Those Green Pastures

Oswald G. Ragatz

Introduction

For more than forty years, Oswald Gleason Ragatz served as chairman of the organ department of the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Witnessing many changes through those years at Indiana University, Dr. Ragatz has also seen many changes in the world of concert organists in the years since his retirement from IU in 1983.

When Dr. Ragatz retired in 1983, the organ department at Indiana University had a notable historic concert organ in the IU Auditorium, two respectable studio organs, and eleven pipe organs in practice rooms for student use. Ragatz built the department to a level where it could take its place along with the other large university organ departments in the United States. Currently, the organ department of the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University is one of the largest institutions offering degrees in organ in the United States.

With approximately 400 living IU alumni organists, former students of Oswald Ragatz can be found all over the United States and in several foreign countries, teaching and playing in churches and universities. Established by the Indiana University Alumni Association, the Indiana Organists United is an alumni club for graduates of the IU Organ Department. The IOU has established the Oswald G. Ragatz Distinguished Alumni Award that has been presented at the biennial reunion of the Indiana Organists United. Organ alumni who have received the OGRDAA honor are William Entriken and Herndon Spillman in 2006, and Peter Richard Conte and Jesse Eschbach in 2008.

In October 2008, at the age of 91, "Ozzie" made the move from Bloomington, Indiana to live near family members in the Minneapolis area. Before the move, I enjoyed the chance to visit with Dr. Ragatz in his home in Bloomington. Full of stories and anecdotes, as always, he recounted concert escapades throughout his forty years of concertizing across the United States. What a joy it was to listen as Dr. Ragatz relived these performances. The humorous tales of "Those Green Pastures" provide a candid review of his life in the "not-so-fast" lane as a concert organist from the 1940s to the 1980s.

—David K. Lamb

Oswald Ragatz with former students: David Lamb and Aline Otten

Glamour

Just look at the typical shelves in your drugstore or grocery and take note of the proliferation of magazines dealing with the lives of our contemporary stars—Hollywood, TV, the Broadway stage, professional sports, or almost any wanna-be who reports some event in his or her recent life, preferably titillating. On the way past the checkout counter, you may surreptiously pause to read the latest scandalous gossip in the tabloids. Let's face it, we are all to some degree or another voyeurs. So what *is* this all about? Well, it is our fascination with glamour, using the word in the broad sense of something being unusual, enticing, or provocative. Often the subjects in these articles are in some way or another in *The Arts*, and as such are clad in an aura of *glamour*. But just how real is this glamour?

I have spent a lifetime associated with and competing with world-renowned performers in the musical world, all the while hoping to convince "them," and myself, that an organist can indeed legitimately flourish in the area of *the arts*. But how did we get this way? First, one has to be born with an ego that can only be satisfied by communicating with people, from a stage, with brush and canvas, with the pen (well, word processor), or with a musical instrument. (Ah yes, or with a voice! Now there's the quintessential egoistic medium for expression!) Yes! Born with that ego, the desire for glamour.

Let me tell you about my need to create glamour at an early age. (Remember, I am using the word glamour in the broad sense.) At age five, near death with a very serious illness, I made myself totter out of bed and into the living room to play my little Christmas piece on the piano for relatives who had brought Christmas gifts. Three years later I went to some lengths to convince my third grade teacher that I could indeed play something on the piano for a grade-school assembly. After a few years had passed, I had become somewhat aware of what went on out there in the world of the performing arts, and I would imagine that I was already there. After practicing a piece on the piano, I'd slide off the bench and bow graciously to the imaginary audience as they acknowledged my efforts with thunderous applause. By the time I'd finished high school and was off to college, a few of these fantasies had indeed materialized into some reality, though hardly to thunderous applause. I was rapidly convincing myself that indeed I was becoming an important part of the world of *the arts*, musical arts. These green pastures on the other side of the fence, in spite of demanding and critical teachers, were looking greener and greener. And so it came to pass that I actually had a job teaching in a university and playing recitals (I didn't call them concerts yet, a matter of semantics) and was making a living doing what I had dreamed of doing ever since at age three when I banged on that toy piano in the play room.

