Piano to the Board, and asked for permission to put it in the Bulletin as a proposal to the membership. John Motto-Ros made a motion to publish the description of the campaign in the Bulletin. It would basically explain the program and how it proposes to solicit donations from the Chapters and to use this money to start a fund at the International level. He will publish a list of instruments and costs for their restoration. If the plan is well-received, and money becomes available, we will move forward. AMICA will be prominently mentioned for its role in the project if it is approved. The motion was approved to publish the material.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
FRIDAY, August 22, 2003
PORTLAND, OREGON

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM by President Dan Brown. He introduced the committee for the Portland Convention. The schedule for the day’s workshops was announced, and he asked for submissions of convention photos for the Bulletin, since some of our regular photo contributors were unable to attend. His summary of the President’s Report included mentions of the change in committee chairpersons and a commendation for outgoing Publisher Robin Pratt. He introduced each of the International officers and each provided a summary of their reports, included elsewhere in this issue.

Linda Bird, as chairperson of the Nominating Committee, introduced the new Committee members. She invited AMICA members to make their suggestions for new officers known to the committee member in their area. Contact information for each is provided in her report. Maury Willyard moved to accept the slate of committee members and the motion was approved. Officers will be elected at the 2004 Convention in Denver, Colorado.

Dan then gave a review of the Board Meeting agenda items. Highlights include the formation of a new committee to review the direction AMICA is taking and to review the by-laws relating to our purpose, as well as starting a New Chapter/Member Committee. The Membership Directory will soon become available in an electronic format. The direction of the Bulletin was discussed in light of the change in Publisher. The Chicago Chapter’s suggestion to create a new award was approved. The Emmett Ford collection will be passed on to Publisher Mike Kukral, for possible inclusion in the Bulletin. Dan reminded people of the Memorial Fund, and commended Webmaster Meta Brown on the redesigned Web site. He noted that ideas discussed promoting membership growth will be published in the Bulletin. The Adopt-A-Piano campaign was introduced by Richard Reutlinger.

Frank Nix summarized the future Convention plans listed in his report, and presented a brief summary of the Denver Convention for 2004 since Jere DeBacker was unable to present his report.

Each Chapter Board Representative reported on their activities as outlined in their reports to the Board, included elsewhere in this Bulletin.

The meeting was adjourned.

AMICA 2003 PORTLAND CONVENTION REPORT

August 20-24, 2003 were beautiful days in Portland, Oregon, as we shared together a wonderful AMICA convention. Portland is a city of great beauty that has not yet been completely discovered, even by Americans. For example, neither AMICA nor MBSI has ever had a convention there, and the newness of the city to most people in attendance proved to have definite appeal. An unusual number of people came early and our pre-conference tour was actually oversubscribed. At the end of the convention, people hung around the Portland area and fewer than 10 left before the Farewell Breakfast.

CONVENTION COMMITTEE

Many thanks go to members of the convention committee, who were as follows:

Oregon Convention Committee Members:
Al Menashe, Portland Chairperson; Ann Smith; Bruce & Juanie Cartwright; Bill & Marilyn Englund; John Collins; Don McLaughlin; and Nathan Bello.

Washington Convention Committee Members:
Carl Dodrill, Seattle Chairperson; Halie Dodrill; Beverly Spore; Carl Kehret; Dan Brown; Dean Randall (most regretfully, Dean passed away early in 2003, and his memory and contributions to the convention were recognized on a number of occasions through the meeting).
HOTEL
The convention registered 183 people who were comfortably situated in the Doubletree Downtown Portland Hotel. This hotel was the perfect size for our convention, and it felt comfortable and cozy to all. The registration procedure, organized by Halie Dodrill and Bev Spore, went exceptionally well, and other members of the Pacific Can-Am Chapter provided important assistance.

The hotel staff was wonderful and went far out of their way to accommodate our needs and desires. Leigha Thomas, our hotel representative, became a “friend” to many on the committee as we spent lots of time planning during the more than two years of our working together. Her staff responded immediately to all requests and they found a way to meet every one of the items directed to them. Food was served in record times and this was always high in both quality and quantity. During the convention, the hotel also did something special for us every day, including special food offerings, discounts, and bar offerings. Furthermore, when one of our attendees had a stroke during the meeting, the hotel employees took up a collection and sent flowers to the hospital.

