

NOVEMBER 2013

Chapter Meeting - October 7th, 2013

After a few extra minutes to adjust for technical difficulties and to accommodate some folks running late, the meeting started around 7:15 with announcements by Chapter President Eliot Lee. He confirmed that Peg Browne has made arrangements with Yamaha to have our annual all-day seminar at Piano Gallery on Saturday, February 1st, featuring Yoshi Suzuki, Yamaha Piano Service Director. He also touched on the possibility of involving Mason & Hamlin or perhaps a technician like Jude Reveley for next year. Eliot would like to get the word out to anyone interested in providing, or participating in some musical entertainment for the holiday dinner at Lucille's in December. It is not known if there is a piano there, but certainly we can manage to make that provision! Finally, we had a brief discussion about an email that Mark Purney had sent around. Mark is our website administrator, and had informed us that the hosting subscription was coming due for renewal. He was not present at the moment, but based on the information provided about what he wanted to do, primarily to switch to another web host, we voted to allow him the latitude to do whatever he needs at his discretion. We informed him of that decision when he arrived later in the meeting. Some guests were recognized-Tom Fiedler, owner of Alamo Piano Service, and a young technician named Jedin Bianchi with his dad Rick. Welcome!

The Technical Presentation 'I finished the job, now how do I get paid?' was given by Eliot Lee RPT. Several aspects of doing business were discussed emphasizing compensation for services rendered and some recommended steps to protect yourself against the occasional unscrupulous customer. Some suggested forms of payment include cash, checks, barter, or credit cards. Typically, credit card companies, as well as PayPal, charge a percentage of the transaction or some other fee. For some commercial accounts such as schools or senior living facilities for example, purchase orders and billings are often standard procedure. Eliot shared some ideas about estimating, including getting as much information over the phone as possible, even to ask the customer to hold the handset near the piano while playing A4! It may be determined if a pitch raise is necessary, and in any case, you may automatically assume so if the piano hasn't been tuned for about 5 years. He suggests that you do a full estimate and either charge for each service performed or consolidate everything into a 'full service' approach. He cited the 'Piano Technicians Guide' by Newton J. Hunt as a resource. It was also mentioned how the QuickBooks program can convert estimates into invoices.

Next Meeting-

**Monday November 4th
@ 7PM**

Location:

**Stilwell Pianos
1835 E 6th St. #12-13
Tempe, Az 85282
(480) 206-7231**

**Mike Easterling will do a
technical on finish/poly-
ester repairs.**

The logo features three vertical bars of varying heights on the left, followed by the text 'PIANO TECHNICIANS GUILD' in a bold, serif font. Below this, it says 'PHOENIX, ARIZONA CHAPTER'.

President :
Eliot Lee, RPT

Vice President:
Lucas Hathcock, RPT

Treasurer:
Wendell Smock, RPT

Secretary & Newsletter:
Lyle Cherry

Librarian:
Steven Gevirtz

Agraffe Graffiti

Newsletter of the Phoenix Chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild

When giving an estimate or prior to beginning a job, Eliot recommends a thorough inspection of the piano—look for rusty strings, cracked bridges, etc., and if the piano is a player, have the customer operate the mechanism to ensure that it works (or prove it doesn't) before you proceed. That is good advice!

Eliot gave us some insight on some of the procedures for seeking justice in more extreme cases where a customer has written you a bad check, or refused to pay, especially for extensive work in which significant compensation is owed. He explained the differences of which courts handle cases corresponding to the monetary level involved— from small claims to judiciary to superior courts, and some of the hoops one must be prepared to jump through and the associated fees. If do-it-yourself tenacity is not your forte, some professional involvement may be expected —attorneys, process servers, and arbitrators to name a few. Even if you win your case, you may still need to follow up on collecting if the customer still does not relent. This may involve hiring a collection agency or filing a lien with the County Recorder. Of course, you could just write the whole thing off as a bad debt and take the tax deduction! We finished up with some questions and answers about various legal issues and called it a night. Thanks to Eliot for shedding some light on how to deal with an unfortunate, and hopefully rare situation, and for stressing some precautionary practices in order to avoid it altogether. These would be good examples of an ounce of prevention definitely being worth a pound of cure!

A Message From The Phoenix Chapter President:

There is a very famous song sung by most of the Jazz greats, "Please don't talk about me when I'm gone" that has stuck in my head for a while.

Our business grows best by word of mouth, and more likely every time we tune someone's piano here in the valley, we are not the first tuner. So the question is, do we have the right to criticize the previous tuner? We should always strive to do the best work we can in our allotted tuning time, but more often than not we are not authorized to do the extra work a piano might need. The owner might not have the money necessary to get the job done for the amount of work involved. Most of us can't afford to do so much pro bono work from what we are making per year. In criticizing our predecessor we are taking the wrong approach.

1. The technician may have wanted to address the issue but was prevented by the owner.
2. The owner might have had a good rapport with the previous technician and we are being called because s/he is currently unavailable.
3. If the predecessor is called back by the owner, they ultimately will talk about our service. Consequently, the technician will not be threatened if we are not mud-slinging and most likely he will not be mud slinging against us either.

One beginning tuner has used me several times to do extra work he didn't know how. Had I openly criticized him to his customer who called me, that door would be closed.

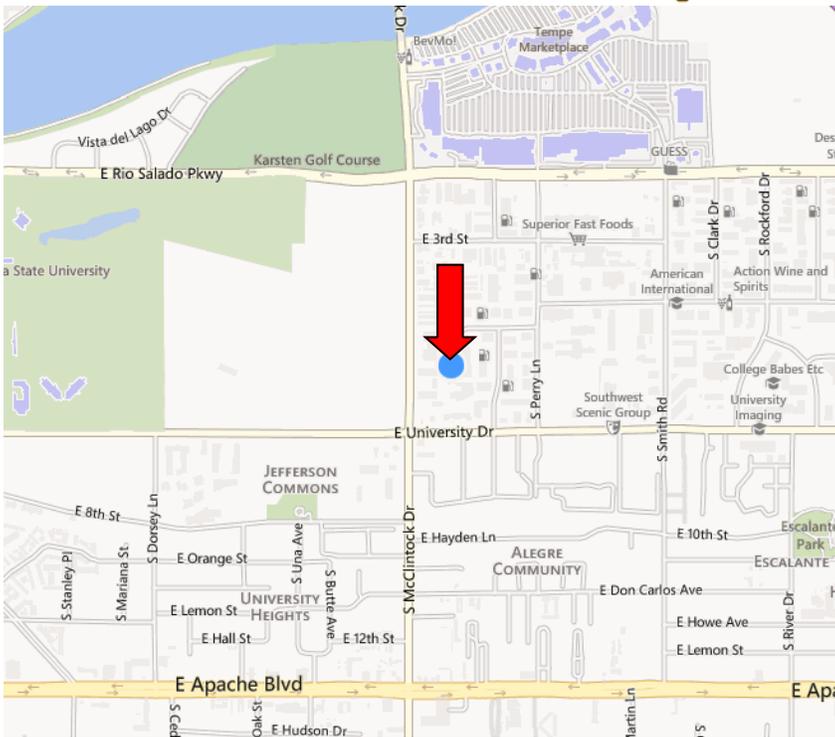
If we educate the owner of the problem that exists, additional income is being generated. If we correct a problem we see, the customer will be happy and we will insure our job security.

In Sanskrit the word is Samskara, or reaction. By doing good action, the reaction too should be favorable, and we should be able to sleep at night, knowing we did our best.

Eliot Lee RPT

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Tempe, Az 85282

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From: Phoenix PTG
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