But the imagined glamour now often seemed illusive. There were a number of peripheral courses I had to teach, not a few untalented and disinterested students to coach, students who didn't have that necessary over-developed ego that had to perform. And the instruments on which I was asked to play (for pay) were often appalling monstrosities of unbelievable inadequacy. But there was that applause after one had survived the torture of some miserable organ in Saint Something's in South Somewhere, Kansas. For a moment, as I had done when as a teenager I slid off the piano bench in our living room, I could slide off the organ bench and experience that ego satisfaction and could imagine that here indeed there was glamour.

The downside of glamour

It took experience and time to achieve some objectivity in all this. The adoring wife of one of my teachers once remarked that they never took vacation trips because sooner or later they knew they would be invited (paid) to play a concert at such and such a place. I assumed that that was what life would be in that future real world. It was shortly after my marriage that I took my wife with me to a recital somewhere. After she had spent two days in a boring hotel while I practiced on the unfamiliar instrument, we were at the recital, decked out, she in formal gown, and I, of course, in full dress tails. I played, then came the obligatory receiving line, and I heard an effusive lady greeting my wife, "It must be wonderful to be married to a man like that!" I would have been filled with inflated ego had I not looked at my wife's face at that moment, which exhibited boredom and actual distaste. Mary was herself a fine organist, and she well knew the work that had enabled that "wonderful man" to play that recital, and that he had forgotten to put out the trash before we left home two nights before, and that she could have played the program just as well if indeed not better. So much for adoring adulation! And it was shortly after that that I was gently informed by said wife that unless it was to some really neat place, where there was scenery, or friends, or shopping to take up the tedium during her husband's eight to twelve hours of final preparation practice, I could expect to make the trip alone. I was surprised but not offended or hurt. I fully understood the reasoning. Many of the recitals in those days were not in the glamour spots of the country, and anyway, I could now give my full attention to the matter at hand, i.e., preparing for a creditable performance, if my wife were not along.

With wry humor I often think of an episode that occurred early during our years in Bloomington. The world-famous organist from Paris, Marcel Dupré, was to play a concert on the organ in the IU auditorium. The organ was in a miserable state of disrepair. Dupré, accompanied by devoted wife, arrived by train from Chicago, exhausted from a three-month tour in the U.S. Mary and I took our guests to the auditorium to see the organ. After fifteen or more minutes on the organ bench, Dupré said in French to his wife, "I will not play. We go back to Chicago!" To which Madame, assuming that we yokels in the heartland of America wouldn't understand French, replied firmly, "PAPA, remember the check!" So much for the glamour of the *grand tour*, even for the great and famous.

This doesn't mean that all concertizing is best to be forgotten. *Au contraire*, although I have spent many a dark night in a hotel room hashing over my stupidity for having made such and such a mistake during a performance. André Watts, one of the foremost American pianists, a couple of years ago had a complete memory slip during a performance of a Brahms concerto with the IU Philharmonic. The orchestra had to stop, and Mr. Watts went to the conductor's podium to look at the score before the concert could resume. He was so humiliated that he didn't even show up at the party/reception given for him afterwards. Now let's hear it for *glamour*, and for ego satisfaction! I once heard the late great tenor of the Metropolitan Opera, Lawrence Tibbett, during a concert in Denver Civic Auditorium, crack badly on a high note. After finishing the aria, he instructed the accompanist to play it again, he got to the

Indiana University Oswald G. Ragatz Distinguished Alumni Award 2006 (l to r): Marilyn Keiser, Bill Entriken, Oswald Ragatz, Herndon Spillman, & Larry Smith

same high note, and he cracked again. As I said, let's hear it for glamour. I'll bet he had a few shots of good French wine back at the hotel that night.