TOURS
Ann Smith coordinated all our tours for the convention and did a splendid job! We had an entire bus of 47 folks attend the 1/2-day Pre-Convention tour that included visits to the Rose Gardens, Japanese Gardens, and Pittock Mansion in Portland. Everyone talked excitedly upon their return to the hotel. Then on Thursday we all boarded buses for a daylong tour of the Columbia River Gorge. Everyone was impressed with the beauty of the Gorge, and numerous photographs were taken. We went up to Mount Hood, where folks both young and old were still skiing down parts of the mountain that had snow. It seemed a bit strange to see people dressed for skiing and it was bright and sunny outside in August! The Lodge at Mt. Hood was toured by some of us while others watched a film on its construction. The Raz transportation company provided our lunch for the day.

A stop at Multnomah Falls generated some very considerable interest, and while some of us took pictures, others made the easy hike up to the bridge that is part way up the falls. From this bridge, one could not only see the falls close at hand, but hear the water as it fell 670 feet to the rocks below. This is one of the most photographed places in the entire United States.

A major feature on our daylong tour was at the International Museum of Carousel Art. This museum, in Hood River, Oregon is home to the world’s largest and most comprehensive collection of antique carousel art. The tour guide showed us almost every imaginable type of animal that at one time or another had appeared on carousels. With regard to the numerous horses on display, she gave us some real insights into the styles of various carvers and what to look for to identify each type. Furthermore, we had a chance to see a restorer at work, and he was able to show us a horse that he had nearly restored, and another that was identical, but unrestored and in pieces. Of interest is the fact that this museum now has several carousels ready to place in public venues, and they are also in a position to provide funds for such placements.

We returned to the hotel around 6 PM after a fun day of visiting with friends, meeting new people and enjoying the spectacular beauty of this part of the world.

FEATURED ARTIST
A particular highlight of the convention was being able to feature our young guest artist, Nathan Bello. Nathan is one of AMICA International’s youngest members, and although he has been a member of AMICA for several years, he is now only 17 years of age. Specifically for this convention, Nathan composed “The Rose City Rag,” which is a real toe-tapping tune of exactly the type that AMICAns enjoy. He worked with Dean Randall, Dan Brown, Kurt Morrison, Ron Babb, and Mark Smithberg, to record it as our convention souvenir roll. David Saul of the Precision Music Roll Company put aside other tasks in order to cut the roll on a timely basis for the convention. The leader on the convention roll has Nathan’s picture on it, and the roll is dedicated to the memory of Dean Randall who not only was one of Nathan’s staunchest fans, but who was the person who actually suggested that we have the convention in Portland to begin with.

On Thursday evening and after the all day tour, Nathan performed a wonderful piano concert using the Yamaha grand piano with a Disclavier that had been provided by the Cascade Music Company of Portland. The concert included the Rose City Rag as would be expected, and indeed there were actually 13 popular tunes played before the Intermission including some by Scott Joplin, James Scott, Cole Porter, and Thomas “Fats” Waller. The Hilarity Rag was perhaps the most technically demanding of these, and it was executed with exquisite fineness, as were the other pieces. After the Intermission, Nathan played seven classical pieces written by composers such as J.S. Bach, Hayden, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev. The Prokofiev sonata (Sonata No. 1, Op. 1 in F Minor) had incredibly high level of demand, and this had been previously played by Nathan in Carnegie Hall.

After the concert was over, with an encore and standing ovation, Nathan patiently signed many, many souvenir rolls for conventioners. The line of waiting people for signatures was VERY long indeed. We in the Pacific Can-Am
chapter of AMICA feel greatly honored that we have Nathan Bello in our group and his fine contribution to the convention is truly appreciated. Furthermore, it was a real treat to have not only Nathan’s parents but also his grandparents (from Texas) in the audience for this special evening.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
Following a buffet breakfast on Friday morning, the Annual Business Meeting of AMICA was held, chaired by AMICA International President Dan Brown. Minutes from that meeting will be featured in the Bulletin. The session included a presentation on the next AMICA convention that will be held in Denver, Colorado the first week in August 2004. That meeting will feature some spectacular scenery, interesting automatic musical instruments, and, of course, a chance for to meet old friends and to make new ones.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS
Carl Kehret organized the Technical Sessions. They were held on Friday morning from 9:30AM until noon, and each session was offered twice during that time interval. The Technical Sessions that were offered included:

“Care and Repair of Theater Pipe Organs.” Jack Becvar did the presentation here utilizing some of the materials provided by Russ Evans and Bob Rusczyk. With more than 30 years of experience maintaining the Wurlitzer in his own home, Jack focused on a number of practical matters pertaining to keeping these instruments going.

