

GOOD Vibrations

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND CHAPTER OF THE PIANO TECHNICIAN'S GUILD, INC.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wade Johnson, RPT

Your Chapter's Executive Board, meeting in early August, mapped out good programs for our fall meetings but also took a further look at questions of changing the regular time or place of Chapter meetings — following up on discussions from last spring. There seems to be a clear majority of members in favor of staying with Thursday and with Avery Piano. For September, we are sticking with the 7:00 p.m. starting time — Prov. Performing Arts Center boxoffice says nothing is on, that night — but the Executive Board is recommending that beginning in October we change the regular meeting time to 6:30 p.m., to give our members a little edge on the parking situation on nights when PPAC has a show. At the September meeting, we should vote on this time as a change in the Standing Rules; and we should discuss whether it affects our supper plans on meeting nights. I'm hoping those of us who want to meet for supper could simply do so at 5 p.m. instead of 5:15.

Hoping your summer was good, like mine...Hats off to the Renners for hosting a delightful, but sparsely attended, Chapter summer picnic at their beautiful place in Portsmouth. Hoping to see you on September 20!

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Inventor of New Key-Leveling System will be here to demonstrate it! - Christopher Rawson, RPT

He handed me one of the tabs at the convention in Kansas City, and followed up with a phone call after I got home. And to make a long story short, Chris Rawson, RPT of the Vermont Chapter has volunteered to be at our September 20 meeting to show us his new time-saving system for leveling piano keys and keeping them level. It appears briefly on page 8 of the July 2007 issue of the *PT Journal*. Chris, an enterprising young graduate of the University of Western Ontario piano technology program, says he's getting orders from all over the world for his new key-leveling tabs. Come and see for yourself how they work!

SEPTEMBER 2007

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Business Mtg

&

Technical

Sept 20, 2007

7:00 pm

Meeting at
Avery Piano Co.
256 Weybosset St.
Providence, RI

Remember to join us for dinner
5:15 Trinity Brew House before the
meeting. Trinity Brew House is at
186 Fountain Street on the corner
of Empire Street.

Ivory Facts and Figures

by Edith DeForest

from *The Keybed, The newsletter of the Connecticut Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild*

An elephant tusk is merely a large, curved incisor. Tusks vary greatly in size. The largest tusks are to be found in Uganda. The record ivory tusk known to come from an East African elephant is in the Natural Museum of South Kensington, weight 226 pounds; length 10 feet 2.5 inches. Years ago, prime tusks averaged about 90 pounds. More recently, an average of 55 pounds was considered good.

The ivory tusks are from freshly killed elephants. Licenses are issued to a number of hunters in districts where the elephants are in abundance and do considerable damage to the native crops. Those elephants are shot by hunters and the tusks turned over to the Game Department. When the hunter brings the tusk to the Game Dept., it is identified by burning an initial and number into it. When the tusk is sold by the Game Dept. at public auction, the license fee is deducted, and the balance goes to the hunter, Dead ivory, or that which is found on the ground, is of inferior quality and very brittle.

Ivory is of two types: hard and soft. Hard ivory comes from India. Soft ivory, used for making piano keys, comes from Africa. The softest and best quality of ivory tusks was imported to the U.S., where Pratt, Read, and Co. of Ivoryton, CT was the largest buyer and manufacturer.

In 1884, three quarters of the ivory exported from Zanzibar was sent to Deep River and Essex, CT, where it was used primarily for the manufacturing of keyboards. It has been estimated that 30,000 elephants were killed between 1905 and 1912 to supply these factories. A 70 pound tusk would supply ivory for about 45 keyboards. Plastic keytops have been around since about 1958.


The entire tusk was utilized. The first process in the making of piano keys is the "junking" of the tusk into four-inch lengths. The blocks are then marked for the parting and blocking in order to have the grain in the heads and tails match, and also to get an equal number of heads and tails from each tusk. The blocks are slit into keytops, each tusk being kept by itself through each process until it is laid on the keyboard. The newly-cut keys are thoroughly dried and then bleached in a specially prepared bleach water. They are then dried in the glass bleach houses.

Odd-shaped pieces left over after the keys were cut were used to make trinkets of vari-kinds. Even the ivory dust was used - sold as a fertilizer.

Library

The chapter **library** has a large selection of books, pamphlets and videos about piano technology & history; excellent resources to prepare for **RPT exams**, plus items of interest to all piano techs. Contact librarian Joyce Gindra (capetuner@att.net) to **borrow** or **donate** items. The library **catalog** is on the website (RI-PTG.org).

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Upcoming Meeting Dates:

September 20 – Rawson Key-leveling Tabs: The Cost Effective Solution To A Very Old Problem - Christopher R. Rawson, RPT

October 18 – Debbie Cyr, RPT - Lyres, Posts & Pedals

November 15 – David Dragone - guest speaker

December – No Meeting



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