



# Agraffe Graffiti

**Newsletter of the Phoenix Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild**

## President's Message



Scott Helms, RPT

If you were to describe the purpose and workings of our organization to someone in another line of business, they would undoubtedly tell you you're crazy. After all, we are all entrepreneurs trying to grow, or at least maintain, our individual customer base. Why in the world would we meet monthly to give free advice and training to our competitors? Why do we pay dues to an organization which uses those funds to pay for, among other things, instruction in a craft that some of us have been doing professionally for decades? Why would I take the time to attend a technical session about something that I could do with my eyes closed?

I think the answer to these questions lies in the fact that we are first musicians. Maybe some of us don't play well (or at all), but we at least have a musical mind, and an appreciation for music. There is a different mindset among musical people. I think back to my days as a school band director, trying to teach kids that anybody who lags behind in their performance degrades the entire experience for everybody, musicians and audience alike. Even if we're talking about a solo performer as opposed to an ensemble setting, poor musicianship degrades the music itself. Musicians have a responsibility to themselves, the audience, their fellow performers, and ultimately the composer to perform as well as they possibly can. Isn't the same true for us as technicians? We as a group are responsible for the sound of pianos in homes, studios, churches, and concert halls. Little Suzy or Johnny can't learn to be musical if the instrument they're playing sounds like a xylophone. The best pianists in the valley can't create something of beauty on a piano that is poorly tuned. If every technician is competent and does good work, isn't the musical life of our community (and that includes us) enriched?

When you attend a chapter technical session that's dealing with a topic you already know, you are not wasting your time. First, everyone has a little different approach to almost every

task in this business, and even though you may have been doing that task for years, you still might learn a new trick to make the job easier, faster, or better. Secondly, we all have a vested interest in helping those who are just starting out. How many times have you followed somebody else's shoddy work and had to undo the damage before you could do your job? Wouldn't it be better if that person had known what they were doing? If you are well-versed in the topic of a technical session, you might have something to contribute to the discussion that would help those less experienced technicians learn the skill.

Finally, you never know when you might have to rely on your colleagues. Not only will you have raised the skill level of everyone attending the meeting, but you will have forged relationships that can last a lifetime and potentially help you out when you need it. I'm reminded of the help being offered by PTG members to Alice and Gary Miles after Gary's stroke. Those who have done piano work on Gary's behalf, visited them, sent cards, and contributed financially are only returning some of the support they've received from Gary and Alice over the years in both teaching and friendship. All of that happened because they have been vital participants in our organization. Most of us who attend meetings regularly have been able to rely on the colleagues we have met through PTG when we needed help. How many of us have borrowed a tool, asked advice, collaborated on a project, or obtained that part we forgot to order when we need it tomorrow morning? Our new chapter listserv email list makes it even easier to call on our fellow PTG members for all of these things. Is the availability of all those resources worth a couple of hours of your time on the first Monday of every month? You bet!

We might be "training the competition" through our participation in PTG, but if the piano playing public learns that technicians as a whole are competent, trustworthy, and professional, they'll be more likely to maintain their pianos regularly, and we all benefit from that!

October 2008

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**Our Newest Member ...  
We wish to welcome  
Billy Abbott to the  
Phoenix chapter!**



**President:**  
**Scott Helms, RPT**

**Vice President:**  
**G. Eliot Lee, RPT**

**Treasurer:**  
**Wendell Smock**

**Secretary & Newsletter Editor:**  
**Mark Purney, RPT**



Jim Coleman, Sr., RPT



Wes Flinn, RPT



Mark Purney, RPT

## Our Previous Meeting

During our September meeting, we voted to change our standard meeting time to 7:30PM to accommodate members with later work hours and longer travel times.

To assist Gary and Alice Miles during Gary's recovery, we approved a plan to waive their yearly dues. Half is covered by a program offered by the PTG Home Office, and the other half by the Phoenix Chapter.

