Nov 1958

REF

The Violin Makers' Journal

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE VIOLIN MAKERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Devoted to the development and encouragement of the art of violin making in Canada.

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE EDITOR

DON WHITE, 4631 W. 14TH AVE., VANCOUVER 8, B. C.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO NON-MEMBERS $3.00 PER YEAR.

THE VIOLIN MAKERS' JOURNAL

Official organization of The Violin Makers Association of British Columbia

OFFICERS: President: Geo. Friess, 2724 Yale Street
Vice President: G. Heyworth, 1683 Renfrew Street
Treasurer: F. Holly, 2636 West 6th Avenue

Subscription rate $3.00 per year. All remittance must be at Par Vancouver. Address all communications to the Secretary and Editor - Don White, 4631 West 14th Avenue, Vancouver 8, B.C.

.....

VOL.2....No.1....November,1958

OUR FIRST ANNIVERSARY NUMBER

We feel that we may be pardoned for exhibiting a very lively scene of pride in this our first number of Volume 2. In looking back at our first number we cannot help but feel that we are at last producing something really worth while, compared to that very modest start.

However before we become "all choked up" with our pride let us hasten to declare that much of the advance is due to many interesting letters and articles received from our subscribers.

Their letters often contained the encouraging words so badly needed by your editor under the stress of production and financing the Journal.

It is our ambition to place this magazine into the hands of every worthwhile violin maker on this continent and you our subscribers are the only ones who can assist us in this undertaking. You all know at least one maker who might enjoy and profit by our work. Ask him to write us or send us his name. In this manner you will be doing your part to make The Journal "bigger and better".

We would also like to express our thanks to the many new advertisers whose "copy" appears in this issue. Their expression of confindence in our work is also a definite sign of advancement in that our Journal is worthy of their attention.

Let us then, again, wish ourselves a "Happy Birthday" and repeat the request that you keep your letters and articles coming in. This is your Journal and were it not for you we would not be enjoying a healthy reputation.

.....

MORE THINGS ARE WROUGHT BY WORK THAN THIS WORLD DREAMS OF

Apologies to Shakespeare

.....

GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The Editor, The Journal:

It was in November 1957 that we saw the Journal make its modest but brave debut.

Originally intended as a sort of chronicle of local doings of the Membership of our Association, it has, in the space of one short year, assumed the proportions of a regular, monthly publication.

It has also become the Official Organ of the Violin Makers' Association of British Columbia. Between its trim covers have appeared interesting articles, by Makers, Musicians and other prominent authorities on the Violin.

The man chiefly responsible for its remarkable growth is none other than our indefatigable Secretary and Editor, Mr. Don White, who conceived the idea, and almost single handed, has developed it to its present status.

Happy Birthday to the Journal, and congratulations, Don! May your ardour never cool!

George Friess, President.

.....

A SUGGESTION FROM MR. SLOTNICK

Birthday Greetings to your wonderful Journal. I enjoy it very much and find each issue better than the last.

I found the enclosed clipping of singular interest and hope you find a like interest. It is from the "New York Times" of Oct.5. With this ad I have the opportunity to put forth an idea that has been kicking around in the back of my head for a long time. Most notices mention the name of the piano in use at the recital. Even orchestral concerts, when no piano is used mentions the name of the "official" piano. Mr. Gerle for the first time in my memory names the maker of his violin. True it is the maker Stradivari, who needs no publicity. But I think it is high time that this become a common practice. I realize that some makers would feel that this practice might work against them but this is the chance one must take. I am certain that in the long run it would benefit all.

Most star performers either have or aspire to Strad, Guarneri etc., but I think with a concerted effort along this line, many adventurous artists would be willing to play on a modern instrument for perhaps one part of their recital or even the encore part of the program. If an artist is willing to take a chance playing new and difficult music, I see no reason why he wouldn't be willing to try a new violin at the same time.

I hope your organization will consider this idea and perhaps plan a campaign to put across this idea to the concert world.

Alfred Slotnick, Brooklyn, New York.

.....

That action is best which procures the greatest happiness
for the greatest numbers.

Hutcheson.

.....

WE JUST GROWED!!!!

On the start of our second year of publication our first thought is naturally to evaluate the results of the last year and second, one which is more important, to glance at the future.

