

The Sooner Tuner
Official Newsletter of the Oklahoma Chapter
of the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.
January 2007 Edition

President's Message

Someone once said "You can tell a person's true character by the way they treat those that they don't have to be nice to", or something similar.

A couple of years ago, at the Ptg Convention, I met Mike Callahan. Mike makes and sells his handmade tuning levers. I was immediately impressed, not only by the quality of his craftsmanship, but also by his attitude and the pride he obviously took in his display of tools.

I purchased one of his levers and was very pleased. Unfortunately, however, about a year later it broke while tuning a spinet piano. Although I had been using this hammer for a year, and there was no written or implied warranty, I decided to call him and see if I could buy another one. Actually, I didn't expect him to replace it for free, but I hoped he might make me a "deal" on another one.

At that point, he could have told me something like, "Sorry Bob, You've had it for a year, there's no warranty-- Call someone who cares!"

In today's world, that's about what I would have expected to hear, but not the response that Mike gave me. He expressed regret that the lever had broken, and that if I would send it to him, he would repair or replace it. Later he called to say that he couldn't satisfactorily repair it, so he sent me a new one.

I have a great regard for this man's integrity. Although he probably lost money and time, taking care of the situation, it was more important to him to do the right thing. A satisfied customer is the best way to make any business grow, and certainly the best way to advertise.

I once read on an office wall that "The reason most businesses fail is due to poor attitude on the part of the management and employees." Something to think about.

I hope everyone had a great Christmas, Pat and I enjoyed having the Christmas party. Bob

Chapter Officers

President Bob Scheer
Vice President David Bonham
Secretary Nathan Sobel
Treasurer Gary Bruce
Newsletter Editors Norman Cantrell & Blaine Morris

Meeting Notice

The January Meeting will be held at the home of David and Barbara Bonham; 10717 N. Eastlake Circle in Oklahoma City. The meeting will begin at the usual time of 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 18th. The topic will be on Grand Damper Regulation. David will demonstrate on a Baldwin grand that was recently re-strung

using Arledge bass strings. Come hear the strings sound and find out how to quiet them down.

The February meeting is tentatively scheduled at Oklahoma Christian University on February 15th. The technical presentation will be by Bob Scheer on Tuning Stability and the Tools to Get There.

Norm's Noncents

I am always looking for material to include in the newsletter that is of a technical nature. Today I was provided with a situation that I will pass along that will hopefully be of use to some of you at least someday. I was called to tune a Kimball spinet manufactured in about 1963. The customer commented that the piano had a squeak in the pedal and the bass strings seemed to ring a bit. A little lubrication in the appropriate places and a couple of adjustments had the damper situation corrected. I noticed that it had a lot of lost motion and that the rubber grommets were hard and clicking in the forks at the ends of the keys. Kimball used the grommets with the square body that have an enclosed square nut that threads onto the drop wires for adjustment. I had never replaced a complete set before but as luck would have it I had a set in my supply box. I have replaced individual grommets of this type in the past but did not have a good technique for this repair.

Schaff does sell a tool called a Kimball Lost Motion Regulator for adjusting the special button on Kimball pianos. This is handy to know if the grommets are still pliable and if one has bothered to actually purchase this tool. Since my customer had grommets that resembled rock salt in texture and I did not have the nifty Schaff tool I was perplexed to come up with an efficient method for both the extraction of the existing grommets and the installation of the new ones. A call to Keith provided some needed information. There was no magic tool on the market for removing disintegrating 34 year old grommets. Keith suggested a trip to the auto parts store for a tool that might fit. Since I was pressed for time, I mulled over my options. That is when it occurred to me that I had a tool that fit small square shapes that would be perfect as a nut driver. I have a 4" long #2 star tip for tuning the high treble in grand pianos. A quick check confirmed that the small steel nut would fit perfectly into the tuning tip. All that was required was a quick squeeze with a pair of pliers to shatter the old rubber and reveal the square nut. This made removal a snap. The remaining old rubber was simply pried from the fork with pliers and removed from the threaded wire. I did place some newspaper on the carpet in front of the piano to catch the wayward rubber particles as they shattered.

I began installing the new grommets by hand as I did not have the official nifty Kimball Lost Motion Regulator. Many of the nuts seemed to bind on the threads a short distance from the top and my fingers were getting quite sore from the effort. I did manage to locate my Drop Lifter Action Button Regulator which is the tool for adjusting the wooden dowel type nuts on Aeolian spinets. I tried it to see if it would work and voila it did! By the time I was installing the grommets in the high treble I had also added a touch of Pro-Lube jell to the wires prior to installing the grommets which seemed to assist even further. I got all the grommets replaced and adjusted in about two and a quarter hours. I will probably work faster on the next job since I have now learned a valuable lesson.

By the way a quick tip for replacing the doughnut grommets on a Baldwin spinet is to simply pop the wires out of the forks in the keys and out of the slot where they connect to the wippen. Then simply slip the old grommet down and off and the new one up from the bottom. Install the wires back in place. If you do this there is very little adjusting of the nuts on the wires.

Norman Cantrell, RPT

Official Disclaimer

From the office of Dewie, Chetham and Howe

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