

AMICA International

Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

Honor Roll

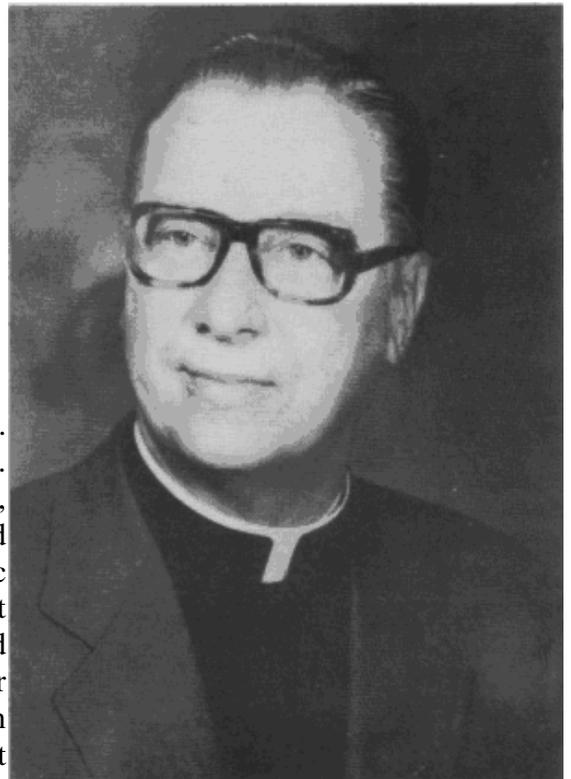
VICTOR I. ZUCK

From the AMICA, March 1980

Victor I. Zuck, known to many organists and composers over the past fifty-six years, was born in Hagerstown, Maryland, on January 29, 1908. His mother was a teacher of both piano and organ and in the Zuck family residence was an old fashioned parlor organ utilizing free reeds and operated by suction.

Due to the influence of his uncle, David Zuck, an employee of many years standing with M. P. Moller, leading builder of pipe organs in America, he became associated with Moller on New Year's Day of 1924. After serving his apprenticeship, which in those days was broad and deep, embracing every step in organ manufacturing, he installed and finished organs throughout the United States and Canada. Much of his tonal education was under the tutelage of Ted Clark, Raleigh Williams and Richard Whitelegg. (Whitelegg was a well-known Moller tonal director in the '30s and '40s, coming to the United States from England.)

Mr. Zuck spent two years (1930 and 1931) at West Point (U. S. Military Academy), on loan by the M. P. Moller Company to the U. S. Government, where he collaborated with Frederick C. Mayer, Organist and Choirmaster, on the then new and very much publicized Harmonic Division of the West Point instrument. The Harmonic Division by itself contained 62 ranks and at the time was the largest church organ in America. After his tenure at West Point he returned to the Moller factory to assume charge of the Automatic Player Department. He supervised the rebuilding of hundreds of pipe organ players known as the "Artiste Reproducing Organ" and did a great amount of the hand-cutting registration for the automatic rolls. Some of the most notable installations of the automatic "Artiste" were in such distinguished places as the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City; the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia; the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago; the Convention Hall in Philadelphia; and the George Washington Memorial Shrine, Arlington, Virginia.



It should be mentioned that Victor Zuck was involved in the design and construction of the first player organ built by the Moller firm, known as the "Solo Symphonist" in 1924. This player utilized QRS rolls, with tonal registrations controlled by hand. The first completely automatic instrument was built in 1926.

It was during 1926 when he became associated with Frederick A. Hoschke, who joined the Moller organization as Musical Director. Some of you may recall that Professor Hoschke in 1919 was an artist for Ampico - Ampico Rythmodik rolls. One of the most popular was "Sunset" from his "Garden Scenes" compositions. He was also arranger for the Regina Corona, Polyphon and Stella Music Box discs.

Mr. Zuck was trained in the roll making process where the complete composition to be recorded was first rhythmically recorded and then the actual notes transcribed from the usual score into markings on the master-roll which was three feet in width. After the roll was marked and perforated by hand it constituted the "Master" which was then operated in a machine to duplicate rolls for the market.