Oswald Ragatz, organ technician

I doubt that, other than vocalists, any other performers in the musical world have to put up with as many variables and hazards as does a concertizing organist. In the first place, there are tremendous differences in the instruments one is expected to perform on. Organs vary from modest two-manual instruments to huge instruments of four or five manuals. There is no standardization of console arrangements, how the stops are arranged, what mechanical aids are available, configuration of console vis-à-vis the bench, flat or concave pedalboard, even the range of the keyboards—61 keys on most American instruments and 32 pedals to only 56 keys and 30 pedals on many European organs. The voicing of the stops varies greatly from one builder to another. Even more important is the basic tonal concept used by the builder—early 20th-century Romantic, French or German neo-Baroque, American "eclectic," and whether electric or mechanical action. Is the organ in good repair and tuning, or will the performer have to risk life and limb to climb around in the pipe chambers to spot tune, fix a cipher, or what not? Glamour? Survival is a more realistic term. A few examples of some of this will follow.

Early in my days of playing for a fee (a very low fee), the embryonic management service of the School of Music booked me to play a program for an exclusive club group of some sort in a town in northern Indiana. I wasn't playing music of much consequence, but I did have to prepare it on the organ to be used, a miserable, antiquated disaster. I kept having major mechanical problems with the key action, and eventually I obtained a screwdriver from the custodian and indeed thought I had fixed the problem. Came the evening, the seventy-five or more guests in full dress swished up from their banquet in the basement. I started to play; oops, my "fix" of the afternoon hadn't held. I slipped off the bench, plaintively asking if someone could find me a screwdriver. Miraculously a screwdriver was located, while the audience sat in embarrassed silence. (I should have made small talk or told jokes or something, but I didn't have that much aplomb at that point in my life.) Having figured out the problem in the afternoon, I was able to quickly open the console case, poke around inside at whatever it was that needed to be poked, played a chord or two just to see if indeed I had fixed the problem (which I had). At that point the bejeweled audience rose from their stunned silence, and I received a standing ovation. Well, it wasn't just as I had dreamed it would be in my teenage musings, but we take what we can get, and I finished the program in glory.

It was a few years later and the scene was a big, rather new Presbyterian church in South Bend and a good three-manual organ. But the gremlins were at work. Halfway through the program, the organ suddenly ceased to function, no sound, no mechanics, nothing. The lights were still on in the church, and I could hear the blower motor growling away somewhere in the basement, so it was not an outside power failure. My instinct told me it could be only one thing—the generator that provides low-voltage current for the mechanical portion of the instrument must not be functioning. This promised to be more than a simple screwdriver fix. But I was cool. "We'll have to take a brief intermission while I check out the generator, and if I can't fix it, we will reconvene in the chapel down the corridor where there is smaller chapel organ." A hasty trip to the blower room in the basement revealed that the belt from the blower motor to the low-voltage generator had indeed broken, and no amount of tinkering on my part would repair it. So it's back up to the chapel, the audience (audiences at organ recitals are seldom very large!) and soloist settle themselves, and I play my last piece, a big French toccata as I remember, on a seven-rank, two-manual organ. I hoped my listeners were impressed; I was just bored by the episode.

Over the years there were other mechanical problems—some small, some very vexing. I was playing one of the featured recitals for a regional convention of the American Guild of Organists in Knoxville, Tennessee, on a fairly large instrument (but not a new organ by any means). The combination action was completely inoperable. Although it was a formidable program, being played for an important convention, I had to make all stop changes manually, grabbing stop knobs right and left as best I could, or just using the crescendo pedal.

