

PACfacts

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

spring 2007

PROSCENIUM PROFILE: Warp-Speed Volunteer Bill Pluma



Photo by Bob Young

Time does not hang heavy on Bill Pluma's hands. He just can't stand to be idle.

"My idea of a bad day?" he says. "Not having anything to do! Sitting on the couch, I get bored real quick."

Few have taken volunteering to the degree of intensity and scope that this friendly PAC usher and floor captain has done since he and his wife Janice arrived on the central coast in 1975. And his ushering and floor captaining at the PAC is but the tip of a very big iceberg.

Every weekday Bill is scheduled for some volunteer activity— or two or three.

Asked by a visitor to show his awards, they were piled high on the dining table: recognition of his outstanding volunteer service that has come from the Federal, State and County governments as well as a wide variety of big-name and local nonprofits in Paso Robles.

He is understandably proud of the "Call to Service" award issued by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. (That 2004 award

credited Bill for more than 4,000 hours of volunteering in two years.) But he gets nearly the same kick from being honored by organizations, including the North County Dance and Performing Arts Foundation and the Toy Bank, that benefit from his volunteering zeal.

"He's happiest when he's busy. It is his personality! If the 'busy' involves helping people, so much the better."

—Janice Pluma

That Bill is a master at network-building shows in dozens of projects happening all around the Paso Robles area, from a "Magic Tables Challenge" evening for a local church to a silent auction for the Food Bank. "It's what I do best," he says with a bright smile.

What kind of volunteering time are we talking about? Bill estimates that in the eight years since he began keeping track of his hours for the Retired Senior Volunteer (R.S.V.P.) program, 12,000 hours is conservative. (In 2003 the Paso Robles R.S.V.P. logged Bill at 1,918 hours— that year's top award.)

Bill and Janice moved from Ventura to Los Osos in 1975, then, in December, 1989, to Paso Robles. The month sticks in memory because the house's pipes froze when the thermometer dipped to 12 degrees on their second night.

Clients of Bill's talent for organizing have included the Paso Robles Police Department and the Golden State Classics Car Club (he's proud to drive a sleek, white Corvette). He regularly serves as a courier for sensitive paperwork for the District Attorney's office. Fluent in Spanish, he has given tours of the Paso Robles Public Library, and he's also sorted new books.

He serves on the board of the SLO County Food Bank, and is past chairman of the Salvation Army's North County Disaster Canteen. With Bill taking his turn at the wheel, the mobile Canteen provided meals for rescue workers and many residents following the deadly earthquake in December, 2003.

He is often called upon to mediate on car-towing cases for the Police Department, as a hearings officer and also a courier.

How did Bill Pluma catch the volunteering virus? As a member of the East Ventura Lions' Club, he became a mentor to wards of the courts. "One short young man enjoyed playing guitar and stealing cars," Bill recalls. "He came to be my ward. We had visits and long talks, and I kept in touch by mail over several years after he was released from the Youth Authority. He got a real good job, a good wife, and children. It made me feel real good."

Of her husband Janice observed, "It's the work ethic you were raised with." Bill agreed. "I've always looked for a way to help someone who really needs help," he said. "I've always been a person who likes to get things done."

Janice: "He's happiest when he's busy. It is his personality! If the 'busy' involves helping people, so much the better." Bill: "I had a disadvantaged childhood, but am having a marvelous senior life. It has been great!"

Where does our PAC fit into Bill's hectic volunteering ethic?

"The PAC is my fun time," he says. "And I've learned not to pick something you expect to be great. Some of the best shows were ones I knew nothing about."

—By Bob Young

2,767 pipes give voice to Opus #129

–By BeJae Blake

“In essence the organ is just a great big wooden machine,” said Andrew Gingery, project engineer, on a recent week-long assignment in San Luis Obispo. “When we leave,” said Gingery, “Another team will arrive to finish the voicing and Opus #129 will be ready for the inaugural recital June 11.”

Opus #129 is the designation given to the pipe organ designed and built by C.B. Fisk, Inc. of Gloucester, Mass. and donated to the Performing Arts Center by Bert and Candace Forbes. The parts arrived in San Luis Obispo last June and were carried into the hall by more than 65 community volunteers. It took a month to assemble the parts and over eight months for the voicing of the pipes; a process of adjusting the timbre and volume of each individual pipe to work with its neighbor and in the context of the entire organ.

The part of the great big wooden

machine you don't see in Harman Hall is built behind the console flanked by 34 of the larger pipes. The three-story structure, connected by narrow wooden ladders, supports wooden shelves holding the other 2,733 pipes. Arranged and numbered in different configurations, the smallest pipe is about the size of a pencil while the largest pipe is 32 feet. Each pipe has a foot, lips and ears.

“Astop does not control the amount of airflow; it simply allows or disallows wind to get to the foot of the pipe,” said Gingery. Each pipe plays the volume that it was voiced at, and the only way

to make the whole instrument louder or softer is to add or subtract more stops.

The phrase, pulling out all the stops, originates from pipe organ performances and means to apply your best effort. It took the best efforts of many individuals over six years to turn the dream of having a pipe organ at the PAC into a reality.



Each time a key is pressed one of these valves in the windchest opens.



Lips and ears. Freeing the organ's voice.



Free tickets may be available April 2 for Solo Organ Recital

Monday, June 11

Evening Solo Organ Recital by Olivier Latry who is titular organist of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. Special invitations for tickets will be extended by the Foundation for the Performing Arts Center to its current and renewing donors. Any remaining free recital tickets will be available to the general public beginning Monday, April 2, 10 a.m. at the PAC Ticket Office.

Tuesday, June 12

Noon “Brown Bag Lunch” Lecture/demonstration in Harman Hall by the staff of CB Fisk, Inc. Find out more about the design of Opus #129 and details of its construction directly from those involved in its creation.

Wednesday, June 13

Evening performance featuring Olivier Latry and the San Luis Obispo Symphony and community chorus conducted by Michael Nowak and Thomas Davies.

Sunday, June 17

Afternoon Open Keyboard Event
Details on how to sign up for a 10 minute slot to play Opus #129 will be posted soon on the PAC web site.

Nancy's Notes

Spring/Summer Schedule – Start checking your e-mail (or mailbox if you don't have e-mail) for notice about the next sign-ups. Deadline is Friday, April 13 to submit your choices for spring and summer events at the PAC.

Parking Reminder – When ushering, please park in G-1 which is the surface lot adjacent to the PAC. Parking fees are \$5.00 Monday through Thursday nights. If you are working Friday evenings, Saturdays or Sundays, parking is free in G-1. If you want to park in the structure you may but it will cost you \$6.00.

Usher Uniforms – We have some slightly used / donated vests, blouses, shirts in various sizes – and even a pair of nice men's black dress pants that are free for the asking. If you're interested, e-mail or call Nancy.

Check out the S.O.S. List – On-line at www.pacfriends.org. Log in with your user name and password; it takes you to your home page and the current S.O.S. List. You can also sign-up in the binder at the house manager's podium.



Smaller pipes arranged behind the console.



Andrew Gingery is holding a reed pipe.

Photos by BeJae Blake

For concert & event updates go to www.pacslo.org/about/pipe_organ.php

For info on Olivier Latry go to www.concertorganists.com

For info on C.B. Fisk, Inc. go to www.cbfisk.com