in Chicago, and he certainly was one fine person who handled all the detail with a professional finish.

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA-About this time we were booked to appear in one of the cultural and social centers of San Jose, California, and for days in advance we rehearsed our master of ceremonies. For each appearance it was necessary to have on my staff a local representative and an expert mechanic. It was especially important that this particular presentation be a success in view of the fact that members of one of San Francisco's leading firms were to be present, and if the performance came up to their expectations, there was the possibility of their taking on the agency. On the evening of the concert, everything went fine, up to a point. Naturally each concert presented its rewards, catastrophies, and amusing experiences, all of which a young lady was forced to meet without fear or favor, and this particular event was no exception.

When our esteemed host confronted the audience and beheld the dignitaries facing him, he forgot his lines. He would get so far, pause, go back to the beginning, and repeat and repeat. I was standing by in the wings waiting for my cue, and I was supposed to have the prompting sheet. Instead, I found that I was holding the mechanic's instruction sheet, and he was standing across stage in the opposite wing! So- it befell the frustrated mechanic to prompt the bewildered spokesman. To add to the growing chaos, the said mechanic suffered a speech impediment and stuttered epileptically between hisses and huffs while attempting to prompt our panic stricken co-worker- to no avail. Seized by the futility of further effort, our official representative unceremoniously dashed off the stage and was never seen or heard from again. The people in the audience, not knowing whether or not this was a farce, could no longer restrain their mirth, and broke into spasms of laughter. Regardless, I went on with the show with no further interruption, and I am happy to say that the day was saved and the coveted agency was secured and signed by the San Francisco representatives.

This combustible experience sparked a new challenge for me, and thereafter public speaking became part of my career. This proves the adage that latent talent can blossom from unexpected sources.

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA-The city of roses. Not only are the parks and gardens beautiful, but the people truly match their roses in beauty and graciousness. I was invited to give a concert for the Pasadena Women's Club at their luxurious country club. The stage was a bower of roses and the setting almost too beautiful to describe. While playing for this delightful audience I experienced an ethereal thrill- I seemed to have melted into that beautiful picture. It seemed that Divine Providence guided my fingers over the keyboard and I felt overcome with ecstasy. In fact, this experience inspired me to write a romantic type number called *Ecstasy* which I later recorded for the Ampico and Duo-Art reproducing pianos. I was showered with so many beautiful roses that I would have been happy if I could have transformed them into wax for posterity.

WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA-There was one small town in California, and as near as I can recall it was called Woodland, where I was booked to play a quick courtesy program. There was only one hotel in the town where I spent an almost unforgettable night. It seems that modern facilities were unheard of, and my night was truly a hysterical riot. My room was directly across from a long row of public toilets shared by both men and women. It seems that privacy was not the mode, and locks were not provided, except that there were swinging doors with enough open space at the bottom so that one could peek underneath and determine if said domicile was occupied by seeing protruding feet and legs at various angles. What added to my interrupted sleep was the open transom on my door, which was permanently set to remain open, thus exposing me to the danger of becoming permanently gassed, facing the front line of the firing squad.

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA-The crowning glory of any experience, past or present, was my concert at the Glenwood Mission Inn. Naturally I could never forget how impressed I was with the quiet beauty of this city. It was unheard of for any one celebrity to be permitted to set foot and perform on the stage of the Glenwood Mission Inn, yet I felt heir to that honor. The Cloister room itself is an edifice of the choicest arts-stained glass windows, rare paintings, tapestries, statuary, and costly antique furnishings rarely seen elsewhere in so characteristic a setting. One steps breathlessly into this austere atmosphere, as if into the sanctuary of a dedicated cathedral. Here I was to play before 800 invited guests. My brown, faded, press clippings bear out that the concert was entirely an artistic success. Pictures of me taken on this stage setting appeared in several music magazines then on the market. Naturally, I was overwhelmed by the armful of flowers showered on me after the concert and to find that the bathtub in my hotel room was the only vessel large enough to hold all of them.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA-My booking in Los Angeles -

was more dramatic. I was scheduled to play at the Little Theatre, which I learned later was a compliment to me. My assistant soloists were both well known celebrities, and very popular in their community. Marie Tiffany, an opera star, was my soprano soloist, and Richard Copeland, the violinist, was a true virtuoso in his respective area. Both soloists were a big drawing card in Los Angeles, and the Little Theatre was filled to capacity and the audience was warm and overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

