

THE SOONER TUNER

Newsletter of The Oklahoma Chapter 731 of the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.
March 2009

COMING EVENTS

March 19-22. Everyone is encouraged to go to the Central West Regional Conference in Wichita KS
<www.ptg.org/cwr>
Norman Cantrell will be one of the instructors. The lineup of people is pretty stunning really.
Bottom line, there won't be a PTG OKC meeting this month.
Hey, let's have one next month!

Thank You everyone, for all the prayer and support for my new grandson Zebediah. He is a 6 pounder now and may come home this next weekend.

Presidents Message:

Actually there isn't one but we know that Bob and several others are going to Wichita next weekend. I think it would be great to hear some of the highlights for those of us who cannot attend.

Dear Tech Talk:

I am in a bit of a pickle and I was hoping you might have some suggestions on how I might handle this situation: A few years ago I went for the first time to service an old Kimball grand. It was the typical piano past its prime, owned by a young family who hoped it would last long enough to see if the kids would stick with their lessons. We went over the options and realities, settling on a compromise of restringing the bass and some minor action work. At the time the tuning pins were holding reasonably well; I assured them this would give them the five or so years they needed to assess the family commitment. Returning this year for the annual service, a group of pins in the upper tenor lost all tension as soon as I touched them with the tuning hammer. Zing! Gone, with no torque left. For the most part the other pins are as they were but this group of 15 pins or so had lost it! There was the scent of furniture polish on the stretcher and I wonder if this area might have been sprayed I don't know for sure. Perhaps the block has arrived at that point of no return. What might be my options here? I feel responsible for following through on what I promised and the piano really isn't worth rebuilding. I'm afraid to soak the pins with CA glue; if there is silicone in the block, the glue might drive it elsewhere. Any suggestions to gain a tunable piano given this sketchy information?

The answer:

What experienced technician hasn't been faced with this scenario? Lucky (or wise) is the one who can walk away from this gig. What is the real end of the line for an instrument like this? Our contributors say that a qualifier should be put in place before any work is done. There can be no guarantees for patchy work on an old piano; you are kidding yourself and your customer to assure them of the longevity with the original parts or structure. But the deed has been done. Can it be fixed?

Show them with a torque wrench how much tension was there. A year later you've found that the tension is gone, so ask those questions about the furniture polish. If furniture polish was used, it would be very difficult

to get oversized pins not to be jumpy, but for those few pins, you would be willing to try to make this a tunable piano. Try driving the loose pins, stopping short of the coil making contact with the plate. I would think applying CA glue prior to driving the pins would increase the

efficacy without much risk. If this has already been done or proves ineffective, oversize pins would be your next option. In either case, when hammering on a pin, be sure to have a pinblock jack under the block to help prevent more delamination. Chances are one of those two options will buy you the time you promised originally. If they don't, good luck with trying to shim or epoxy the holes to a useable size. The price we pay for our ambition! Kudos to you for not avoiding the situation. Good luck and let us know how it turns out.

Mark Foss, RPT

"A prudent question is one half of wisdom.:
--Francis Bacon

Things I learned while fishing:

A while back I went to Blue River to engage in my favorite sport, fly fishing. I hiked in to the catch and release wilderness area with my backpack, fly rod and waders and started fishing for trout, basically having the place to myself. It was cold, wild, and beautiful and I was catching and releasing several nice fish. Around midday I came upon a couple about my age sitting on a big rock eating lunch. We talked fishing and the great outdoors for a while. Interesting people. They obviously were very successful people and each had about 2500 to 3000 dollars worth of gear apiece, including custom built rods. After quite a bit of conversation the man said to me "So, are you retired then?" "No." "I tune pianos," I said. Long uncomfortable silence. "Are you a professor then?" "No." "and you know those times when the shock of the question causes time to slow while your brain tries to process why this guy would ask such a question in front of God and everybody. Was it my spectacles hanging from my neck hooked on the lanyard with electrical tape? Was it my Tilley hat? Coming from a university town I began to remember the professors I knew. Personal hygiene was not particularly important and they looked like they slept in their clothes and had cats. Those were the tenured ones. Then there was the homeless guy at the cafe-- a couple tables over boldly pontificating where no man had pontificated before, arms flailing and spit flying on a subject he had never actually done, the groupies all around hanging on every word, no one touching their food. Someone leaned over to me and whispered "That's professor so and so from the university." "GEEZ" I blurt out. Then on main street almost every day there was this 40 something geeky looking guy on a bicycle in the middle of traffic in his own little world and as I pass, I make some snide comment and the Nigerian student with me says, "That's professor so and so from the university." "Gracious!" I blurt out, thinking "wonder what your parents are paying for your education in America?" Then I thought about the movie, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, where Jack Nicholson wanted to sneak the mental patients out of the hospital to get away from nurse ratchet and go deep sea fishing. Remember that? As they were getting on the boat he introduced them one by one as Doctor so and so from the hospital. As you looked at each one they did look rather intelligent. Then I thought of our PTG meetings and well, you know how those are. And those convention slash educational things we go to like the one you guys are going to next weekend. You look around the room and wonder what's really goin' on up there in those noggins and the similarity to the doctors on the boat, then it dawns on

me! There will always be comedy as long as there are professors, doctors, fly fishermen and piano tuners.
Thank God for comedy!

" I never drink water because of the disgusting things fish do in it.:
--W.C Fields

President – Bob Scheer
Vice President – David Bonham
Secretary – Jordan Bruce
Treasurer – Gary Bruce
Newsletter Editor – Blane Morris
[Oklahoma Chapter Website](#)

Cheers!

“All expression of opinion and all statements of supposed fact are published on the authority of the author as listed and are not to be regarded as expressing the view of this chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc. unless such statements or opinions have been adopted by the chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild, Inc.”
