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Musical oddities lure him

Los Altos man records elevators

By JIM WOOD

Roger Murray, 21, of Los Altos, prefers to ride elevators rather than walk stairs, but not because of the convenience. He likes to listen to elevators.

Murray said, "I make tape recordings of elevators because I'm a perfectionist when it comes to sound, and I like to record musical oddities.

"I record elevators. Mainly Otis elevators. I call it my collection of Otis-ana.

"I've collected 40 elevators on tapes—they have fantastic sounds. It really makes me mad when I see a movie and they simulate elevator sounds. I'm looking for the real thing.

"I take my recording equipment either to the motor room or the car of the elevator. I listen to see if it would sound good on tape. I specialize on elevators built between 1906 and 1920; they make more racket. But the new relay control centers of modern elevators make quite a zap. It sounds like maybe your sitting in an electric chair," he said.

MAKE RECORDING

"In the old ones I sit in the car and take a ride for five or 10 minutes and make a recording. The process of riding the object recorded reminded Murray of another tape.

"I think I'm the only person who has made a recording of the Santa Cruz roller coaster from inside the roller coaster while it was going. It took me eight trips around to make a good tape."

Murray recorded his first elevator on the Stanford campus. "It was built in 1912," he said. "I recorded it on July 3, 1960. I remember that date well. It was also the day I first recorded the band organ at the Merner Lumber and Hardware Co."

REASSEMBLED

Murray read a story in the Times about a band organ that was brought to the United States from Holland by Paul M. P. Merner of 1545 Edgewood Drive, Palo Alto. Murray recorded the organ, and this week he finished putting it back together after completely taking it apart five weeks ago.

He talked Merner into letting him repair the organ. "Merner is footing the bill," he said, "and so far we've spent about \$100. We've spent \$80 on glue alone."

The instrument is six feet high and about 15 feet long. It has 178 organ pipes, a bass drum, two wooden blocks, a snare drum, and a cymbal.

Merner replaced wooden and cardboard tubes with rubber and copper tubing and sealed the 400 to 500 valves, tubes, pipes, and bellows to preserve the air pressure required to run the organ. Except for the tuning, the job is about completed, he said.

MANY OTHERS

Murray has recorded and repaired other musical instruments, including a violana virtuoso. Murray said "it's a nicleodeon with a real violin inside which is played mechanically.

I've recorded Hooverlitzers, too," he said. "In Virginia City, Nevada, there are half a dozen custom built Wurlitzer orchestras. They had triangles, drums and pianos on them, but when we got behind the boards we found that every one of them was run by a vacuum cleaner."

It seems when the original vacuum mechanism broke down a vacuum cleaner was substituted, and it was always a Hoover. "Every time I put a nickle in, I heard the moan of the Hoover vacuum cleaner."

"You know, I hate driving," he said. "I've found out now that it is kind of necessary to drive to get around, but when I was 16 and kids were making hot rods, I was making tape recorders." He plans to sell his own tape recorders soon and a recording of the Merner band organ.

CO-FOUNDER

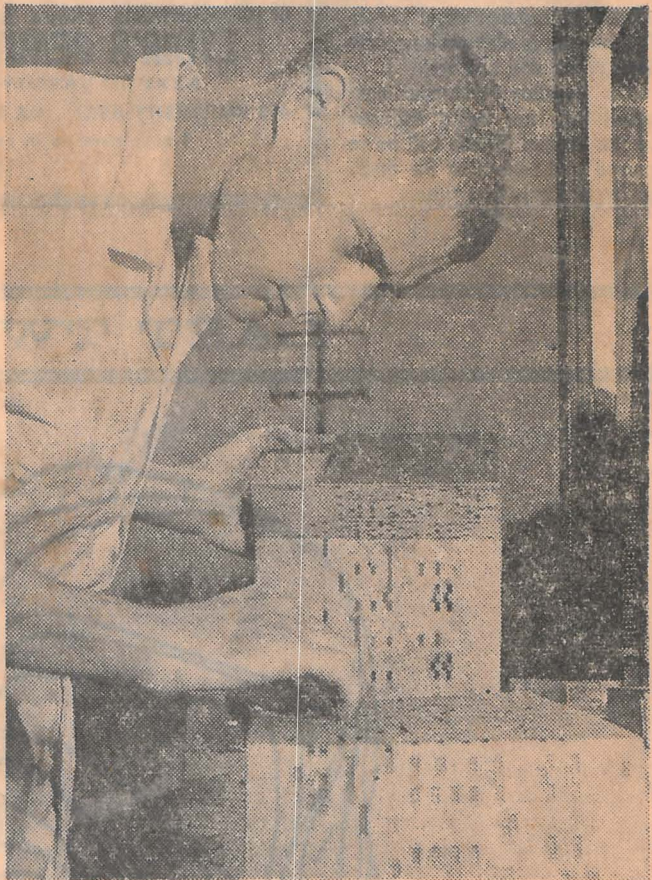
Murray was one of the founders of station KFRC at Foothill Junior College. His program, entitled musical oddities, consisted of organs and elevators and an hour program of the Foothill air conditioning system. "I'd like to do that again after I finish repairing the band organ. On that program we just sort of let our hair down."

Murray lives at 23 Arbuelo Drive in Los Altos.



LOS ALTAN RECORDS BAND ORGAN

Roger Murray recorded band organ on his hi-fidelity tape recorder.



MUSIC BOOKS

Roger Murray, 21, feeds cardboard sheet music into a Dutch band organ he rebuilt. The cardboard music works in the same manner as player piano rolls.