Playing the dedicatory recital on a new organ in a church up the river above Milwaukee, the combination action on one or two of the manuals ceased to work a couple of hours before recital time. I knew the workings of this particular make of organ, and I was still tinkering with the innards of the console when the audience began to arrive. Ciphers are endemic. This is very likely to happen with a new instrument, since there are bits of sawdust still in the reservoirs. Suddenly in the middle of some piece one is playing, a pipe will start to sound and can't be shut off from the console. Depending on the type of action, this may be taken care of by a torturous trip inside the organ proper—locating the sounding pipe, one removes the mechanism that operates the pallet, blows out the offending moth, and returns to continue the program. Or maybe one just pulls the pipe out of the pipe rack, and that pitch on that stop is dead. Now that is not fun, especially when it is in the middle of the performance.

. . . Or not

So far I've recalled situations when I was able to control the problems one way or another. But how about that church in Greenwood, South Carolina? During my practice that afternoon before the recital, a trumpet pipe went way out of tune. Normally one out-of-tune pipe is no big deal. This was a big deal, however, because the program was to open with *Trumpet Voluntary* by Henry Purcell, and that particular pipe was sounded often in the course of the work. I could tune it in a matter of minutes if I could get into the organ chamber. But the door was locked, and the custodian wouldn't open it for me. After loud protestations, I convinced him that he should call the Chairman of the Board of the church to get permission to let me into the chamber. But do you know what? The chairman declared that they didn't let anyone into the organ chamber but the service representative, and of course he was in Columbia. I'd been hired to come from Indiana to play this program, but I couldn't be trusted to make a simple tuning adjustment to their precious organ! I was furious, but anyway I played the *Trumpet Tune*, squawking pipe and all.

The struggle for practice time

Then there is the matter of practice time. As I mentioned earlier, the player must have at least eight hours with the instrument if possible before a performance. I was to play in the auditorium at the University of Minnesota. For some reason that I have forgotten, it was not possible to get to the organ the night before I was to play. I think my train was delayed by one of those Minnesota blizzards. (Remember trains?) But I was to have all day in the hall before I was to play in the evening. Ah, but when I arrived in the morning, lo and behold the Minneapolis Symphony was rehearsing on the stage, and when the orchestra finally cleared out about noon, the stage crew roared in to remove chairs, etc., setting the stage up for the evening concert. I went into a formidable program that night with about two hours practice on a big organ. Needless to say, I did not play well, and I did not get a good review in the paper the next morning. People arranging organ recitals just don't get it!

And the vagaries of weather . . .

But organ mechanics and bad tuning were not the only enemies in one's career. There is the weather. I was doing my first nationally noted concert at the December meeting of the Deans and Regents of the American Guild of Organists, held that year in New York City. Mary was going to go with me, since it was in New York, so we unwisely drove. We had barely left Bloomington when a blizzard set in. It followed us all the way to New York, laying 29 inches on the city by the time we got there. We were staying at the Biltmore and managed to find a garage for the car in the vicinity. But the city was shut down—no cabs, no cars, nothing. I supposed the subways were running, but they wouldn't take me to where I had to go, namely upper Fifth Avenue to Temple Emanu-el, probably the most important synagogue in the city. I trudged on foot up Park Avenue and over to Fifth Avenue for two or three days to practice on the splendid, very large organ. After all that, there was a sparse attendance at the conclave. Usually the Guild officers come from all over the country to these biennial meetings, but not that year to a city shut down by the worst snowstorm in years. But I did get a number of good dates for the next season because of the exposure.

In all fairness I should point out that the city with its myriad Christmas lights sparkling in the snow was spectacular, but that wasn't quite the point of this safari. A few years later I was again invited to perform for the same big meeting, this time in Chicago. And I would play in Rockefeller Chapel on the campus of the University of Chicago. But would you believe that 23 inches of snow awaited us in Chicago this time, with similar results on the attendance!? Both times I played very well, but big deal! There was no

Dr. Oswald G. Ragatz at the console of the 4/86 Schantz in the I.U. Auditorium at the time of his retirement from the I.U. School of Music in 1983

Dr. and Mrs. Oswald G. Ragatz. The late Mrs. Ragatz was the first organ graduate of the Indiana University School of Music.

cheering throng to be bowled over by my prowess. (But I did get a splendid review in the national journals.)