No one could have expected that The Journal would have snowballed into the size and popularity that it now enjoys. The inital idea was merely to put out a sort of monthly letter or bulletin. Within a few months, however, articles came flowing in from all over the globe and requests for subscriptions in their wake. In other words the Violin Makers's Journal was not created. Like Topsy.."It just growed".

It soon became important enough to wear a cover and now at its First Birthday, Behold... A full fledged magazine read by subscribers in France, England, Norway, U.S.A. and all over Canada.

We wish to thank our many friends who have written kind Aniversary Greetings to us. We hope we can live up to these valued opinions.

Contrary to the usual belief that the greater the production the less cost, the contrary in our case is true. A small bulletin of a few pages can be turned out by one person cheaply and easily. Now at three times the size and a large ciculation the cost of production is really high. Certain work must be paid for and at $1.50 per year we
last few months we have charged $2.00 but at that we do not really break even. If we are to continue publication we must make the Journal at least pay for itself.

We believe that our readers will appreciate our position and readily accept the new price we are forced to charge, namely $3.00 per year. At this price it will be possible to produce a worthwhile magazine which we feel confident will continue to grow throughout its second year.

We have writers expressing their thoughts and experiences so that all might share in their knowledge. This has been to your editor a most thrilling and gratifying experience. The realization that the best makers hold no secrets while those of uncertain stature still speak of "secrets" which they covertly hide. In this world the man who seeks to help his neighbor is still "The cream of the earth".

The true lover of the violin is only too anxious that all may have the thrill of success. To all such people we dedicate this our Second Volume.

.....

The following seven advertisers are all members of The Violin Makers Association of B.C. . . . All have won prizes at the P.N.E. Hobby Show, against the keenest competition.

For complete satisfaction your patronage is solicited.

PEDER SVINDSAY

3914 MAIN STREET, VANCOUVER EMerald 5022

VIOLINS — VIOLAS — REPAIRS

Hand Made Bows for the Discriminating Artist

FLOYD HOLLY

2636 WEST 6th AVENUE, VANCOUVER

CEdar 9314

VIOLINS AND VIOLAS

Pupil of the Late "Doc" Porter

DON WHITE

VIOLINS

With the Accent on Tone

STUDENTS AND ARTISTS INSTRUMENTS

4631 West 14th Avenue, Vancouver ALma 1523L

GEORGE FRIESS

2724 Yale Street, Vancouver HAstings 6462R

VIOLIN MAKER AND REPAIRER

Violins — Violas — Cellos

Also

FINE OLD VIOLINS WITH REAL TONE

HERBERT MARTIN

755 Foster Road, Richmond, B.C. CRestview 8-1378

VIOLINS

To Accommodate the Concert Performer

MARTHA KOZAK

Careful Repairs to All String Instruments

BOWS EXPERTLY REPAIRED

VIOLINS — MODERN AND OLD

1598 West 16th Avenue, Vancouver CEdar 5293

R. W. HELIN

3751 Venables Street, Vancouver GLenburn 2969R

VIOLINS — VIOLAS — BOWS

Highest Quality Tone Consistent With Good Workmanship

HIGH ALTITUDE ARIZONA AGED TOP WOOD

Reddish Brown or Clear White

USED BY LEADING VIOLIN MAKERS

Fine or Wide Grain

$5.00 Each Plus Charges

PLAIN OR INLAID COWBOY VIOLINS

MADE TO ORDER

Satisfactory Repairs

BOB WALLACE & SON

Box 367, Gilbert Arizona, U.S.A. Phone WO 4-6977

OLD ITALIAN

CEMONA VARNISH FOR VIOLINS

Made from Fossil Resins

ALL COLORS INCLUDING NATURAL

Oil or Spirit

Prices Postpaid 2 oz. $1.50

4 oz. $2.50 8 oz. $4.50

S. KUJAWA

1958 East Hawthorne St. Paul 6, Minn., U.S.A.

FRANK G. WARD LTD.