“Computer and Automatic Music.” Phil Dayson spent a great deal of time carefully showing how he had been able to make a harpsichord play music automatically by a computer. This harpsichord was demonstrated many times in the Hospitality Suite during the convention.

“Tips on Recovering Bellows and Pumps.” John Pohlpeter demonstrated his great familiarity with bellows and pumps in his presentation on the many intricacies that are involved in recovering them so that they will perform trouble free.

“Secrets of a Smooth Running Air Motor.” Bing Gibbs presented this topic in a small room with standing room only. Convention attendees were truly appreciative of the techniques which he offered in order to make air motors truly smooth running.

“Easy Listening.” Pianist Halie Dodrill led this innovative session with the playing of groups of light classical, show tunes, and religious pieces. Between each group, she spoke about what she was doing and answered question. While not the typical technical session, this program attracted many people who simply enjoyed the playing of live music.

“Cross-stitch.” Liz Barnhart once again outdid herself in providing a cross-stitch pattern consistent with the theme of “Roses” for the convention. As always, a number of ladies enjoyed visiting as they made cross-stitch remembrances of the convention for later framing and viewing.

PUMPER CONTEST
The Friday evening the pumper contest was held, nearly everyone in the convention attended, and a great time was had by all. Dan Brown organized the event and appointed the judges that included Kurt Morrison, Ron Babb, and Mark Smithberg. These guys were no fun, however, as none would take bribes! The 88 note player piano was a Victor that was secured through Ron Rusczyk. The entries were of especially high quality, but there was lightheartedness, as usual, with Larry Norman. Then there was Maggie Richardson who put on a show which no one in the audience could be 100% certain was or was not staged. The entries were of especially high quality, but there was lightheartedness, as usual, with Larry Norman. Then there was Maggie Richardson who put on a show which no one in the audience could be 100% certain was or was not staged. As this progressed, people became more and more involved in the spirit of the very fun evening. Karl Ellison, demonstrating unbelievable control of the piano’s expression, won the Footsie award.

During the evening and between contestants, a number of door prizes were given out. Five of these had been purchased by Oregon Convention Committee members and five by the Washington committee members. In addition, Nathan Bello provided several CD’s to give away. It was a lively, fun evening for all!

THEATER ORGAN CONCERT
Saturday morning after breakfast, we once again boarded buses and went to the Oaks Park Roller Rink and Amusement Park in Portland. Here we enjoyed a wonderful concert on the Wurlitzer pipe organ by Jonas Nordwall. The rink is a really fun place to see, with the entire pipe organ chamber suspended from the ceiling in the center of the room. The floor, on the other hand, was on pontoons and when the building floods from the river, the floor actually raises as much as several feet and thus avoids water damage. We were allowed to walk around on the rink floor during the performance, hearing the organ from various perspectives. As the concert progressed, AMICAns felt more and more free to enjoy themselves out on the floor, and when a grand march was played, nearly 100 people were on the floor following each other in a great parade, walking, dancing, and responding to the lively music. What fun it was to look around and see everyone enjoying themselves so very much!

After the concert we were shuttled to the Sellwood Antique area of Portland where there are more than 50 antique shops, with almost every type of antique that you can imagine. People were free to shop and wander around as they wished, and grabbing lunch wherever and whenever they saw fit. Shuttle buses...
returned to the hotel each hour, and people returned to the Doubletree as they wished during the afternoon.

BANQUET
Saturday evening our banquet was held in the ballroom, with music provided by the Dick Saunders Orchestra. The selection of this orchestra was made by convention committee member John Collins, and the band proved exactly the type of music that AMICAns love. It was very lively, truly danceable, and enjoyed by all.

