

## A Tribute to Johnny Verbeeck

October 14, 1951—June 2, 2015

*Johnny has left a legacy with the many organs he has restored and constructed. He has carried on his family's business of organ building with great passion. In our dealings and conversations I saw that Marijke and Jeffrey were very proud of him. I also saw that Johnny was very proud of them. It made for a great family. I am sure Jeffrey will carry on the family business with the same enthusiasm and integrity that Johnny had. We will all miss Johnny. Bill and Stacy Nunn*

*Johnny was a virtuoso 4th generation organ builder. He had a natural aptitude and ability as well as interest in his craft. In a visit to his shop during the development of "The Glacier", I was completely taken by the perfectionism and workmanship of what he did. His natural ability was only exceeded by his interest in superb craftsmanship. Beyond that, he was a friendly and warm person. Spending time with his family, I just didn't want to leave. Besides what he built for me, I have been around many of his projects and they were all a clear masterpiece musically and visually. His is a tremendous loss to the organ and mechanical music world and to me personally. I will miss him greatly!*

*Glenn Thomas*

*As an organ builder, Johnny had rightfully earned his place among the 'big Belgian names' like Bursens, Decap and Mortier. Coming from a family of organ builders – who already started in the trade in the 1880's – Johnny had set up his own firm in 1979 in Deurne, near Antwerp. His craftsmanship soon earned him a very good reputation, which in turn lead to the search for a bigger workshop. This was found in 1984 at the Eikenlei 179 in St.Job-in-'t-Goor – an address that would become familiar to anyone seriously involved in our hobby. I will miss Johnny as an organ builder – fortunately, he has left us many fantastic instruments all over the world to enjoy; I will certainly treasure my own small Verbeeck organ. But I will miss him even more for who he was – a friendly, professional and helpful man with the heart in the right place.*

*Björn Isebaert*

*With Johnny's passing, a living legend in the world of mechanical musical instruments became history and have we lost a great man and friend. I met Johnny and his lovely wife, Marijke, at the presentation of one of his many big projects – the ex. Milhouse Gaudin concert organ – at his ateliers in St.-Job-in-'t-Goor back in November 1999. Many occasions followed and I got great respect for his positive attitude, humor and hospitality and not to forget the company of "J. Verbeeck" he and Marijke led and under their supervision became world famous. Fortunately Johnny left us with many of his organs, everywhere in the world, so we will never forget him.*

*Stefan Batist*

*The fairground organ world lost a great asset when Johnny Verbeeck died last week. I never met Johnny personally, but when Seabreeze Park lost its 1931 Wurlitzer 165 band organ in the carousel fire of March 31, 1994, Johnny Verbeeck stepped into the breach and crafted a superb facsimile, using measurements he took from the Wurlitzer 165 owned by Bob Gilson, Middleton, Wisconsin. The result is a magnificent replica Wurlitzer 165 band organ that has been operating every day at Seabreeze Park all summer long every year since its installation in June 1996.*

*Matthew Caulfield*

*Long before meeting Johnny I was well aware of his genius as an organ builder. My first impression when first meeting him was his exuberance and genuine enthusiasm for life. His smile was contagious and he appeared to be much younger than his years. In my subsequent meetings Johnny was as ebullient as the previous meetings. His joy for life will be my everlasting memory. His excellence as an organ builder will remain his legacy. God Bless you Johnny, you will be missed forever.*

*R.I.P. Angelo Rulli*