Sales and Rentals of All Instruments

EXPERT ADVICE ON REPAIRS

FULLY QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS ON ALL

STRING INSTRUMENTS

A Complete Line of Parts for All

Needs in the String Field

Accessories and Instruments for Sale or Exchange

FRIENDLY COURTEOUS SERVICE

3 STORES TO SERVE YOU

WARD MUSIC LTD.

BURNABY: 4849 Kingsway HE. 1-5596

VANCOUVER: 412 W. Hastings MU. 4-6545

VICTORIA: 1320 Broad Phone 2-8146

LETTER FROM MR. CARDO SMALLY

7048 Hudson Street
Vancouver 14, B.C.
September 29, 1958

Dear Mr. White:

After reading your editorial notes in the September issue of the Violin Makers' Journal I feel that, as one responsible for the judging, I must comment on several points.

In order of criticism, the lack of room for a display is not from lack of interest but because it is a hobby show in the fullest sense of the word. All hobbies must have a showing and they are well represented. I am sure that all classes in this show wanted more room.

Again on this issue, I personally feel that the Hobby Show is not the place for your presentation, especially as you have such ambitions for it. As a section of the art of woodworking it is well presented and judged in this hobby show, and it takes its place as a great draw for the public. We are one of a large group of judges that enjoy seeing and grading exhibits of every craft. We do this without remuneration because we are more than generously interested in these arts.

You are setting your sights on an international Violin Show and expecting the P.N.E. Hobby Show to throw everything to your effort. A show of this type will have to be run as a separate event. It must be in a special hall with sound rooms and proper display tables. There would be picked judges and several days spent in checking all instruments for grading. There will have to be a minimum standard acceptable, a point that I have not so far insisted on in the hobby show, and only the best of each maker must be sent in. In this last show some makers sent in several instruments for judging. This made more work for the judges as it was obvious that there was a best example in the group.

In regard to the point system, we again refer to the hobby show standard as in the other classes. In making a violin the craftsmanship is very important and is certainly worth at least half the value. The three judges, with the permission of the hobby show directors, changed the marking to 50 points for tone and 50 points for workmanship. If we had not done this it would have been a poor show indeed as we all agreed that the tone generally was poor. I myself thought the standard not up to last year. A great show of instruments does nothing if the standard does not improve.

I feel rather hurt at the remark that you have little or no say in arranging marks, I will be very surprised if any other department of the hobby show dictates the policies set down in judging their entries.

I agree that each year your show must improve, as you have started something that can grow into a wonderful affair. You however, must stand on your own feet and not be so anxious to place the blame on others. Where would you be if it weren't for the hobby show? I would have the show in the best part of the winter season when the musical season is in full sway.

I am not trying to stop exhibits in the hobby [illegible] many violin entries and we need them. The unusual specials are especially wanted and should be shown off to better advantage. I must comment here on

- over -

MR. SMALLY'S LETTER cont..

Rev. Wright's wonderful "Centennial Violin".

In closing I must say a word for the help of the other two judges. We worked late into the night and were very serious with our decisions. We obviously couldn't make up a paper on each instrument. To do that would take at least one half hour on each one and would be a professional criticism.

May I wish you continued success with your journal, however I must ask that you check yourinformation more carefully before publicly criticizing the efforts of others. I hope that the Violin Makers' Association continues to grow and become a strong body. I am sorry to see the names of some fine makers disappear from yourlist of makers.

Best regards, Cardo Smally.

.....

OUR ANSWER TO MR. CARDO SMALLY

As editor of the Violin Makers' Journal and writer of the editorial in question I feel it my duty to answer yourletter (presented above).

First I would like to state that the criticism I gave was not directed at the judges but at the officials of the hobby show who gave certain promises which were not fulfilled.

May I express the greatest admiration for the thoughts you have expressed in your letter. Throughout it runs a theme of constructive thought which is perhaps a contrast to my rather blunt criticism. However I make no apologies as I consider the criticism quite called for.

I agree with you that our exhibit this year was outside the realm of the Hobby Show, nevertheless the manager of the show knew the scope that our exhibit was to take and should either have refused our exhibit or provided adequate facilities.

Regarding the point system. Possibly you are correct in that a hobby show is considered a competition. In the correct setting as you suggest in your third paragraph (and which strongly appeals to me) the situation would be different. Then the judging would definately be with the accent on tone. Craftmanship would be secondary.