Hoschke and Zuck worked together in their spare time on various electronic tone producing methods. One proved most encouraging and in 1934 basic patents were secured in the United States, England, France and Belgium. After a model was completed, exclusive licensing arrangements were consummated with the Everett Piano Company of South Haven, Michigan. Mr. Zuck joined the Everett Piano Company in 1934, directing activities in research and manufacturing. This new instrument ultimately became known as the "Orgatron." After the first model was ready for production, little time was lost in developing an automatic player. Little enthusiasm could be stimulated among the Everett Company dealers, so plans for manufacturing were abandoned. (William H. Barnes, author of *The Contemporary American Organ*, mentions Mr. Zuck in the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th editions in relation to the Orgatron.)

Following the purchase of the Orgatron and all related assets from the Everett Piano Company by Rudolph Wurlitzer in 1944, he joined the Wurlitzer Company in North Tonawanda, New York, as a member of their Research Department. The Orgatron became the Wurlitzer Organ, and he ultimately became superintendent of the organ division and consultant in research. While he had financial interests in several basic patents on electrical tone production, he was also the personal recipient of 13 U.S. patents on improvements in electronic tone production. While with Wurlitzer, Mr. Zuck spent a considerable part of his time as pipe organ consultant.

When his patents expired in 1952, he resigned his post at Wurlitzer, joining Moeller once again as their Sales Representative for western New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. He was active in the American Guild of Organists, and has written featured articles for their national magazine; also he was active in the International Society of Organ Builders, attending many of their congresses held throughout Europe. In the November 1967 issue of the Diapason magazine he reported on the Fifth Biennial Congress of the I.S.O. held in Madrid, Spain. Other publications included *Radio-Craft Magazine*, (March and April 1938 issues) on "The Pipeless Organ." In the March 1955 issue of the *Music Trade Review*, his article was carried on

"The Development of Electronics" as they relate to the renaissance of the organ in various systems. *Casket and Sunnyside*, the National Magazine for Funeral Directors reprinted his articles on "The Physiological Use of Music."

In 1975, Mr. Zuck was ordained to the Diaconate in the Episcopal Church, having studied previously for his Canonical Examinations. He was ordained to the Priesthood at Trinity Cathedral, Pittsburgh, on May 29, 1976. Currently he is Priest-in-charge at St. Luke's Church, Georgetown, Pennsylvania.

In 1937 he was married to the former Nathalie Peterson, a native of New York City and the grandniece of Frederick A. Hoschke, the artist-composer.

Some of the recording artists and composers he was acquainted with included Lee S. Roberts of "Smiles" fame who recorded for QRS, Ampico and Artigraphic rolls; Vincent Lopez, Ampico rolls; Edwin H. Lemare of "Andantina in D Flat" fame who recorded for the English Duo-Art Audiographic rolls; Charles Wakefield Cadman of "At Dawning" ("I Love You Truly") fame who recorded for Duo-Art, and a host of other artist composers.

Mr. Zuck has always been interested in automatic musical instruments and at one time began collecting various automatically controlled ones.

Presently, in the Zuck residence there is an 18 rank, "Artiste" Reproducing Organ which he built, with a library of some 400 rolls. He has his own roll cutting registration machine which allows him to alter the registration when different stops of pipes are added or exchanged; also, when rolls are obtained from owners of a similar reproducing instrument, larger or smaller than the Zuck instrument.

To play the organ in the Zuck residence in the conventional manner the tonal resources are that of a "classical" instrument, yet when played automatically, the organ utilizes not only the classical registration, but brings into play registration orchestral in nature which can only be operated from the organ console by inserting a computer card.

In addition to the Player Pipe Organ, the Zuck's have a Welte Mignon, built at the Frieberg, Germany plant. It operates from "Red Label" records of which they have approximately 100 in their library.

In the interest of automatic player organs, Mr. Zuck furnished the Smithsonian Institution with complete tracker-bar and automatic mechanism drawings, switching, etc., for the "Artiste" Reproducing Pipe Organ. He has also been helpful in locating automatic instruments for interested collectors and in providing technical information for the rebuilding or servicing of the organs.

