

# Agraffe Graffiti

Newsletter of the Phoenix Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

January 2009

## President's Message



Scott Helms, RPT

I started in the piano tuning business almost 11 years ago after getting "burned out" in my job as a middle school/high school band director. Like many other people who have taken on piano work as a second career, I had to start learning the craft

while I was still putting food on the table with my "day job". The few piano technicians in my area were either unwilling or too busy to take me on as an apprentice, so I decided to learn the basics through a correspondence course. I enrolled in the Randy Potter School of Piano Technology, which seemed to have received high marks among correspondence courses.

Randy's course allows the option of paying in installments, and if you choose that route, he sends you just a couple of chapters for each payment. I had procured an old beater upright, and I was SO anxious to try my hand at tuning it. Unfortunately, the chapter on setting the temperament didn't come until several payments later, and I was getting antsy. I have always considered myself to have very good aural skills in music (I taught undergraduate aural comprehension classes for years), so I decided I wasn't going to wait for that chapter. I had a good ear, dang it, and I could tune the whole piano on my own!

This is what is commonly referred to in education as the "hidden curriculum" – things we learn that are not taught directly by the teacher. Boy, did I learn my lesson! My uneducated attempt at piano tuning started with tuning one octave note-by-note chromatically up the scale. I'm not even sure I

used a pitch source! This could be referred to as the "yep, that sounds like a half step!" approach to aural tuning. Once I got that octave done, I spread it to the ends of the keyboard by tuning octaves (at least I had the right idea there). When I finished my "tuning" (no aural checks of course), I excitedly played a tune, and as you would expect, it was AWFUL!!

As it turns out, there's a REASON Randy doesn't send that particular chapter in the first shipment. He knows that there is a lot the piano tuning student needs to know before attempting to set a temperament. Randy is a good teacher, and I learned a lot from his course. I attended two week-long seminars he presented, and learned even more. The interesting thing about these seminars is that they were attended by technicians of all skill levels. Of course there were beginners there who still thought letoff & drop was something that happens after eating too much Mexican food, but there were also experienced technicians who still could learn something from Randy and his associates.

That's what can also happen at this year's Arizona State Seminar. Our instructor, Randy Potter, has something to offer everyone, from beginners to veteran technicians. Most of his classes for this seminar are business-oriented, an area that many of us tend to overlook in our zeal to learn more of the "nuts and bolts" aspect of our trade. But if you skip out on learning business skills, you might just be trying the business equivalent of tuning the piano without learning how to set the temperament. Come to the Arizona State Seminar and make your business practices as strong as your technical skills!

## Inside this issue:

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	1
PREVIOUS EVENT	2
NEXT EVENT: AZ STATE SEMINAR	2
ARTICLE: WEBSITES (RANDY POTTER)	3
FROM THE EDITOR: GOING HIGH-TECH	3
TREASURER'S REPORT	3

Arizona State  
Seminar Saturday  
Jan 10th, 2009  
Register by 12/31



PHOENIX, ARIZONA CHAPTER

### President:

**Scott Helms, RPT**

### Vice President:

**G. Eliot Lee, RPT**

### Treasurer:

**Wendell Smock**

### Secretary & Newsletter Editor:

**Mark Purney, RPT**

## December Gathering

Our yearly banquet on 12/1 was a great time, and there were even special gifts. Kevin Ramsey handed out a box full of "cue ball" tuning hammers that he designed, and we got to spend time with Gary and Alice again, too! *Photos courtesy of Eliot Lee*



## Our Next Event: AZ State Seminar with Randy Potter, RPT

**Saturday, Jan. 10th, 2009**  
**8AM at Phoenix College.**  
**Registration Due 12/31/08**  
**See [phoenixptg.org](http://phoenixptg.org) for**  
**brochure & details**

Randy has been tuning and servicing pianos for 32 years. He is the founder and director of the Randy Potter School of Piano Technology, which is the largest school training piano technicians in the world, and has students and graduates in over 80 countries. He is a frequent instructor at local, state, regional and national PTG conventions, and has taught at seminars in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia and Cuba.



Registration is \$35 and includes a catered lunch. A catered dinner will also be available for an additional \$10, and after dinner we will feature a jazz piano duo, Glenn and Ellen Brown. You may have heard them play after the A440 Jazz Band performance at the Anaheim Convention.

### ***Randy will be teaching:***

It's All About Jack

Baker's Dozen of Beginner's Boo-Boos

Why Did You Give the IRS an Extra \$10,000 Last April  
- and Are You Going to Do It Again Next Year?

If You Did Not Earn \$80,000 Last Year ... You Need to Attend This Class

How to Be A Mentor - How to Be An Apprentice

# Creating a Website That Works

by Randy Potter, RPT

## Who Cares About Web Sites?

With the expansion of the information age and the Internet, more and more piano technicians are getting web pages to promote their piano-service businesses. When approached with the idea many piano technicians think its "not for them," but once they get one they tell everyone they meet about it and recommend they get one, too.

## Why Have a Web Page?

The first reason to have a web page is to increase your tuning clientele. People can just look in the Yellow Pages to find a piano tuner, but people who enjoy surfing the web think its fun to look for new things. Several technicians I know make tuning appointments for regular clients via the net, and many of their clients originally found them through their web pages.