I agree that we have started something worthwhile and I would personally be dissappointed to see no further growth in our competitions. So much is needed to impress upon the musical world that modern string instruments are of real worth that I must agree with you again that we must show by continual improvement that our violins are of real merit. Letters such as yours give one the encouraging thought [illegible] while Violin Competition.

Don White, Editor

.....

I COULD RATHER FAIL IN THE CAUSE THAT SOME DAY WILL TRIUMPH

THAN TRIUMPH IN THE CAUSE THAT SOME DAY WILL FAIL

.....Woodrow Wilson.

SCLF NOTES by Chibiabos

What stange food do they consume in Nova Scotia? Or is it the climate Brrrrrrr. Whatever the environment it certainly seems to breed Violin Makers and lovers of that instrument. Now we have Earle Sangster announcing that he lived at Halifax for nine years. Here are some other "Blue Nose" subscribers - Bob Holt of Belfast, Maine, was born in Nova Scotia. Bob's violins are as good as any I know for I have played one. Here in Vancouver Arthur Jones, a member of our Association and a delightful violinist was born in the "Blue Nose" Provance.

A prize of one piece of California Red wood, (will make a nice toned Violin top) will be given to the first person who writes in telling who Chibiabos was. Clue: "A musician, fictional character."

Rev. Geo. Wright who has been attending a Church Convertion in Eastern Canada reports that some violin makers in Toronto find a ready market for their instruments in the U.S.A.. George enjoyed a very pleasant trip.

Dr. Micheal Beddoes of the University of B.C. gave the membership an interesting talk at our last meeting. He described the operation of testing violin plates as outlined by Dr. Saunders, in the last two issues of "The Strad". Thank you Dr. Beddoes for an enlightening lecture.

Our apologies are due Dr. Saunders for several mistakes in the article written by your editor in the August issue. We will try and find space to rewrite this article in the near future and place the material before you in more ordered form. On rereading my article in the last issue I note that I suggested Dr. Saunders was really retired. Being the energetic person that he is, he reminded me that he will never stop investigating the violin and that he is still the leader of the little group carrying on their experiments. Long life Docoter and thanks for your good work.

Our friend Joseph Reid of Nelson Road, R.R.2, Grimsby, Ont. has just completed the drawings of plans for a superb Strad. Cello. I have received a set and it is certainly a nice job. Every detail is shown in actual full scale with all graduations given. Anyone contemplating building a cello should obtain a set. Mr. Reid is asking $5.00 a set and doesn't make much money at that price. Write for them direct to Mr. Reid's address (given above).

Joseph also tells me of the Old Time Fiddlers Contest to be held at Shelbourne, Ontario. This is a Nation wide affair sponsored by one of the Service Clubs and brings contestants from all over this continent. Sleepy Marlin, the U.S.A. open Champion Fiddler flies up each year in his plane. Sleepy uses one of Bob Wallace's Cowboy fiddles. Joseph is doing his part in offering the violin that he showed in Vancouver this Summer as a prize.

.....

GREETINGS FROM MR. JACKLIN

Congratulations to The Journal on the event of its first anniversary number.

Have just been looking over the last issue, and notice that it is reaching quite an exalted atmosphere. This time it contains some opinions from Mr. Ellerseick and Mr. Sangster, both of whom are well known throughout the entire violin world, and I was much interested in what they had to say. In comparison with these men, most of us are just raw amateurs, and we are fortunate in getting their views.

Last week the Daily Province ran a picture of Mr.Friedlander, the cello virtuoso from Vienna who is now cello principal of the Symphony here. He is a wonderful artist. The cello in the picture which he is using daily is one I made in 1948. He also has two fine Italians, one a Guadagnini, which I presume he will use for solo and recital work; but the fact that a performer of his stature will use and is interested in modern instruments should be of some interest to our members. I should add that my cellos are used in two other Symphonies. If you think that the Province picture would be of interest in the magazine, I will try to get it.

Walter A. Jacklin, Vancouver

.....

Dear Mr. White:

Anniversary Greetings and salutations to your fine Journal on violin making. Must thank you for your kindness in sending me the copies. Have enjoyed them very much. Keep up the good work.

