

**25 Years of Beautiful Music:
The Helmuth Wolff Organ
at Travis Park
United Methodist Church**



The Travis Park Church community is celebrating the 25th anniversary of our beautiful organ's installation. In honor of this event, this history has been compiled to increase our understanding and appreciation of the instrument's creation and design.

From our church history:

"In 1982, \$300,000 was given for a new organ by Paul and Mary Avery. Travis Park had a 4-year pledge campaign, 1984-1988, to remodel the sanctuary for the new organ. Built in Quebec, Canada by Helmuth Wolff and Associates, it was installed in the fall of 1985 and dedicated in February 1986 with a recital. Bill Telford, Becky Vitola, Caldwell Smith, Phil Watkins, C.A. Foster, Mrs. Wallace Schneider, Clifton Roop, Robert Parker, Scott Mouton, Dan Solomon, Ed Purcell, Josephine Forman and Bonnie Surber served on the Organ Committee. (J. Forman, 1991)

From the builder's website:

"The instrument's stoplist (for selecting which ranks of pipes will sound when a key is pressed) was devised personally by Helmuth Wolff in consultation with Scott Mouton, Travis Park organist at the time and Dr. Robert Anderson, head of the Organ Department at SMU.

The organ is unique in several ways. This instrument was the builder's first in a neo-classic building. It has painted casework – also a first for the firm – with a blue-gray frame contrasting with off-white panels and moldings, the latter accented by gold leaf. ...the instrument is actually a large two-manual one, possessing a third keyboard as a means of giving independence to certain solo voices. It was designed to do justice to classical music pieces as well as romantic and contemporary compositions.

(http://www.orgelwolff.com/opus_list_e.html)

November 21, 2010

Memories from Scott Mouton Travis Park Organist 1975-1993

Bonnie Jean and I came to TPUMC in 1975, and the Dutch-American organ, installed by Pels in 1957 after the disastrous fire, was not in great shape even though money had been spent on it for repairs. The organ continued to deteriorate to the point where Helen Campbell, Executive Secretary of the Halsell Foundation, was concerned that Ewing Halsell's name was associated with an organ in such disrepair. At this point we hired Dr. Robert Anderson, from Perkins School of Theology/SMU, to give us his opinion of the organ's condition. His report left no doubt that the old Pels needed to be replaced. Of course, anyone attending a worship service could have told you that, too. (The first time I played for Annual Conference, the Travis Park choir sang C. Hubert H. Parry's "I Was Glad" for the offertory. The huge finale to the piece ended on a Bb, and the organ ciphered kept playing on a Tutti "B".)

Our organ committee selected three builders to seriously consider, and I was sent off to New York City to play instruments by Hellmuth Wolff, Casavant, and Bozeman. I distinctly remember having a very small amount of cash for this trip, so I ended up walking or taking the subway to many of the venues on our list. One particularly long day of walking produced a strained tendon, but I still had a final 8-mile-day coming up. Limping along beside Central Park is still very vivid in my mind. It seems like I came back to San Antonio with at least \$1.50 in my pocket.

It didn't take me long to figure out that Hellmuth Wolff was the right guy for our project. It was really fun to work with him in selecting the stops for our two manual organ, which was slightly expanded (at the request of Dan Solomon) to create a third keyboard for solos and the trumpet en chamade.

Paul and Mary Avery were the generous donors of the organ, but their gift would not have been possible if others such as Bob Parker had not stepped up to the donation plate. Dan Solomon took Bonnie Jean and me to the Tower of the Americas to announce that he had gotten a commitment from Mr. Avery for a new organ, and we were all walking on air with excitement. The next few volatile years in the oil & gas industry were rough on Paul, but he honored his commitment to the church. He deserves a ton of respect for this honorable act, and I think that others need to know the personal sacrifices he made to complete this renovation project at Travis Park UMC.

For 11 years I waited patiently for a new organ to arrive, and finally the arrival date was announced—the same day in October I was booked to go on my Walk to Emmaus. At first I announced that my walk would have to wait, but after much wise counsel the original schedule was kept. The 18 wheeler from Canada arrived that Thursday morning, and I was driven off to attend my walk a few minutes later. Those first four days of organ installation were missed, but they were not as important as the fabulous walk in Kerrville.

The organ was a joy to play from the very beginning, and it is still fantastic. What a joy it is to have this organ in the heart of the city and to think that I had something to do with it.