The food at the banquet was truly delicious, with many people bronzed salmon or pork tenderloin. Approximately 195 persons attended this event. At the place for each person, a special coffee mug was placed which was a gift to each person. At room temperature, the mug has a black square on each side, but when hot liquid is put in the mug, the black disappears and the logo of the convention appears with its beautiful red rose. These table favors and associated roses were planned by committee members Bruce and Juanice Cartwright.

FAREWELL BREAKFAST AND OPEN HOUSES
As part of the Farewell Breakfast on Sunday morning, Karl Ellison presented a film from the “You Asked for It” program that was first aired in 1956 that highlighted the Imperial Industrial Company in New York City, featuring Max Kortlander and JLC. It focused upon the only piano roll producing company in the United States at that time, QRS. The shop and much of the roll producing mechanism were shown in operation. A special feature to this file was the life and work of J. Lawrence Cook, the man who for several decades provided vital services to the QRS Company in cutting and editing rolls. The film pictures him at his work for QRS and records his voice. It was clear that this man made a tremendous contribution to automatic music with not only his commitment to it, but with his truly remarkable skills. The film presentation was greatly enjoyed and appreciated and seemed to bring a very nice “farewell closing” to the formal part of the convention. Thanks, Karl, for showing this film!

Don McLaughlin of our committee organized the open houses, and there were six houses to attend. The Convention Chair made the decision that there were adequate funds available to cover the cost of rental vehicles including fuel and full insurance for small groups of people who wished to go to the open houses and who did not have transportation. The vehicles hired included a 15-passenger van that was filled with AMICAns who had a great time making a circle of the city, and stopping at nearly all of the open houses. This transportation was greatly appreciated by people who had come to Portland by airplane and had no transportation to reach the houses. The open houses included the following:
- Bruce & Juanice Cartwright’s residence in Salem, Oregon (50 miles south of Portland)
- Al Menashe’s residence in Portland
- John Pohlpeter and Mary Hayden collection in nearby Oregon City
- Kurtis Knight residence in Portland
- Leonard & Ann Smith’s residence in Portland
- Robert Rusczyk’s residence in Vancouver, Washington

Each of these homes featured instruments never before featured in an AMICA open house. Sincere thanks are expressed to everyone who opened their homes for members to visit.

CONCLUSIONS
The AMICA - 2003 - Convention Committee thanks everyone who helped with the convention (a host of folks from our Can-Am chapter), the wonderful hotel staff at the Doubletree, our guest artists Nathan Bello and Jonas Nordwall, and persons who offered their homes. Special recognition goes to my wife, Halie, whose commitment to this convention in the hundreds of hours she spent resulted in a convention with no significant weaknesses. In addition, there were a host of others who made this convention a meaningful and memorable experience. These “others” included you, the people who attended the convention, because it was you who responded to my call to really connect with those convention attendees who you did not know, to speak with them at every opportunity, to constantly welcome those among us who had never attended an AMICA convention before, to especially welcome persons who were not even members but who had come anyway, and even to smile at and speak to the hotel personnel. You took seriously my assertion that AMICA is people, first and foremost, and you considered the quote of Mary Jo Bopp who at last year’s convention in Arkansas said, “We love the instruments, but we love their owners more.” It was this focus on others which made this a truly warm convention where there was created a place and a sense of belonging for everyone.
DEVOTEES OF PLAYER PIANOS
ARE ON A ROLL WHEN THEY GATHER

“A little faster, I think,” Nathan Bello told Julian Dyer, who obligingly increased his tempo on the piano’s pump pedals so the “Rose City Rag” unrolled from its reel a bit quicker.

“See, he’s playing it quicker than I did,” Dyer said in his soft London accent later, when Bello sat down at the keyboard. Bello should know, however: The Gladstone High School senior — who has played Carnegie Hall and just spent six weeks at Tanglewood studying with composer John Williams — composed the “Rose City Rag.” He wrote it exclusively for the national convention of the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors’ Association, the 40-year-old club for fanciers of player pianos, orchestrions, music boxes and all manner of musical automata. (www.amica.org)

The convention happened last weekend in Portland, and each of the 200 or so attendees took home a piano roll of the “Rose City Rag” to run through one of their own player pianos.

