

THE SOONER TUNER  
Newsletter of The Oklahoma Chapter 731 of the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.  
MAY 2004

COMING EVENTS:

MAY – The next meeting of the PTG will be held on Thursday, May 20 at 8:30 AM at the home of David and Barbara Bonham located at 10717 Eastlake Circle in Oklahoma City. Election of officers for the coming year will be held at this meeting. Don Ekonen, who is a local violinmaker, will present the technical. He will give a demonstration on building a violin. If you need directions, please call David or Barbara at 721-0566. Mr. Ekonen has won many national awards for his violins. He is the father of Barbara Bonham.

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WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE?

Gratitude! Attitude! If we don't have an attitude of gratitude then we miss the whole ideal of life. I would like to express my gratitude for each and every individual who contributes to our very small and humble Guild. I also express my gratitude for those who feel they are way and far above the Guild. Both attitudes contribute and are a driving force toward the ideal. May your hammer fit tight on the pins!

Ben Davis, RPT  
Luther, Oklahoma

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FEED YOUR FAITH AND YOUR DOUBTS WILL STARVE TO DEATH.

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CALLBACKS

There is this general concept I entertain called "old activity" and "new activity". The gist is as follows:

I usually make an effort to notate all services performed on the invoice for each visit to a piano. Then if there is a callback, the problem either falls under the categories of "old activity" (what is on any previous invoice), or it falls under "new activity" (not on any previous invoice).

If it falls under "old activity" I am accountable.

If it falls under "new activity" the customer is accountable. There is plenty of room to maneuver under "new activity", but little to none under "old activity."

Keith McGavern, RPT  
Shawnee, Oklahoma

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"THE PIANO WAS A GIFT"

Many times over the past few years I have had conversations with clients about pianos they have inherited or received as gifts. No matter how bad the pianos are, some of these people are very attached to them. We, as technicians, need to be sensitive in these situations and help the receivers of these “gifts” think through their options and explore their sometimes complex and conflicting feelings.

In some cases I simply explain what could be done to improve the piano and then describe what the final product is likely to be in objective terms and in fair market value. For example, “Your grandmother’s old upright might cost \$5,000 to \$7,000 to completely restore, after which time you might be able to sell it for \$1,500.” But, of course, resale is not usually relevant and I would speak to the sentimental value, the history and uniqueness, and the great satisfaction of seeing the restored heirloom back in use.

As I have matured and grown more bold and (I hope) sensitive to people’s thinking about such matters, I have found myself addressing the spirit of the original purchase or gift. One woman in particular comes to mind. Her father had scrimped and saved for several years to buy her a baby grand when she was eighteen. Thirty-five years later it was in need of rebuilding, but was not a reasonable candidate for it. I gradually led up to asking her (though NOT in these words), “What would your (deceased) father say if he were here today? Would he want you to preserve this poor piano and show your appreciation and loyalty to him and his gift that way – or would he want you to receive his truer gift, which was for you to have the best possible instrument that you or he could afford to pursue your love of music? If trading this unresponsive and tonally deficient piano in on a good grand is in your budget and it would inspire you to play again, which path seems more in tune with the original gift?”

I don’t offer this as a formula to influence future clients, but rather to share a meaningful experience I had with one client, and perhaps to stimulate others out there to share other such challenging encounters.

David Bonham, RPT  
Oklahoma City, OK

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TAKE YOUR WORK SERIOUSLY, BUT YOURSELF, NOT AT ALL.

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THE MUFFLER

A blonde got a dent in her car and took it in to the repair shop. The repairman, noticing that the woman was a blonde, decided to have a wee bit of fun. So he told her that all she had to do was to take the car home and blow in the tailpipe until the dent popped itself out. After 15 minutes of blowing into the tailpipe, the blonde’s blonde friend came over and asked what she was doing.

I’m trying to pop out this dent, but it’s not really working.” “Duh. You have to roll up the windows first.”

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MIXED BAG – CUTTING A CUSTOMER LOOSE & LOYALTY

It certainly takes courage to do this, but if other tuner-technicians are in the area, it could be the most professional thing to do. It is for certain some customers don’t worry about loyalty to a particular individual,

group or company. However, as a customer myself, I shop around until I find what it is I'm looking for in a product, services, etc. The loyalty I give begins when my needs are met and ends when they are not. I expect no less and no more from the customers I serve.

Keith McGavern, RPT  
Shawnee, OK

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SORROW LOOKS BACK, WORRY LOOKS AROUND AND FAITH LOOKS UP...

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What a delight it was to see so many new faces at our April meeting. I think that TSA generated a lot of enthusiasm and interest among the technicians in this area. I hope this group continues to grow and to support each other. I look forward to seeing all of you at the meeting next week.

Barbara Bonham

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President – Bob Scheer  
Vice President – Ben Davis  
Secretary – Keith McGavern  
Treasurer – Gary Bruce  
Newsletter Editor – Barbara Bonham

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