Jim Coleman, Sr. led the technical session on Tuning Hammer Techniques. Wes Flinn provided an insightful look at the challenges of tuning and stability, and displayed his collection of tuning hammers and tips. A discussion of the "Physics of Tuning Pins" was presented by Mark Purney, along with a demonstration of the latest technology in carbon fiber and impact tuning hammers.



Michael Spreeman tries the carbon fiber tuning hammers



## Our Next Meeting

## Technical Session: Appraisals and Evaluations



Please Note the Time Change

**When:** Monday, October 6, **7:30 PM**  
**Where:** Arizona Piano  
4134 E. Wood St. Suite 200  
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Scott Helms, RPT will discuss appraisal and evaluation work. Performing this service with diligence and integrity is important to the customer, and to our reputations.

Also, a vote will be held on the use of chapter funds.

### A note from Alice Miles:

Thanks to each of you who have visited or sent cards to Gary and to those who have donated to his care. To those who have left messages, please understand it is all I can do to keep up with Gary, work, and family. One of these days I will return phone calls but it may not be soon. Gary moved to an assisted living group home where he will continue physical therapy on an out-patient basis. I wish this process could be faster but the brain has its own rate of healing and will not be rushed. Hope to see you all before too long.

If you'd like to visit Gary, he is at J&B Assisted Living, 6613 W. Pershing in Glendale (near 67<sup>th</sup> Ave & Thunderbird). If you are coming north on 67th turn east on Pershing to 6613. Since the middle of 67th is torn up, if you are coming south on 67th turn east one block north on Willow, go one block east, one block south to Pershing, west to 6613. Visiting hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (mid-day or early evening is best).

## Technical Notes: Insurance Appraisals (from the PTG Journal, April 1995 issue)

**Q:** David Vanderhoofen

What methods are used to determine the value of a piano for insurance purposes? I've recently had two requests for information concerning replacement or repair of pianos that were damaged in house fires. I am particularly interested in finding out if appraising a piano's worth is a service that many piano technicians routinely offer to insurance companies. Is there a difference between determining the market value of a piano and determining its replacement value?

**A:** Steve Brady

My experience is that insurance companies will sometimes contact a piano technician to provide an appraisal when there is dam-

age to a piano. When a piano has been in a fire, one must be very careful to allow for the possibility that damage from smoke and heat may actually be hidden, that is, it may not become obvious for several years. Excessive heat and humidity, both of which are usually present when a piano is in a fire situation, can compromise every glue joint in the instrument, and yet everything may well look fine when the piano is first examined. The point is that the piano's life expectancy may have been reduced, and this needs to be reflected in the appraisal of its value. I don't have any magic figure to plug into the formula, but perhaps a 20-to 40 percent reduction in value (taken from its normal appraised value) wouldn't be far off the mark.

There is a difference, for insurance purposes, between "market value" and "replacement value." Market value of a piano means what the actual, used instrument is worth right now, in its present condition. Replacement value usually means what a new piano of similar type, size, and quality would cost if you were to "total" the insured piano and replace it with a new one.

Homeowners insurance policies will specify whether the coverage is for replacement value or not. When you do an appraisal for insurance purposes, you should include both an "appraised value" and a replacement value."

(edited for length)

## Product Innovation: Rawson Key Leveling Tabs

While in Kansas City, I noticed that Kent Swafford's piano had some strange-looking tabs under the balance rail punchings. As an innovator in piano rebuilding, Kent prefers using the Rawson Key Leveling Tabs to traditional punchings. The tabs have a tapered, variable thickness, and an abrasive lower surface that keeps them in place on the balance rail. Key level is raised by pulling the tabs forward with a special tool.