I had a small apartment in one of the nicer sections and was assigned additional sleeping quarters on the roof in the form of a sleeping tent. Every apartment had its own tent labeled with its respective apartment number. I could well understand that comfortable sleeping in this hot city could pose a problem in any apartment building, thus sleeping in a tent on the roof would offer some relief on a hot night. It was quite amusing to encounter people furtively sneaking up to the roof in their bathrobes, groping their way to their tent, and trusting they were headed for their tent and not someone else's. The quarters were cramped and all it contained was a hammock-like cot and a peg on which to hang one's clothes. It had a small flap which one could open for more air, at the risk of a strolling peeping peeper.



Miss Ursula Dietrich and the Art Apollo in the Cloister Room - Mission Inn, Riverside, California.

Occasionally I was entertained at different dinner clubs, but I found this somewhat boring, watching half-dressed, second-rate entertainers swinging hips, and off-key singers who bordered neither good taste nor talent. A trip through Hollywood was, of course, exciting during the time of the silent movies. One rarely had access to their sanctum sanctorium except to say you had a peek at the lot. A trip to the Farmers' Market was truly rewarding. A beautiful display of every imaginable fruit and vegetable was more like a painting than the real thing. One could spend hours strolling by the various stalls in utter amazement at such a variety of exotic fruit and vegetables that one seldom saw at the average market. One felt impelled to buy a sample of everything and to ship it home to his friends in the East. What a piece of art so realistically manifested in man's greatest need for survival-food not only for the body but the soul.

PORTLAND, OREGON-My trip to Oregon was a change of pace. Since Portland was the terminus of fifty-odd steamships, and one of the nation's fresh water ports, I decided it would be more interesting to travel to Portland by boat rather than by rail. I looked forward to the trip on a liner sailing between San Francisco and Portland, which was to be my first experience on a cruise that offered so much luxury. My friends saw me off with much glee and bon voyage, and having immediately met a young man aboard, I was all agog for a real adventure.

It so happens that ships travel cross current between these two ports, consequently we aboard were tumbled right and left, forward and backward. My only secure refuge was my cabin and that is exactly where

I spent the entire trip. Tempting meals listed on the menu had to be abandoned. I never dreamt anyone could be so sick. My ardent admirer was kept busy bringing me sedatives and light refreshments, while I only hoped he would stay away, realizing that in my state of disarray I could not hope to capture his ardor.

Upon landing it took me at least three days to regain my equilibrium. The floors kept coming up to meet me, and the pianos swayed back and forth. This much looked-forward-to cruise was not only a disaster physically, but it ruined a prospective romance.

Portland is a city of varied and extensive industries and also a home town for its residential avenues lined with beautiful shade trees and attractive gardens. The Portland Symphony Orchestra is nationally known and plays a yearly program of 15 concerts. The Rose Festival held in June in a yearly event and the Pacific International Livestock Exposition is held each autumn. The many ethnic groups like the Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, Russians, Japanese, and Irish have kept their national customs and are settled all over the city. Only the Chinese live in one special section, and they also have kept their national customs.

It seemed that it rained constantly. I would be awakened by the drone of the newsboys selling their papers under my hotel window to the plaintive tune, "The Oregonian-buy the Oregonian," which seemed so futile under the pouring rain.

My initial concert was booked at the Benson Hotel in their fabulous Gold Room. Unexpected competition, however, loomed up in the guise of a little bull dog. It so happened that the manager of the hotel owned this pup called Joker, who was blind in one eye but had an ear for music and was highly sensitive to sound and quality.

The night of the concert, unbeknown to us, this pup stationed himself under the baby grand piano directly facing the audience. As part of our program we had a very distinguished baritone and he proceeded to do justice to his proclaimed talent. He would hit a certain note and the dog could take it no longer and would throw his head back and pantomime a silent, spasmodic outburst at certain intervals throughout the song. The dog's performance could only be observed by the audience, while the soloist and myself accompanying him were completely unaware of the performance under the piano. At the conclusion of the number, we were shocked to be greeted, not only by applause, but also with shouts of laughter which the audience could no longer restrain. It took some minutes to assure our soloist that the dog had been competition, and that the reaction of the audience was no reflection on his singing-although it well could have been.