I find many interesting articles on the art of violin making. Some day when I get caught up a little I would like to send an article.

We are having a Centennial here next year but at this time I can't say whether I will enter a violin. I just don't have any on hand very long. I'm working on three now and two of them are spoken for.

Hope some of you fellows will be dropping in again soon.

W.C. Palmer, Portland, Oregon.

.....

When I telephoned my mother on Mother's Day I got a wrong number, as I was informed by a young woman's pleasant voice.

"Sorry," I said, "But happy Mother's Day to you!"

There was a pause and a little gasp. "Golly," she replied, "that's just what I'm afraid of!" and hung up.

.....

Real-Estate ad with a Texas touch from the Dallas Morning News: "For Sale - Small ranch - 11,000 acres."

.....

MORE OF CONTROL IN VIOLIN PLAYING by Don White

Control is a word we have heard often lately on Radio and Television. I refer, of course to the World Series and baseball. "This pitcher has wonderful control" or "He seems to have lost his control and is throwing wild," are some of the words we hear from the announcer. In another sport, boxing, we find the same quality desirable. The boxer keeps a cool head under the greatest stress. Should he lose his temper, for instance, his timing would immediately falter.

The violinist too must also observe this attribute. He must at all times have complete control of "the ball". Should he allow his emotions too much play then it will interfere with his tempo, especially when playing piano passages or the opposite-fortissimo. He will be likely to slow down during the piano passage and tend to run away in the loud ones. He will commence to "throw wild".

Control must be practised before public appearance. He must learn it as part of his daily practice of technique. It must be so impressed upon his faculties that during concert time he can concentrate upon interpretation. Not only must he have control of his technique but also of his faculties or emotions.

In composing music years are spent on learning the laws of harmony, counterpoint etc. Then when these laws have become imbedded in your mind, you are told to forget them and to proceed to write music to satisfy you self. Years of learning rules have made their impression upon your subconsious mind and will keep your compositions within the bounds of correctness. Yet you produce original work.

So with any musical work. First learn it with absolute precision, even to playing to a metronome for correct time if necessary. You then know your number "inside out". It is fixed in your subconsious and you can let loose. You insert variations in tempo, rubato is introduced. Rubato being the effect of unequal time between beats. For instance, you have four beats in one bar --instead of making them exactly equal you perhaps delay the second beat placing it closer to the third. Your tempo and time is not broken but the stiffness is smoothed out. A great artist once said "Anyone can play the notes, it is the spacing that counts".

This then is the subconsious control. That is not enough, there must on the concert platform be complete technical and mental control. We have all heard it said of some artist -- "He was lost in his rendition". I doubt if that be true of any worthwhile virtuoso. Hardly, for he is in complete control of his faculties and fully aware of the least shading of every note. This point is not fully appreciated. We are too prone to suggest that a player is talented and forget that brains and persistance play an all important part in interpretation. Paganini is said to have practised eight hours every day and also was no fool. The best artists are well equipped with mental powers. Especially with the gift of imagination.

.....

Run, if you like, but try to keep your breath; work like a man, but don't be worked to death.

Holmes

.....

THE IMPORTANCE OF TUNING PLATES (continued from last issue)

In our October Issue I gave a rough outline or introduction to this subject. In this number Dr. Saunders has kindly summarised the two articles in question. We hope that readers will write in giving their opinion or experience on this vital subject.

Editor.

SUMMARY FOR MOST OF STRAD ARTICLE ON TAP-TONES 1958 by Dr.F.A.Saunders

This study dealt with the notes produced by tapping violin plates (notes here called tap-tones), and their use in helping to get best plate thicknesses. Savart (Paris, before 1819) had "several Stradivaris and Guarneris" taken apart so that he could text the pitch of the tap-tones of backs and tops. He assumed quite rightly, that they were the best violins available. The tests showed that the back should give a slightly higher pitch than the top, this has been ca lled Savart's Rule.

The tapping is usually done by holding the plate between finger and thumb, as far down from the upper (neck) end at a point on the mid-line, and tapping it at a mid-point farther down. The results vary somewhat if these points are moved.