But Bello, you understand, was actually playing the piece — using the keys and pedals and everything, while Dyer had used only his hands for swooping down upon sustain and tempo levers to add emphasis as the roll spun by. He was practicing for Saturday evening’s “pump off,” when a dozen folks would compete for a trophy called the Footsie, awarded for the piano-roll performance made most musical by varying pumping speed, sustain and emphasis to simulate a real pianist.

So Bello’s actual keyboard chops made him a rarity in this group whose members often have more pianos in their homes than most folks have eggs in the fridge. On Friday, many were still talking breathlessly of young Bello’s concert the night before, just as they talked of their own preference for throwing a switch instead of tickling the ivories.

“You could call me a frustrated concert pianist, like many of us, I suppose,” said Steve Rattle of Melbourne, Australia, who planned his West Coast trip around the Portland convention. “When I realized I wasn’t going to be Paderewski after 10 lessons, I gave up thoughts of playing seriously. Then I heard my first reproducing piano and it was fantastic — like having the artist in your living room. I knew I had to have one.”

Twenty years on, he’s got several — not a surprise in this group. But the reproducing piano is another step up from the basic player piano, such as Bello and Dyer were playing in the meeting room at the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Portland. The reproducing piano was made to replicate actual performances with tempo and emphasis signals punched into the piano roll.

There were several systems such as Duo-Art — which were often installed in Steinway pianos — Ampico and Welte-Mignon, which was favored by Rattle, who’d just bought a vintage roll of “Land of Sky-Blue Waters” at the swap meet in the next room. He’d also bought the “drawer” or works of a Model B Ampico — a bewildering maze of rubber tubing, levers and pneumatic bellows that must’ve weighed a hundred pounds or more.

Still, it wasn’t as bad as that time in Boston in 1991, when he found an entire reproducing grand piano, bought it and then inquired as to shipping it home to Australia. No worries, as it turned out. Couldn’t have been easier, he said, so much so that Rattle’s since imported a couple more pianos to bring his total herd to six.

“He’s just a beginner,” apologized club president Dan Brown of Spokane. “I’ve got seven, and I’m still looking for an Ampico B. I had neighbors who had players when I was growing up, and I’d buy my own rolls and go over to their houses and play them. Then, when I could afford my first piano, it was all over.

“This is one of those hobbies that just spirals out of control and takes up every bit of available space you have. My house is so full now that I currently have three of my pianos in foster placement at the homes of good friends.”

You’d hesitate to accuse Brown of being a slacker, but after meeting Jack and Mary Lou Becvar, who have a 1920 Wurlitzer theater organ — as in the Mighty Wurlitzer — in their Seattle-area home, and who built a 2,400 square-foot addition with ceilings more than 20 feet tall to accommodate the ranks of pipes, you’d realize that there are many levels of enthusiasm.

Friday morning was devoted to technical sessions such as “Secrets of a Smooth Running Air Motor” and “Tips on Recovering Bellows and Pumps.” The less technically inclined could listen to club secretary Halie Dodrill play — really play — old show tunes and standards on a futuristic looking Yamaha grand piano or join a cross-stitching group.

But hardware freaks attended Jack Becvar’s session, “Care and Repair of Theater Pipe Organs.” The Becvars brought tables-full of sample pipes, wind chests, switches, pneumatics and an old movie that showed a Wurlitzer pipe organ being built. That process was so
labor-intensive — from kilning and milling the lumber to hand-forming the pipes and turning miles of wire into hawser-thick harnesses — that it’s a wonder one was ever built, let alone the 2,600 built before World War II.

Becvar’s instrument was originally installed in the Blue Mouse Theater, removed in 1956 and sold to a man who intended to install it in his home but never completed the task. Becvar bought the organ 30 years ago, when he was still working for Boeing. He helped a friend move a pipe organ, was impressed with the instrument and mentioned that he wouldn’t mind finding one.

A week or two later, his friend called and said they found him an organ. “Mary Lou was busy so I yelled out, ‘Mary Lou, can I have an organ?’ and she yelled back, ‘Sure, hon.’ Twenty-six pickup loads and a ton-and-a-half van later, I had it home.”