An incident of some human interest involved a newsboy and the flight of a \$5.00 gold piece. One rainy night I was aboard an electric train running between Portland and Eugene, Oregon, where I was booked to play a concert. The train made several stops en route, and at one junction I rushed out to the platform to catch the newsboy and by mistake gave him a \$5.00 gold piece instead of a nickel for the paper. After the train started, I discovered my mistake and asked the conductor if there was any way of recovering my gold piece. He very obligingly wired back at the next station and this reply awaited us. "We found the boy with the \$5.00 gold piece, but he wants the nickel for his paper." We, in turn, wired back that I would gladly give him a dollar for his paper, and upon arriving in Eugene there were four dollars awaiting me. The story of this experience filtered through to many passengers and was thereafter a conversation piece reflecting the honesty of their community.

TOLEDO, OHIO-While staying at a hotel in Toledo, where we were rehearsing for my forthcoming concerts, disaster was narrowly averted. I was sitting at a desk on the balcony, which desk was located parallel to a staircase leading to the foyer below. An escapee from a mental institution suddenly appeared and attempted to throw me, chair and all, down the stairs. Fortunately he was seized, and a trip that I had not planned was aborted.

Happily, my work was not always of a serious nature, due mostly to the refreshing sense of humor among my immediate associates. Several of my co-workers happened to see me off on a trip out of Chicago for the West. I noticed that they were having a confidential conclave with the porter, to which I attached little importance. During the trip I became acutely aware of the fixed gaze of the porter, suggesting the incarcerating consequences that would befall an escaped inmate. I later found out that my associates

had tipped the porter \$10.00 to keep me under close surveillance. Why? *I had fits!* I returned the joke in kind by crating and shipping a three-week-old baby pig to headquarters at the main office. I found out that in attempting to retrieve this frightened, uninvited bundle of oinking merchandise, they were looking at everything but the "pig's eye."

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI -in the ballroom of the historic Jefferson Hotel we were all set to offer what we hoped would be a most impressive concert, since our audience consisted of the elite in musical circles - a group which was reported to be skeptical of anything mechanical that would replace the human performance. However, things were destined not to turn out that way. At a certain point during the two-piano number

(*Arensky Concerto*) it was the job of one of my assistants to start the reproducing Apollo by pushing a certain lever near the keyboard. I was supposed to play about eight measures before the other piano was supposed to pick up. However, it didn't work that way. My assistant turned to leave, assuming everything was in order. As he did so, the tail of his frock coat caught on another lever, causing the roll to go into reverse, and sending discords and distorted harmonies shrieking through the auditorium for terrorizing minutes before I could dash across the stage, release the coat tail, and shut off the motor.

I tried to salvage the embarrassing situation by turning to the audience and saying, "One can never tell about electricity." Regardless, the rest of the program went very smoothly, and the audience responded by giving us a standing ovation at the conclusion of the concert.

OMAHA, NEBRASKA- It so happened that we found one of our most cooperative and enthusiastic sponsors in Omaha in the Hospe Music Company. They spared nothing financially in advertising and promoting our work to the hilt. We appeared before several musical clubs, luncheons, etc., and at one luncheon passed out programs shaped like a large gold coin imprinted with \$1,000.00 on the cover. This program challenged that anyone who could tell my playing from the Art Apollo reproduction would be entitled to collect the reward. I certainly had to be on my toes for this show, but all ended in my favor, and there were no attempts to collect the reward.

In another appearance (I should call this "the cat's meow") a certain club decked the footlights with a hedge of artificial flowers. While I was playing, a cat found its way up on the stage, merrily wove in and out of the shrubbery, and finally took a leap at the keyboard, forcing me to play with one hand while brushing the cat off with the other. I finally explained to the audience that this was not rehearsed as such, but since they would not find this on the program we would entitle the episode "*Kitten on The Keys.*"

