

Robert S. Coe - 364 Summit Street - Manchester, Conn. 06040

June 10, 1975.

Bob Ellsworth
1186 Trout Brook Drive
West Hartford, Conn. 06119.

Dear Bob:

Enclosed are the Jay Ray pictures, with data at the top of the sheet. Really hunted for the negatives, found many others of that era, but not the ones that these prints were made from, nor any other Jay Ray negatives, only WTIC photos in general, of the 1930-s. Must have given these negatives to Jay.

Jay and Fannie were members of the Guy Hedlund players on WTIC, back in the 1930-s, a dramatic group that Morency commissioned Guy to organize for broadcasts, back in the early 30's, after he (Morency) returned from a West Coast meeting of the broadcasters' association of which he was then one of the kingpins. He had Guy Hedlund in tow on this trip. Guy made one big mistake, which was his eventual downfall, namely that he always took the lead part, in all of the radio productions, whether or not he fitted the part. Instead of staying behind the scenes and directing operations, he "hammed" it up on the microphone. As you probably know, WTIC fed a lot of material to the NBC Red Network in those days, primarily Norman Cloutier and the "Merry Madcaps" Orchestra, and also our WTIC Concert orchestra, direction of Christian Kriens, whom WTIC hired as musical director. Morency finally persuaded NBC that he had a real good dramatic group, and that the network should carry them too.

The first presentation or two, Guy did a real hammy job, as leading man, and the New York critics simply tore him apart in their reviews etc., and Morency finally realized that what his staff had been gently hinting for lo these many years, was a reality, and fired Guy shortly afterward, but prior to that time, Morency was dictator in his policies of Guy's group, and nobody in the program department of WTIC dared speak too loudly about Guy, for fear of themselves being fired.

The staff of players in Guy Hedlund's group, were good talent, and many went on to fame and fortune. Louis Nye, Ed Begley etc.

Jay Ray was active in Hartford in stock company productions, and appeared at the Palace Theatre often, in Hartford and others, in the area. I saw Jay and Fannie once at a theatre on Court Square in Springfield, in a real old fashioned "Meller-drama" a satire on the old theatre productions.

Jay was very much liked by all of the WTIC staff, and many thought that he should have been the director of the WTIC Players.

WTIC broadcast recitals regularly, from the studio of the Austin Organ Company, on Woodland Street, in Hartford, where these pictures of Jay were taken. There was a full-fledged three manual (32 stops) pipe organ installed in the factory studio, primarily for demonstration of the Austin product, to visiting organ committees from various churches etc., commissioned with the purchase of a pipe organ.

Enclosed is a snapshot I took of the studio organ, with the WTIC microphone in position, and the "remote" amplifier, which I operated on a table in the right side of the picture. In those days of "remotes" WTIC always did the job correctly, with two lines between studio and remote point, one for the broadcast material, and the other for a private communications system, for cues etc. (Note the private telephone sitting on top of the control box). If the broadcast line failed, we had a standing order, to swap lines, and use the telephone line (to a private switchboard in control room downtown) for the remainder of the broadcast. They don't do things this way nowadays.

The organist who was performing, during the Jay Ray recital, in the pictures, was Walter Dawley, who was organist at the Poli Capitol Theatre in Hartford (now gone) (Mr Dawley is also deceased). Many guest organists played broadcasts from this Austin Demonstration Studio. One was Esther Nelson (deceased).

The pipes showing in the picture were only dummies, the real works of the organ, with it's hundreds of pipes, being in back of these sound outlets, fitted with the ornamental pipes. The organ was divided into two chambers, both under expression. (The expression pedals, and pedals for playing the bass notes, do not show in this photo, as the organ bench was in the way.

In addition to this pipe organ being a demonstrator, it was also rigged for making paper rolls of a performance, this machine being in a room across the hall, and wired to the organ console. The organist simply played the instrument in the regular way, and everything he played was punched into a wide paper roll, including stop changes, expression etc., and the roll was then available for making copies, and it could (or the copies be played back on any Austin organ fitted with a player mechanism, of which there were a few in private residences. The studio demonstrator was also fitted with a player, in back of the music rack. (Note the small doors on the rack). These rolls when they played the organ, were an absolute duplicate of the original performance by the organist.

This studio organ, is long gone, being dismantled when the old company liquidated, and before the newer generation of Austins took over and re-established the business. The present Austin Company is doing very well and are the leading builder of pipe organs in the country. You might say that they are the "Steinways" of the pipe organ builders. Genuine pipe organs, custom built, are still in great demand, in spite of the electronic product now on the market.

Austin built a pipe organ for Aetna's auditorium on Farmington Ave., back around 1932, and it is still in operating condition, being cared-for by the Connecticut Valley Association of a group of pipe organ buffs, who keep it in good condition. It is equipped with a player mechanism, the last original installation remaining. (There are other Austin players hooked onto private residence pipe organs, at later dates, but not installed by Austin).

Next time you are over, and have a little time, will play you some rolls made by a friend of mine (organist) back in 1932, which were played recently for me on the Aetna organ, which I taped while listening.

Sincerely,

B. A.

P.S. - WOULD LIKE ALL PICTURES RETURNED, WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED WITH THEM. WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SEEING ONE OF YOUR COPIES OF JAY RAY PICTURE.



Pictures of Jay Ray