Another reason to have a web page is to educate current and new clients as to the services you offer. This can bring additional regulating and voicing work, humidity-control installations, rebuilding jobs, and other specialties you highlight on the page. Having a web page will give your piano-service business the appearance of being up-to-date.

## What Kind of a Web Page?

Should your page be plain, basic, simple? It only takes a little more time to make it pretty special. You can include color pictures showing you at work, shaping hammers, voicing, setting the dip. Action, or the appearance of action, is important. Before-and-after photos are a virtual necessity if you are highlighting your rebuilding services, and of course photos of pianos that are for sale are a necessity.

Sections with informational topics such as regulating, voicing, and humidity control can draw people to your site and help them to think you must be pretty smart to have such a professional-looking site.

## How to Build a Web Page

One tuner friend decided to design his own web page, spent all day and evening for three days, and was able to build

(Excerpts from the Feb. 2005 PTG Journal Article)

a very basic page. After spending more than double that amount of time he has a pretty nice web page. However, in the same amount of time he could have earned \$2,000 tuning pianos, and probably paid \$500 to have the page set up.

I took a different route. Our first page was designed by Dave Swartz, RPT. For our current site I found a web-page designer who designed it so I could do the updates myself.

Before you start talking to web designers, first look at other web sites and decide what you like and what you don't like. Start by going to the PTG web site, [www.ptg.org](http://www.ptg.org) and then follow the links to the listing of RPTs.

Second, make a basic design of what you want. The first page *must* tell your business name, your name, address, phone number and e-mail contact address. When you start looking at sites you will see that many don't have this information on the front page.

Third, consult with others who have sites and ask what they like, don't like, etc. Get a recommendation of a web designer.

Fourth, select a web site name. It should include your company name, if possible.

Select a web-site host. This will probably be your local ISP. You can get some major ISP to host it if you want but I find it helpful, when I have a problem, to have local folks hosting my site. Next, secure your web site address. You can do this through Internic or another supplier. I had my ISP do it. The fee they charged was minimal, less than I earned tuning a piano while they were doing what they do best. Go for a ".com" address, not the ".biz" and other endings. Keep it simple, so people will remember it. Make sure you are the owner of the name, not them, and that you are listed as such in the registration. Pay for it with your own major credit card.

Discuss programming options with the web designer. Will you control the site? (Yes!) Will they control it? (No!) Will you get your own copy of the program and make updates? (Yes!) I have used several programs over the years, because three different web designers have all used different programs.

## From the Editor - Going "High Tech"



Mark Purney, RPT

The Phoenix Chapter has some fancy new digital goodies. Our website [www.phoenixptg.org](http://www.phoenixptg.org) is up, but still has a long way to go. Over time it will evolve into an asset for Phoenix PTG members. With the right content, it can help us to reach out and connect to the Phoenix piano owners who trust us to look after their investments. It can also be a welcome mat for new technicians to find us and join.

Take a moment to check out the Member Locator Maps at



[members.phoenixptg.org](http://members.phoenixptg.org). It's a potentially useful tool, but also fun to view. Our new discussion forum is at [www.phoenixptg.org/forum](http://www.phoenixptg.org/forum) so be sure and sign up and make use of it. Ask and answer tech questions, trade tools and supplies, share stories, and just have fun!

We just purchased a 3000-Lumen projector that will give our chapter meetings multimedia capability, as well as a way to put technical skill demonstrations on screen with a live camera. *No more crowding around the piano to see exactly where Rick is sticking those needles!*

## From the Treasurer's Desk:

Our total assets are \$12633.62. On Dec. 01, we all enjoyed the annual Christmas Feast at Marie Callender's which was \$577.92.

Money and wisdom, "He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent, He that doeth these things shall never be moved." Psalm 15:5  
- Wendell

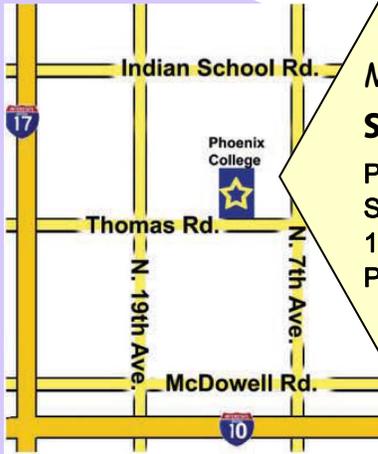


Wendell Smock

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

Phoenix College  
1202 W. Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85013  
602-285-7800



Map to the AZ State Seminar  
**Saturday, Jan. 10th 8:00 AM**

Phoenix College  
Sessions Theater Building M-138  
1202 W. Thomas Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85013

**Go to [www.phoenixptg.org](http://www.phoenixptg.org)  
For Registration Form / Brochure  
and Hotel Information**

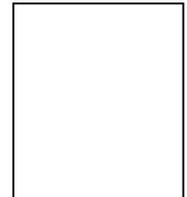


**PIANO  
TECHNICIANS  
GUILD**

PHOENIX, ARIZONA CHAPTER

All expressions of opinion and all statements of supposed facts in this letter are published on the authority of the authors listed and are not to be regarded as expressing the views of the Phoenix Chapter or the Piano Technicians Guild unless such statements or opinions have been adopted by the Phoenix Chapter or the Guild.

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