And sartorial difficulties

Matters of clothing can interfere with one's aplomb. In the middle of playing the feature piece of a dedication concert of a big new organ in Dallas, the collar button of my dress shirt popped loose. And there was the time in Bloomington, when I had just settled myself on the bench after what I hoped had been a gracious entrance on stage and was checking stops, pedalboard etc., when I saw that my trousers were unzipped. This necessitated my slithering back off stage so that I could adjust my clothing—and my aplomb.

And speaking of aplomb, there was that time in Seoul, Korea. I was playing the Copland concerto with the Korean National Philharmonic. Just before I was to go out on the stage, someone handed me a thick business-sized envelope. With a quick glance I determined that it was filled with American currency. Normally one is discreetly given a check either before or after a concert, or the check is mailed to a manager. But not in Korea! I'm in full dress, of course, and the breast pocket of the coat is small and at an angle. Should I leave several thousand dollars in cash on a chair back stage? Well, no. Should I carry the envelope with me as I make the grand entrance and then lay it ostentatiously on top of the console? Well, no. So the envelope is jammed into the small breast pocket, I walk very stiffly on stage, and take my bow with hand firmly pressed to my chest (over the bulging pocket). This operation, of course, had to be repeated at the post-performance bow, which because I was in Korea I thought should be particularly low. I hoped that the audience figured that my hand over my heart was expressing obeisance to Korea, or to Copland, or to St. Cecilia. Why I was paid in soiled American currency I will never know. Maybe it was scrounged from the American military on the DMZ. I spent the remaining time in Korea with the money pinned inside my suit breast pocket, scared to death that I'd be robbed at the next corner.

By now I was no longer the "brilliant, young performer"—I'm quoting from a publicity brochure put out by my manager. I was now having to settle for being a "well-known university professor," with a quote from the IU Press cover on my method book. One gets one's jollies wherever one can.

. . . among others

But the biggest hazard of all is human error, especially when compounded by unavoidable circumstances. Consider Drury College in Springfield, Missouri. The professor of organ at Drury was short, so the organ bench was cut low. I have long legs and need a high bench. The bench was not adjustable, but no problem—I thought. I carry four inch-thick, foot-long slabs of wood that could be put under the bench supports to raise it higher. Over the years I've done this sort of thing dozens of times in similar situations. But this time I must have not been careful. In the middle of my biggest number, having built up to a grand climax, I allowed myself some theatrical histrionics, throwing my shoulders back vigorously. But too vigorously as it turned out! The bench slipped back just enough to cause the two boards to slip sideways. The bench tipped backwards precariously. I am still holding on to the big dramatic chord all the while trying to figure out how in the world I could reach down and slip the boards back in place while I'm still sitting on the bench, which of course was impossible. Nothing to do but get off the bench without falling flat, readjust the boards, slide back on the bench and go on, big dramatic moment of music shot to hell.

In spite of this *faux pas*, I was invited to play again at Drury several years later, and Drury got its revenge. The main line of the Missouri Central railroad crosses through the Drury campus, going quite near the auditorium where I was playing. I had just begun to play the first of a group of several quiet Bach chorale preludes when a blatant diesel horn announced the approach of a train, a freight train it was, and it must have had a hundred cars. The organ was completely drowned out by the clatter of freight cars. There was nothing to do but stop and wait—and wait—and wait—until the train had passed.

I must add that I got one more chance in Springfield. The last concert I played after I had retired was in a fine large church on an excellent big organ. I played the way an old pro should play after over forty years in the racket—excuse me!, in the profession. A big round of applause, much adulation at the reception afterwards, etc. Ah, glamour! What a way to conclude the concert career! But not always. Consider the following tales.