While concluding my Omaha assignment during one of the worst blizzards (this was in November), my company wired me to be prepared to move on to the remote northern part of Canada, and to buy suitable clothing. Since the amount of wearing apparel was dictated by the weather, I bought three suits of long underwear, the kind that one tucks tightly around one's ankles, in readiness for the frigid change. However, my company changed my plans and ordered me to move on to San Antonio, Texas. Heretofore I had never been south and I was not prepared for the extreme change in temperature. Consequently I adorned myself for the trip in this horrible, itchy underwear, and en route I became so warm I decided that I was coming down with a fever. I was pleasantly surprised upon arriving in San Antonio at the complete contrast in the weather. Could it be possible that our fine country could offer such a paradise? Not to be outsmarted by my employers, I bundled up the expensive underwear and promptly shipped it back to headquarters, pleading for reimbursement.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS-1 was tremendously impressed by the warm, friendly people I met in San Antonio. This lovely, historic city offered so much in beauty

and culture. My performances were so enthusiastically received and I felt welcome and appreciated. At the time, I thought how wonderful it would be if this lovely city could become my permanent home, never dreaming that in later years my wish would be fulfilled.

The Goggan Brothers Piano Company were my sponsors and they provided my headquarters at the beautiful Saint Anthony Hotel. I revelled in their picturesque court of palm trees and flowers - far beyond my expectations.

Nostalgically reminiscing, I never met more hospitable hosts than the Goggan personel; In their halcyon days, Goggan's Palace of Music was more of a musical social club than a mere music store. It was the rendezvous of opera celebrities, famous concert pianists, violinists, all of whom were talented sensations from all over the country. Ernest Richi, San Antonio's showman, staged many an opera and concert throughout San Antonio's fabulous golden age, when the town was widely known as the music capital of Texas. It seemed incredible that I should be so fortunate to later be included and booked in concert by the Goggan Brothers in this illustrious city.

There was much to see of interest in San Antonio. One's first trip, of course, was to the Alamo, the historical center of the city, where over a hundred years ago Texas heroes laid down their lives in order that Texas might become, first an independent nation, and later a mighty state in the Union.

Like no other city I visited, San Antonio breathed an atmosphere of true romanticism. The San Antonio River silently winds its way through the center of the city, oblivious of the surrounding commercialism. Its shores, banked with nature's contribution of tall pecan trees, shrubs, and flowers, offer shelter and privacy for strolling lovers. Subsequently the citizens of San Antonio glorified the river by improving the banks with rock gardens, zinnias, verbena, marigolds, etc., fancy staircases, and arched bridges. Every twenty minutes Venetian orange-canopied gondolas take off from its banks with conducted tours, quietly winding their way up and down the river with mystified tourists enchanted by the changing panorama as they float along. One can lunch at the original Mexican restaurants or steak houses bordering the river, or visit the art shops, or wander up the river to the outdoor Arneson River Theatre, whose coliseum of seats borders one bank of the river with the stage on the opposite bank.

I could go on and on with endless description of the varied attractions. The Mexican and Spanish flavor is reflected in an interesting sector near the river called La Villita. Here arts and crafts are displayed in their original setting. The five San Antonio missions recall the romance of original Texas in her fabulous beginning. The good Franciscan fathers sheltered the Indians of many tribes behind their walls, converting them to Christianity and educating them in farming and the crafts.

San Antonio was also an important center of military activity, and since I happened to be there during World War One, I met several of the officers and had two budding romances, one of which might have wound up at the altar if I had not moved on to other ports.

I can hilariously recall a bout with the top of a Model "T" Ford which had collapsed on my head en route to an afternoon concert. First it was necessary for me to help the driver get the car started by holding a wire under the hood while he frantically cranked to set off the starter. After many attempts, dashing back and forth from my seat to the hood, we finally took off with a song and a prayer. As we bumped over a bridge, the top collapsed and settled on my head and shoulders. From under the remnants of my large picture hat the driver kept shouting, "Hold on, keep a steady hand on the top; I'll never get it started again if we stop!"

We arrived at my destination way behind schedule and in complete disarray, sickened by the implication this experience left in its wake. Fortunately the audience was charitable and good-naturedly receptive, and the

concert went off with no further complication. This experience was humorously exploited by the press the following day, to the effect that their visiting celebrity made her way to her concert holding up the top of a Model "T" Ford.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS-After stops in Jackson, Mississippi, where I narrowly eluded the grasp of an amorous and not very scrupulous governor, and in New Orleans, Louisiana, where I took in all the sight-seeing tours I could possibly work in between performances, I arrived in the city where the home office of the Art Apollo was located. It was Sunday afternoon and upwards of 3,000 people were assembled in one of the largest auditoriums in one of the largest cities of the U. S., the Medina Temple in Chicago.

