

## Easy Listening at the Free State Theatre Organ Society 25th Anniversary Recital

**By Helen Gordon,  
Photos By Buzz Diehl**

The Free State Theatre Organ Society (FSTOS) was formed in 1984 with a mission of saving and restoring an important legacy in American culture – the pipe organs that were installed in theaters in the early days of silent movies. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of FSTOS was celebrated on August 22<sup>nd</sup> at the home of Dee and Roy Wagner with an organ recital, picnic, and a car show – with cars provided by our Club members.

The Wagners helped organize and lead FSTOS over the years. An objective of pipe organ clubs is not only saving and restoring old organs, but also setting up situations where music artists and the public can enjoy these old instruments. The primary project of FSTOS has been the rescue of the pipe organ from the old Metropolitan theatre (known as the Met) in Baltimore. FSTOS restored the Met organ, which is a Robert Morton organ built under license by the Wicks Organ Company. The console had been lost, so it was restored using a Wurlitzer console and parts from other organs. FSTOS has installed this organ

at Thomas Rice Auditorium (see the picture below). They sponsor an annual series of organ concerts featuring famous artists at Rice.

Dee and Roy Wagner have been involved in the organ hobby for about 45 years. They purchased a Wurlitzer Theater Pipe Organ from the State Theater in Baltimore. To accommodate an instrument of this size, they had to build an addition to their home for this eighty-two year old magnificent pipe organ. The Wagner’s pipe organ is a complete and original unit, which is not common, and makes it a museum piece. By invitation, well-known organists are invited to entertain guests at concerts in the Wagner’s home. It’s not often that these artists can play on a completely original organ.

Members of the Chesapeake Region joined with Organ Society members to celebrate the anniversary by listening to several members playing the organ, and partaking of the nice barbeque picnic. While the weather was typical hot and humid Baltimore summer weather, about seventy-five guests were scattered in the shade enjoying the delicious barbeque and dishes of

favorite food and deserts brought by guests for all to share.

It was a pleasant surprise to learn that our Club’s Alan Sandler owns and plays an organ. He told the group that fifty years ago he played the Wurlitzer organ that the Wagners now own when it was at the State Theater. Although the theater was closed at that time, a group that Alan belonged to was allowed to have organ concerts there. When Roy became aware of this he invited Alan to play a few pieces for everyone present. Alan played beautifully and the Chesapeake Region members were proud of him.

Bringing antique cars to the recital were: Dave Cavey, 1959 Edsel; Barbara and Buzz Diehl, 1966 Pontiac Le Mans Convertible; and Paula and Gary Ruby, 1964 Chevrolet Malibu. The rest of us drove modern vehicles: Margaret and Frances Werneth, Terry and Dan Materazzi, Read Van Zile and Joanne Day, Sylvia and Alan Sandler, and Helen and Jerry Gordon.

We all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and thank the Wagners for including us at this nice event.



*Shown from the left: Inside the Rice Auditorium with the Pipe Organ consol on the stage before a concert; At the home of Dee and Roy Wagner, one of the guests is playing their Wurlitzer Pipe Organ; And the three member’s cars that were antiques: The Ruby’s 1964 Chevrolet, the Diehl’s 1966 Pontiac, and Dave Cavey’s 1959 Edsel.*

Hershey Week Event Schedule	
Mon., Oct. 5 – Library Literature Auction	Fri., Oct. 9 – Race Car Run & Highwheeler Event
Tue., Oct. 6 – Flea Market Set-Up	Bus Tour #2 – TBA
Wed., Oct. 7 – Flea Market & Car Corral Open	Sat., Oct. 10 – Show Car Field Open – Judging Starts
Judging School (Thur. Also)	Judges Breakfast
Night at the AACA Museum Benefit	Ladies Luncheon
Thur., Oct. 8 – Bus Tour #1 – TBA	Awards Banquet