Life as a star

The University of Pittsburgh has a beautiful Gothic chapel on campus, given by the Heinz family. An impressive organ, given by an elderly Mrs. Heinz, was being installed in the chapel. The instrument consisted of two organs, a large three-manual instrument in the chancel and a two-manual Baroque organ in the balcony, which could be played separately by an organist at its own console, or from the big chancel organ—a complicated wiring maneuver. My wife Mary and I had been engaged to pay the auspicious dedication recital.

We had resurrected some music by an eighteenth-century Spanish composer actually composed for two organs. (Spanish cathedrals often had dual organs, one on each side of the chancel.) Mary and I went to Pittsburgh several days before we were to play, which was fortunate because the Möller organ company was still working to get the complicated wiring worked out. Much of our planned practice time was taken up with technicians' efforts to stop the music being played on the balcony organ from also sounding on the chancel organ.

The night finally came, the chapel was packed with the musical and industrial elite of the city. I was ready to begin the concert when an usher came rushing up to the console to say that we had to wait because Mrs. Heinz hadn't yet arrived. So we waited, and waited, and after a half hour while the audience rustled impatiently, a great flurry was heard and the donor, Mrs. Heinz, swept in. So I finally played my opening group, Mary played her group of Baroque pieces, on the balcony organ, and we got through the antiphonal Spanish numbers, although the wiring was still not right. I had to remember not to use the top manual of my console because it would also play the balcony organ. I finished the program with a couple of big French numbers, with, I thought, a burst of glory.

The audience stood in obeisance as Mrs. Heinz was ushered out, followed by the throng of admiring citizens. Mary and I changed our shoes, the chapel emptied, we awaited someone to come greet us and take us to the reception that was to be at the home of the University President. But no one came, and the chapel was empty, and lights were being dimmed. Fortunately, the band director, whose office was somewhere in the bowels of the building, came through and rescued us. He drove us to the President's mansion.

There was much hubbub from inside, and we were admitted by a liveried servant who directed us to the cloakroom. We wandered into the drawing room, no one greeted us, a lot of people were in formal dress so our clothing didn't make us conspicuous. At the far end of the room, Mrs. Heinz was grandly holding court as she received congratulations on her great gift to the university. Finally one of the men who had arranged for Mary and me to come saw us and wandered over, indicating that he thought one of the others had met us after the concert. Well, Mrs. Heinz stole *that* show. After a glass of punch, we indicated to one of our "hosts" that we were tired and wanted to go back to our hotel. I was furious. I don't really know what Mary felt. She hadn't wanted to do the concert in the first place. I had cajoled. So as far as the Ragatzes were concerned, glamour did *not* reign in Pittsburgh that night!

But I can't stop before relating one more horrendous event. This is the most unbelievable event of my whole forty-five year career as a concert organist. And this time things turned out very well indeed, but oh my, a lot transpired en route to the forum—read on!

The American Guild of Organists has a biennial convention in some major city in June. Being invited to be a recitalist at

Indiana University Oswald G. Ragatz Distinguished Alumni Award 2008 (l to r) first row: Peter Richard Conte, Oswald Ragatz, & Jesse Eschbach; second row: Christopher Young, Marilyn Keiser, & Larry Smith

one of these events is the highest honor an organist can receive. Between 1,500 and 2,000 members of the profession from the United States and Canada and even from Europe attend the four-day events. It was 1956, and the convention was in New York City when I got the bid. I was to play at St. James' on Madison Avenue on a large, new Möller instrument. Pipes were still being installed when I arrived, I thought for practice, the day before I was to play. But the builders did clear out at five o'clock, and I was able to start to work. Mary and I were staying with very good friends, Mary and Robert Baker, who lived in a brownstone in Brooklyn. Bob Baker, along with Virgil Fox, was co-chairman of the whole event, a taxing and stressful job including, among many other things, arranging a concert in the NYU stadium with the New York Philharmonic and two organists playing concertos. The Bakers and my wife Mary left me at St. James' for a long evening of practice while they went on to the stadium concert.