As I stepped on that stage facing this large audience in that colossal temple, I was overwhelmed by the applause that greeted my entrance. It seemed incredible that I had reached the pinnacle of my career. I was aglow with excitement and steeling every nerve and fiber to measure up to the role of an acknowledged celebrity. As in most cities, the audience seemed completely mystified to hear the exact reproduction of my playing by the Art Apollo, and the two piano-numbers were equally appreciated.

Flowers - flowers were showered on me by the armful but I felt it behooved me to share the honors with the Apollo which never missed a beat in the accompaniment, so with a broad gesture and a bow, I placed the flowers on the Apollo, and led the audience in an applause as a tribute to the unseen musicians whose playing was so accurately and beautifully reproduced by this spectacular instrument.

The Shriners, who sponsored this concert, had such a big membership that I was invited to make three appearances, three Sundays in succession, and for each performance the auditorium was filled to capacity. Since this particular appearance came pretty close to the end of my three year tour, I felt this particular experience was a most rewarding climax, especially since the newspaper and music magazine reviews were profuse in their favorable comments.

We were approaching the end of the first World War and things were pretty hectic. Although I was booked in many other cities, it was necessary to cut my stay to one night stands. I was disappointed that time did not permit taking in many of the interesting spots. However, the fine people and my respective sponsors made it up in hospitality, and I was really sorry to have to leave all of them so hurriedly.

DENVER, COLORADO-it would suggest false modesty to minimize the unexpected but gratifying publicity attending my return to Denver, my home town. While reminiscing among old friends, it was a case of "I knew her when . . ."

I was booked to give a concert at the Brown Palace Hotel, Denver's elite hostelry known to offer its elaborate setting to contemporary celebrities. Coincidentally, this concert was sponsored by the very first music company, the Knight Campbell Music Company, which had initially hired me and initiated my musical career.

By the end of the first World War my contract with the Melville Clark Piano Company had expired, especially since I had probably covered all of their respective agencies. About that time a handsome piano salesman from Detroit had been pursuing me for many months, and being emotionally upset at the inevitable conclusion of these exciting and thrilling tours under the auspices of my peers whom I had learned to love and respect, rather than romantically inclined, I married in haste.

About that time the Ampico and Duo-Art were beginning to step forth in the making, and I was happy to



How W. T. Grant Store, Buffalo, N. Y., Displayed Song by Buffalo Composer Featured by Well Known Theater Organist

BUFFALO, Dec. 17-The W. T. Grant store in Buffalo arranged an attractive window for the new waltz hit, "I Want You," which is now taking the country by storm. A complete tie-up with other sheet music and Q R S roll dealers was arranged by the publisher of the song, H. G. Weasner & Co., during the week it was featured at Shea's Hippodrome by Albert Hay Malotte. More than 600 copies of the song and 800 rolls were sold at the Grant store the week of the display. The roll was made by the composer, Ursella Deitrich, a Q R S artist.

be invited to record and give comparison recitals for both these companies. Most of these concerts were confined to up-state New York, viz., Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Watertown, and Niagara Falls. My husband was more or less a natural showman in his own right and he served as my manager and promoter. Ten years later I lost my husband to a litany of other women, and again I was on my own.

I took up teaching, together with entertaining at various clubs in a two-piano skit with two of the best celebrities in Buffalo. This included a weekly performance over the radio. Our opening theme was one *part of Sandman's Frolic, which I had composed. In succeeding years thereafter, teaching and real estate became my main source of income, and I did very well. After 20 years I finally retired and joined my son and his family in San Antonio, Texas.*

Now many years have passed and at the twilight of my life I am still alive and healthy, and teaching a fine class in San Antonio. It's a marvelous experience to help educate these fine young people, to watch their lives unfold not only in the study of music for their edification, but also in the immeasurable contribution they will eventually make toward other people's happiness and enjoyment.

How could one foresee or predict that God had destined that my early career would again mairaculously reappear. How could one foresee that what I had accepted as being the final scene in the twilight of my life would fade, and at dawn my accomplishments of over fifty years ago would rise up like a mist on the approaching horizon.