In the experiments described an "audiogenerator" was used, capable of creating in a plate or a violin a clear whistle-like note by magnetic action or a tiny bit of ironfastened to the bridge of the violin, or waxed to a plate. The iron weighs so little that it does not affect the action of the plate. The generator has a dial which can be turned to change the pitch of the note and a scale on it to read pitches (in vibrations per second).

A microphone picks up the sound, and this is connected to an "Oscilloscope" which acts much like a television tube. It can be made to produce a line of light (up and down) whose length indicates the loudness. Mr. Hopping set up a camera so that this line can be photographed on a long strip of film, which is slowly moved along its length as the dial turns and alters the pitch from very low to very high. The result is a dark band on the film whose height varies with the loudness. It resembles the New York skyline, or the horison strip in a planetarium. This is Method A. It yields all possible tap-tones and all the higher notes at which the plate vibrates most readily. These stand out as peaks of loudness. A violin (or a plate) thus yields a permanent record of its ability to emit all sounds in its range.

Method B is to play every note of the scale of a violin, one by one, slowly and as loudly as possible. An instrument called a Sound Meter has a pointer which indicates approximately the loudness of the sound. The pointer readings can be laid out as vertical lines whose legths represent the pointer readings, against a horizontal scale like the keyboard of a piano. The tops of these lines can be joined and form a "loudness curve" for the violin. All violins show peaks of loudness whose position is characteristic of the violin, no two alike. This curve differs from the one of Method A. All the vibrations (harmonics or overtones) contribute to the loudness in B, while A gives the strength of the fundamental only, the first member of the series of harmonics. The note of open G has a weak fundamental, so it makes a low point in curve A; but the loudness of the upper harmonics produce a fairly high G point in curve B. The air-tone (about C sharp in violins is strong in both types of curve. The peaks which are strong because one of their harmonics is strong occur only in

SUMMARY FOR MOST OF STRAD ARTICLE ON TAP-TONES 1958 cont..

curve B, they are called "overtone peaks".

Method C consists in securing the help of experts who play each instrument and give their opinions of it, using a great variety of adjectives derived without exact definitions from our sensations of taste, touch, light etc. In this articleMrs. Hutchins gives a very impressive list of the kind artists who have helped. Their opinions usually agreed almost exactly with the results by the other methods.

After choosing the best possible wood, Mrs. Hutchins makes the top and the back, leaving each a little too thick. She records the weights at all stages. Method A is then used on each plate to secure a permanent record. Then the violin is put together and methods B and C carried through on it. The evidence then usually indicates that changes are necessary. The plates are taken off, altered, and tested by Method A. Then the violin is reassembled and all three methods applied. This cycle is then repeated until the experts become enthusiastic. As many as four cycles of operations have been carried out on one instrument, and some 10 different instruments have been thus treated already. This work is still continuing; more results can be expected in the future.

The results in this paper show that when the tap-tones are single the rule of Savart is correct. Anyone can match the pitch of a tap-tone fairly well by using a well-tuned piano, of even a violin; but it is much better to get records at each stage of the work. The new (or revolutionary, unpleasant or sacrilegious) conclusion from this work is that we need not be concerned with thicknesses any more. We should not copy from another violin by dimensions (thickness expecially) because differences in the two pieces of wood will make our copy different from the original. We should merely work the plates down until their tap-tones have the proper relation. This automatically takes care of variations of stiffness, weight, strength, etc. in the wood.

If the tap-tones are multiple, the case is a bit harder. One such case was worked out in this report in the Strad. More should be said later on in regard to complicated cases.

F.A. Saunders, South Hadley, Mass.

.....

A man took his Great Dane to a vet. "Doc," he said, "You've got to do something. My dog does nothing but chase sports cars."

"Well, that's only natural," replied the vet. "Most dogs chase cars."

"Yes," the man.agreed. "But mine catches them and buries them in the back yard."

.....

Of all the things you wear your expression is the most important

.....

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM MR. E.H. SANGSTER

The October Journal arrived and I find it most interesting, especially some of the letters. I notice your next number is your Anniversary Number, congratulations.