I was picked up by them after the stadium concert, probably after 11 o'clock. I had had no food since lunch, so the Bakers gave me a key to their brownstone and dropped us off at a steak house near the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn. We would get a cab to the Bakers after we had eaten. It was well past midnight when we arrived at the brownstone and confidently inserted the key into the front door lock. But alas, clunk! In his great fatigue Bob Baker had put on the burglar chain when he locked up for the night. There was nothing to do but ring the doorbell. We rang, and we rang, and we rang. No answer! It turned out that they had a big fan running in their bedroom and couldn't hear the bell. Even the neighbors in the adjoining brownstone had heard the bell, we later understood.

So what to do? Mary had a metal nail file in her purse, and I was able to get my hand around the door. I actually managed to remove the screws from the mount holding the chain. Voila! We opened the door and stepped into the little vestibule. But there was another door into the house proper, and of course, another chain! This time I wasn't able to maneuver the nail file; the mount was varnished in. So now what to do? It is past one o'clock.

We left a note to the Bakers stuck under the door and walked several blocks to a thoroughfare, where we were fortunate enough to catch a cab back to the St. George Hotel. Looking very fatigued and not a little disheveled, and with no luggage, we checked in. The skeptical desk clerk insisted that we pay in advance. All but one of our traveler's checks were back at the Bakers', but my one check would cover. I signed it and handed it to the clerk, who refused to accept it because in my fatigue I had penned in the wrong date. So now it was scrounge through pockets and Mary's purse to scrape up enough change to get us a small, very hot room with a small electric fan mounted up in the corner. We assumed that it was a room reserved for the "hot pillow trade." No toothbrush, no sleepwear, exhausted and full of anxiety, we fell into the bed and actually slept until 7 am.

At that point we were awakened by the sound of sirens and fire trucks that were arriving to extinguish a major conflagration in a warehouse across the street from the hotel. Shortly thereafter a phone call came from a contrite Robert Baker, and we were soon ingesting breakfast in the Baker dining room.

But it doesn't stop there. My good suit hadn't come back to the Bakers' from the cleaners as promised, but we must be driven back to Manhattan and up to St. James' for my last run-through of my program that was scheduled for 3 o'clock. An hour before I was to play, I was sitting in a sort of cubicle in a little cleaning shop near the church when who should walk in but my teacher from Eastman days. I had no pants on, of course. Said trousers were from my wedding suit of twelve or more years before, and they definitely showed their age, to say nothing of the wear and tear of a car trip from Indiana and eight hours on the St. James' organ bench.

So there followed the most important concert of my life, played in a big New York church with every seat filled, and my most demanding and intimidating former teacher somewhere in the midst, along with most of the prominent organists of the country.

And wonder of wonders, I played marvelously. I'd been too involved with the crises of the preceding 24 hours to get stage fright. I even got a big round of applause after one piece, the only applause of the whole convention. (People, even organists, didn't applaud in a church in those days.) Was it worth the struggle and tension? Glamour was slowly arriving, but we had made it just in time, so, yes, it was worth it; my career was launched. (Not an especially high trajectory, but a trajectory followed for the next forty years or so.)

This exposé has been a very distorted report of my life in the not-so-fast lane. These crises are from a handful of several hundred performances, some ordinary, a few possibly notable. And I finally discovered that there was a lot more to life than playing organs here and there. But to recap my introductory remarks: Things are often not as glamorous as they appear to the outsider. Did I prove my point? ■

Oswald G. Ragatz served as Professor of Organ and Chairman of the organ department at the School of Music at Indiana University from 1942–1983. Sadly, Mrs. Ragatz passed away in 1998 after a long illness. In recent years, Dr. Ragatz has written and published two mystery novels, Reunion With Murder *and* Murder Twice Two, *and his organ method book,* Organ Technique—a Basic Course of Study, *is in its fourth edition. His article, "Celebrating a milestone birthday: 'Guardian Angel,'" appeared in the April 2008 issue of* The Diapason.

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