“It started out as a model 210, but it’s now a model 318 because we’ve added pipes and I got a three manual console from a cocktail lounge in New Jersey — it looks pretty good now, but when I got it, it had three layers of paint — pea green, cream and dark green. And just to make sure, they’d covered all that in Naugahyde. . .” John Foyston: 503-221-8368; johnfoyston@news.oregonian.com

Automatically yours continued...

Portland 2003 convention

Photos sent in by Dan Brown, Christy Counterman, & Tom Rosenbusch
Many of us took home souvenirs from one of the Made in Oregon stores.

Mount Hood is the highest point in Oregon at 11,239 ft.

Multnomah Falls is one of the popular spots on the historic Columbia River Highway, built in 1916.

Historic photos decorated the roller rink that still houses its original wurlitzer organ above the skating floor.

(Open House Sunday) These are just some of Al Menashe’s collection of Vogue Pictures Records.

Open House – John Pohlpete with Auto Banjo.
George Cunningham and Bonnie Lusby at the skating rink.

Banquet – Anne and David Saul

Banquet – Ray and Nancy Dietz, winners of AMICA International Award

The Band Box is connected to one of Al Menashe’s Jukeboxes. Barbie is the soloist.
Portland 2003 Convention

The English Connection: Lyn Mercy, Nadine Motto-Ros, John Mercy, Peter Tallent, John Motto-Ros, Margaret Daois, George Cunningham, Janet Tallent, Peter Davis

Banquet – Frank and Shirley Nix

Evelyn Schwerin, Sharyn and George Cunningham, and Nadine Motto-Ros at Multnomah Falls

Open House – Michele and Robert Rusczyn

Dan Brown, Kurt Morrison

Banquet – Julian Dyer, Margaret and Peter Davis all from England

Open House – Michele and Robert Rusczyn

Banquet – Miriam Hanscom and Jody Trittipo

Nathan Bello
Open House – Michele and Robert Rusczyk

Technical Session: Bing Gibbs telling the secrets of a smooth running air motor.

Jonas Nordwall playing the Wurlitzer at the skating rink

Lee Rosencrans, Bernice Carnes, Steve Rattle Multnomah Falls

Sharyn Cunningham, Richard Reutlinger, Nadine Motto-Ros

Banquet – Janet and Peter Tallent from England

John and Nadine Motto-Ros and Sharyn and George Cunningham

Steve Rattle Timberline Lodge
PORTLAND 2003 CONVENTION

Museum of Carousel Art Hood River

Steve Rattle, Brian Meeder
Columbia River Gorge

Jay Albert, Brian Meeder
Multnomah Falls

The Grand March at Oaks Park

Maury and Fran Willyard, Bob and Lee Rosencrans
Columbia River Vista House

Linda Bird accepting Ornstein Award
for Ron Bopp from Dorothy Olds

Steve Rattle Wurlitzer Organ at The Oaks Park

Dan Brown Mt. Hood

Banquet – Ron and Mary Ellen Connor

Columbia River Vista House

Portland 2003 convention

Linda Bird accepting Ornstein Award
for Ron Bopp from Dorothy Olds
Karl Ellison presenting AMICA International Award to Nancy and Ray Dietz

Dan Brown, Mark Smithberg, Lee Rosencrans, Kurt Morrison

Dan Brown announcing President’s Award winner Robin Pratt

Brian Meeder, Jay Albert, guests, Evelyn Schaller

Mark Smithberg, Lee Rosencrans, Kurt Morrison, Troy Taylor, Steve Rattle

The Grand March at Oaks Park

Mae Louise Dopps, Geoff Kaiser

Richard Reutlinger, Liz Barnhart

Banquet – John and Lyn Mercy
The champion and winner of the coveted “Footsie” was Karl Ellison.

Former winner Julian Dyer of the UK introduces his roll.

Dick Merchant from New Mexico.

Maggie Richardson showed us all how to deal with those annoying tracking problems.

Jeffery Bonmsky was the first contestant.

Pumper Contest – Karl Ellison
winner of Golden Footsie, presented by Dan Brown

Pumper Contest – Larry Norman

Bob Rosencrans

Joyce Brite

The champion and winner of the coveted “Footsie” was Karl Ellison.