About making violins, lets start at the beginning and see how much we know and how much we do not know. First, anyone can go to Germany and buy the best violin ever made there for one thousand dollars, except a Stainer. Move into France and buy the finest French violin, a Lupot, a J.B. Vuillaume or a Gand for two thousand. Go across to England buy the best English violin a Banks, a Duke or a Foster for one thousand. But! if you or I want to buy an Italian violin made before 1750 they start at one thousand. "Why"? Because of their beautiful quality of tone and the ease of articulation and volume above the third position. This is all that makes a fine violin.

A word about thicknesses: If possible I would advise every maker to read "The Life and Work of Stradivari" by Hill & Sons, especially chapter eight. There they give the thicknesses of eighteen Strads in fractions of an inch. They are all noted specimens with their dates. Quite a number were six-sixtyfourths all over the top. Now it has puzzled violin makers for two centuries how Strad was able to make a violin that thin, yet two hundred years later there have not been any made to equal them.

While in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where I worked nine years, I made a violin from the blue prints of a Strad and made it 6/64ths all over the top. It was very unsatisfactory, too open and not enough resistance to the bow on the lower strings. Now! my wood was just as good also my thicknesses, but what did Stradivari do that I did not do? He must have done something for you don't get effect without cause. I know it could not have been in his color varnish because I have seen and played Strads with over one third of the varnish worn off and they seem to sound better than some with the varnish still on. This led me to believe that he must have used a varnish or filler that impregnated the wood and stiffened it. In former letters I have already told what I use so will not go over it again, but it has given me wonderful results.

A word about wood: Wood taken from old buildings especially from sills seasoned in the dark is not worth a penny to make a top out of. If you can find a board cut on the quarter that has been on the outside South end of a barn, it will make a fine violin. Wood seasoned in the dark is not worth working.

To sum up. There have been, and still are, hundreds of expert violin makers, such as Hill & Son, J.B. Vuillaume, and N. Lupot who have made copies of Strad and Guarnarius in every detail down to 1/1000 of an inch but they all failed to get the one real thing beautiful pure tone with tremendous carrying power. The best they could say is that they were as good as any used by the Italians. So! it was not the wood or the dimentions or the thicknesses. What was it? What did they do that no one else has done? Think about it awhile all you violin makers....maybe you will find the answer.

E.H. Sangster, Dallas, Texas.

.....

--Ulcers are caused not so much by what you eat but what's eating you.

.....

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Don:
Just a few lines to wish your Journal every success during its second year of publication.

I notice you were not satisfied with the way things were handled at the Hobby Show. It would take a while to iron out all the angles, for instance, the judging. There are so many ways instruments can be judged. They should compete in different classes, as there are violins suitable for home use, for chamber music and for the large orchestra. Also the different size halls and auditoriums. A violin would act different in each place.

Some violins are sweet and nice to play and are ideal for the home. Next there are the ones that are sweet and have carrying power, but a very powerful instrument doesn't sound so sweet to the ear close by.

Some of the violins I have made were tested for distance and could be heard 2/5ths of a mile away with a slight side wind, others could not be heard very far but yet sounded good near by.

You have a big job to test and judge violins because they vary so much and what standard would be used as a guide? Perhaps tape recordings would be the answer? I don't know.

Best wishes again,
Sid H. Enyon, Dauphin, Man.

.....

Dear Don:
Just received the Journal and it was great this month. Thanks for the nice comments you made about my Cowboy Fiddles and also the Texas joke for I would have you know that I am a Texan from "Deep in the Heart of Texas" and Texas is deep in my heart! I was born and raised twenty miles south of Dallas.

Texas is the only place in the world where you can walk in mud and have your eyes put out with blowing sand at the same time.

I was talking to a Pipe Line man a few years ago and he asked me if I was a native Arozonian and I said "Gosh No!," that I had been in the army for about 25 years and was born in Texas. But, I added "after all a man can hardly afford to be born any place else."

We are having trouble getting space in the State Fair for a violin exhibit so will likely wait till next year. Wishing you every success, and also good luck to Volume 2.

Bob Wallace, Gilbert, Arizona.

Note: Bob, I was talking to a man from Texas the other day. He told me it was so hot there this summer that a man's shadow melted before it could reach the ground.

Editor

.....

The new Prince of Wales, Charles, was named by the Queen during recent British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Cardiff. "It was a great day for Wales," Englishmen said. "A great day for Charles," replied the Welsh.

.....