Imagine my surprise to receive a letter from the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association with headquarters in San Francisco, California, announcing that I had been appointed an honorary member of their society. They were completely unknown to me. I was told that they found my name in an old player piano roll catalog, and went to great lengths to find me, especially since I had moved about a great deal. Finally after three years they located me in San Antonio, Texas.

An experience I will long remember and cherish occurred when I was invited to visit this society in San Francisco and was greeted by a large group of members who staged a most extraordinary welcome. They introduced me first by playing a tape recording of some of my rolls. Next they played back on the reproducing piano, several selections including two of my own compositions I had recorded years ago, and which I had long since forgotten. I was so shaken emotionally, watching my phantom fingers playing over the keys, reviving old memories, that when I was asked as the live artist to play for them, I breathed a prayer for strength and poise that I might measure up to their expectation. After all these years, having lost my identity as a concert pianist, it seemed incredible in my declining years to have history unfold a live rendition of my own performance which I would have expected to have disintegrated with time. I would be remiss at this point if I did not mention that later at their other conventions it has been my privilege to meet the most delightful members of this society I have ever met in my life.

THE JOHNNY CARSON SHOW-One day I received an

unexpected call from one of our local TV stations, NBC Channel 4, requesting an interview. It seems my very energetic daughter-in-law, Marg, had tipped them off that I had a very interesting and exciting background and could possibly give them a good story. The interview was arranged and Linda Burton, one of their star reporters, appeared with their staff of technicians and we forthwith proceeded to an old, established music store, called the Griffen Company, which stocks hundreds of player piano rolls, and also restores player pianos of every vintage. I happened to have rescued two or three of my old, beat-up recordings and fortunately we found one automatic electric piano that could play them. To the amazement of the reporters, I gave a demonstration of my playing with the reproduction thereof, while the cameras clicked away. I was deluged with questions as to when and how I became associated with the player piano business, and inadvertently I disclosed my age. This seemed to have sparked the whole experience and they promptly informed me that the entire tape would be on the news that same night. I pleaded with them not to tell my age, but to no avail.



Since our local station, KMOL, is a direct affiliate of NBC in Burbank, California, they proceeded to send the tape on to the Johnny Carson Tonight Show. Shortly after I received a long distance call from their program director, inviting me to appear on their show, all expenses paid, and naturally this sent me to cloud nine. I only had five days notice to pack up and fly out to Burbank for the broadcast that very week. I was in a panic of confusion since I was booked to play at the AMICA convention in Fort Worth that same week and I couldn't see how I could possibly do both with so little time and so many miles intervening. However, the director assured me that they would fly me direct to Fort Worth, Texas immediately after the broadcast, so I gloriously set forth with all sails flying. I just couldn't believe that this could happen to me at my age of 87!

Unless one is exposed to such an experience, he could never imagine the stupendous set-up of these various studios. People were running hither and yon to their various destinations, some in outrageous makeup. There were girls incongruously made up beautifully from their waist up, yet barefoot and in frayed jeans from their waist down. "Hi there, hi there," contemporaries waved. Caretakers, delivery trucks - a huge brigade rushed about like a traffic jam going in every direction. I think I should have fallen on my face if it hadn't been for a very lovely lady and close friend, Myra Peel, who accompanied me from San Antonio. She looked after my luggage, transportation, taxis, carrying my necessary clothes to the studio, and best of all, bolstered my morale during the whole procedure.

Three hours before the show I was interviewed by the program director who briefed me on procedure, suggesting that I should be uninhibited in talking to Johnny Carson. He recommended a few ideas that would tie in with my background, etc., making out a format to be turned over to Carson, since one does not meet Johnny at all until one steps on the stage.

The most important thing to my act was securing a reproducing piano so that I could play along with it on another piano, thus making up the ensemble. This posed a major problem, but finally, through the generosity of Mr. Harold Powell, a member of AMICA, we obtained a Steinway reproducing grand piano for the occasion. Mr. Powell took the risk of having it properly delivered and installed and tuned. He stood valiantly by through the rehearsal and final performance, for which I will be eternally grateful.

For three hours before the show much rehearsing was inevitable with all the participants appearing on the show that night. I was too agog with excitement to mind the competitive activity back stage. Everyone appearing that night was naturally sparring for time to rehearse: the orchestra blaring away, the singer testing her voice in an off-key attempt, me trying to gage my playing in correct unison with the other piano - a bit frustrating, of course, but not defeating.