From the AMICA July/August 1989

By Emmett M. Ford

AMICA Honorary, Victor I. Zuck reached the age of 81 January, 1989, recalling his fame and fortune in helping to develop the world's first electronic organs. His childhood dreams, first was in the pipe organ business and second to pursue a career in the ministry. The latter didn't occur until the age past retirement to receive a master of sacred literature degree in 1982 and a doctor of ministry degree in Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana in 1984.

Fifty-three years ago he had left Hagerstown. It was there in the Irvin Avenue house working with the late Frederic A. Hoschke to develop the electronic organ. In the basement of Hoschke's house the experimental work with electro-acoustic inventions were developed for the pioneering musical instrument. Both Zuck and Hoschke were employees of the M.P. Moller Pipe Organ works on North Prospect Street in Hagerstown.

Zuck had joined Moller at the age of sixteen (1924) to serve as an apprentice to learn the building and installation



of organs throughout the U.S. and Canada. His mother played the old-fashioned reed organ at church services in the Calvary Brethren Church. Zuck never learned to professionally play the instrument but was more interested how the intricate instrument worked. In 1926 he assumed the position as musical director for Moller. He and Hoschke in the 1920s designed and built the "Artiste"; the automatic attachment for playing the organ with rolls which reproduced an organist's playing preserving every nuance and individuality. Renowned organists of international reputations came to Hagerstown to record their favorite compositions as well as orchestral transcriptions.

In the 1930s the two men were experimenting in Hoschke's basement with electro-acoustic inventions. Thus the world's second commercially successful electronic organ was to be introduced to the public. Moller passed on the production of the pipeless organ since they were the builder of pipe organs, giving the reason they didn't want to be involved in any electronic manufacturing.

The Everett Piano Company of South Haven, Michigan, accepted an exclusive license agreement in 1934. Zuck and Hoschke left Hagerstown to oversee the manufacturing of the instrument. The first production model was used in the 250th anniversary of Johann Sebastian Bach's birth with about 4,000 people attending the world premier of the Everett "Orgatron" in the auditorium in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Hoschke's death was August of 1936 (age 60), leaving Zuck to continue their work. At Hoschke's funeral in New York City, Zuck met his future wife, the former Nathalie Peterson. The marriage was celebrated by their 52nd wedding anniversary in 1989 with their daughter and two grandsons.

Zuck received 13 patents on the electronic organ but WW 2 created a ban on the production of musical instruments so wooden caskets and parts for cargo gliders could be made of plywood. Zuck was appointed to oversee the production of parts for gliders used in the war to ferry troops to parachute into combat areas.

When the war ended Zuck went to New York City to be general manager and technical coordinator for the organ division of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Co. from 1945 to 1953. Wurlitzer purchased the exclusive rights from Everett to manufacture the "Orgatron." Wurlitzer changed the name to Wurlitzer Organ and ten thousand were built and sold, the last one now in Zuck's family room. While he was with Wurlitzer he designed an organ for the Upper Grotto of the crypt of St. Peter's Basilica at Vatican City.

When the 17-year patent expired on the tone-producing system in the "Orgatron" (1953) Zuck left Wurlitzer to start his own company in Pittsburgh. For twenty years the Victor I. Zuck Pipe Organ Co. built new pipe organs and rebuilt others. He retired from the pipe organ business in 1973.

At this time Zuck was sales representative for M.P. Moller in western New York, eastern Ohio, northern West Virginia and western Pennsylvania. Zuck still visits the Moller factory and recommends the Moller pipe organ.

Zuck began to fulfill his second childhood dream and began studying for the ministry at Trinity School for the Ministry and the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute. In 1975 he was ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church and a year later ordained to the priesthood, receiving the appointment as priest in charge of St. Luke's Episcopal Church at Georgetown, Pennsylvania. In 1982 Zuck received a master of sacred literature degree and a doctor of ministry degree at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana in 1984. Later joining the staff at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at Mt. Leganon, Pennsylvania, where he remained as the priest in residence until September of 1989 when he moved back to his native town of Hagerstown. Now currently as associate for pastoral care for St. John's Parish on S. Prospect Street and a consultant to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York in the proposed changes in the pipe organ, the largest church organ and the third largest in the world.

Dr. Zuck is quite active and comments, "at age 81, I don't feel much different than I did at 55."

He now resides at 30 Mealey Parkway in Hagerstown. Maryland 21740.