From <http://www.key-leveling.com>: "Are you tired of spending hours removing keys and slitting punchings, pulling the action in and out, and then doing it all over again when the punchings settle? Have you

turned away clients because proper action regulation that includes key-leveling didn't fit into their budget? Do you feel clip on lead weights are slowing you down? When Rawson Key-leveling Tabs are installed, keys can be "pulled" up to exact level, without removing the action, or the keys. Flawless key-leveling can now be done in minutes instead of hours, on grand and upright pianos, without the expensive equipment that modern factories use. Also, when the balance punchings settle after a few months, you can now restore level, on site, in less than 15 minutes!"



Eliot Lee, RPT

## From the Editor



Our chapter is on the road to becoming one of the best in the PTG. We have a vision and a plan to offer more than ever to the membership, but the most important factor in making this plan a success is... YOU!

We all have something more to learn, and something to teach as well. If you have not participated in a while, you should know that you are truly missed. I challenge you to join us on Oct. 6. and make contact with your fellow technicians and friends, and meet those who have recently joined. The fun you will have can be habit-forming, but I promise there are no ill side-effects!



I would like to give a sneak preview to a new tool we will soon have at our disposal. This web-based series of maps will make it easy to organize carpooling. It will serve as a visual directory, with push pins that give the map location for each member, along with the member's address, phone and email information. I hope this can assist with collaboration, referrals and communication among Arizona technicians. This is a new way of visualizing our chapter, and I hope you will agree that it is a helpful and interesting addition for us. I expect to have this finished in early October.

**From the Treasurer's desk.**

**Expenses to date: \$121.80 for postage and Journal CDs for chapter use.**

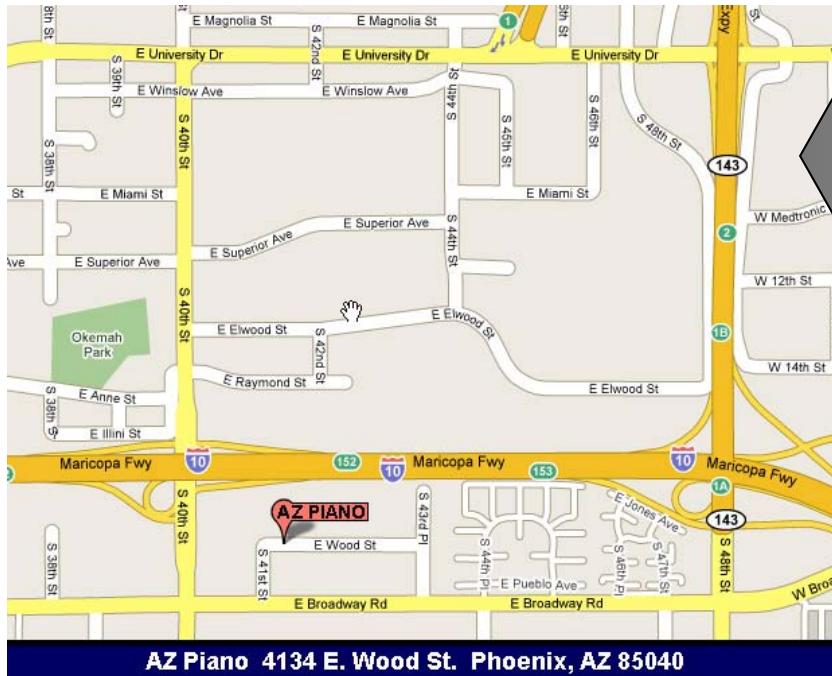
**Balance. \$2263.55. Savings: \$10,955.04**

**Wendell Smock**



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**AZ Piano 4134 E. Wood St. Phoenix, AZ 85040**

Map to our next meeting  
Monday, Oct. 6th at **7:30 PM**

AZ Piano  
4134 E. Wood St. Suite 200  
Phoenix, AX 85040



**PIANO  
TECHNICIANS  
GUILD**  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA CHAPTER

Phoenix PTG  
c/o Mark Purney  
3023 N. Sunaire Circle  
Mesa, AZ 85215

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