What a thrill to find my name on the door of the star dressing room. How unexpected it was to hear a voice from the rafters testing me for the lighting effects. Regardless, I couldn't resist admonishing him to be sure to throw plenty of shadow on my weak spots. Seated high up in a barbershop chair, I relinquished all my features to the hands of the makeup man. What a glorious job he did with an innumerable lay-out of jars and jars of colored concoctions. When he finished I hardly recognized myself. Shadows disappeared - I fairly glowed with glamor, and 87-year-old me looked no older than 40. I wore a pretty long gown but had completely forgotten it had a split skirt. So what - I at least had a chance to add the modern touch, to the hysterical reaction of my friends who saw the show.

I had no opportunity to establish a rapport with Johnny Carson before I stepped on stage. I knew that most of the women who appear on his show kiss him, and I was tempted to do likewise, but I felt at my age it would have been undignified. From there on I was practically playing it by ear, but fortunately my past experience appearing before the public came to my aid and I felt reasonably at ease. Both Carson and McMahon have the provocative ability to welcome their guests most graciously and I found it no difficulty to pick up an unrehearsed, running conversation as if I were sitting in my own living room. Naturally I found it to be an exciting experience, particularly since appearing before an audience has always been stimulating.

The automatic reproducing piano served as an excellent assistant in playing the second piano part of my composition, *Sandman's Frolic*, while I played the first part. I told the audience that when my son was a baby I had always hoped to write a lullaby, but somehow he was never an inspiration for a lullaby, because at bedtime he was at his liveliest, and thus I wrote this frolicsome number. I probably felt in the position of Longfellow. They say before he was married he wrote *The Children's Hour*, but after he was married and the children came, he wrote *The Wreck of the Hesperus*.

Everything went fine up to a point when my automatic partner took up speed toward the end, but I managed to hit the same pace and all ended well. How I loved that audience. They were so enthusiastic and responsive

throughout. They seemed to enter into the spirit of the show and I assure you, anyone ever appearing on the stage knows exactly how that inspires one to work at the highest point of his potential. Thus ended my Cinderella days in Burbank.

WHAT'S MY LINE- It was amazing to receive hundreds of letters and telegrams from people I didn't know and people I had long since forgotten, offering their congratulations. For weeks afterwards these letters poured in from all over the country. Strangers would approach me on the street saying, "I saw you on the Johnny Carson show," or "How about that split skirt!" "You were great." "You stole the show." "At your age I didn't know you could play the piano." To which I could only reply, "Didn't you know they found me in the wax works?"

Shortly thereafter I received a long distance call from New York inviting me to appear on the What's My Line show. The date was set, and all expenses paid, including the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. At this point I was surely convinced that life began at 80-no doubt about it.

I found the personnel on this show much more informal. They took a very personal interest, and I loved them on sight. The setting was not quite as glamorous as the Tonight Show, but seemed to portray an atmosphere of the old vaudeville days. Again, getting a reproducing piano posed the same problem, but it was managed. The main theme was trying to get the panel to determine my profession, originating 60 years ago, and which had again come into public demand what I did then and what I am doing now. I think the audience was more concerned with the incredibility of my age than with my profession. When the interviewer announced my age they shouted back, "Oh, no," and gasped. Of course, I loved that. After several attempts by the panel to come up with the right answer, Arlene Frances guessed that I was identified with music and the piano and came up with the right answer.

At the age of 89 I still don't feel that the hour glass has filtered through to the last grain. Age is a matter of mind, and if you don't mind it doesn't matter. Why should one dwell on the good old days, while there are so many exciting and marvelous things constantly going on around us. What a God-given blessing it has been to be an eye-witness to the tremendous strides in medicine, science, aviation, automation, and television.

I do not feel that "finis" has yet been written to my life. I still feel able and prepared to venture forth into avenues designed by destiny to contribute a little here, a little there. The deplorable process of growing old induces a retrospective point of view, but being able to look back with pleasure to the past is perhaps a recompense for the ever shortening years ahead. May I still indulge in a nostalgic mood, recalling that *Ten Cents A Lesson* helped to launch me on a business and professional career, and what I feel has been a rewarding outcome from a hopeful and humble beginning.

