
G&T GAZETTE

Established 1995. Incorporating the *Edison Echo*

April/May/June

2009



Bill Moran in our living room in 1965 holding an Australian two minute wax cylinder.

As I'm always on the look out for improving activities involving our group, I've come up with an idea which I think would have popular appeal. Even though I'd like to claim it as my invention, I don't think anyone would have much trouble recognising it as having come from the Chinese custom of naming the year after an animal. In the SRG's case, I thought we could annually dedicate it to an individual who made a great contribution to the record industry during it's first 100 years. To get the ball rolling, I'm nominating the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso.

How it would work is that at every meeting the host would devote one item in their programme to the chosen personality who would be elected by consensus for the coming year at the December meeting. The fish hook in this of course is the fact that some may not have a recording of the featured personality. However, I don't see why someone might lend them one for the occasion although in Caruso's case, I can hardly imagine that anyone in our group might be caught short on such a popular and prolific artist as Caruso. Other names to be included in this yearly roster could be Galli-Curci, Chaliapine, Dame Clara Butt and Beniamino Gigli. Then again if 78s prove a problem LPs and CDs proliferate so I can't see the idea being turned down on that score.

I'd like to start the ball rolling on this proposal by including a Caruso when I present my programme in June. One of the benefits from this suggested innovation would be to compensate what I fear is the deliberate exclusion of some artists from our programmes because some of us we tend to avoid playing records by artists that we all have in abundance. For instance I don't think I've played a Caruso in one of my programmes for many years. So please give the matter some thought and be prepared to air your opinions to this suggestion when we meet at my place on the 21st of June.

Next Issue: The final of the Collectors I have known Series which is called the New Zealand Component.

William R. Moran 1919 -2004

My association with Bill Moran began when we struck up a correspondence with one another in the early 1960s. I wrote to him pointing out that he had missed two Dusolina Giannini recordings in his article and discography of this American soprano in Volume 9 of the *Record Collector*. This developed into a steady exchange of letters. The HMV 78s in question were...

DA 1019

Bonnie Sweet Bessie (Gilbert)
Bb15477-2A & Annie Laurie (Trad.)
Bb 15478-2-TI

DA 1025

My Lovely Celia (Arr. Lane Wilson)
Bb 15475-4 & Love has eyes (Bishop)
Bb15476-3.

As it turned out they were released only in Australia to coincide with her concert tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1929. When Bill told me that the soprano did not have these in her own collection, I forwarded them to him so he could pass them onto her. All this was documented in an 'Addenda' article which Bill wrote and subsequently appeared in Volume 14.

Since then I have never been able to replace them in my collection. It would seem that even though they were a very timely release, the shadow of a global depression was already having it's effect and not many copies would have been sold because of the economic times.

After the intense flurry of activity over the Giannini recordings, our correspondence settled down to a steady flow of letters which varied from Bill giving me detailed instructions on how to read 'take' numbers on victor recordings that had been issued under license to HMV and other wonderful anecdotes on how he became a record collector. As I grew to know quite a bit about him and his background as a geologist with an Oil Company, I began to anticipate that one day he might come to New Zealand in the course of his job. This duly happened in 1965 and I was able to have him as a guest to dinner. From memory it was the first of three visits which he made to New Zealand, the last being in 1974(?) When 'careless' days were the order of the day. I remember this method of conserving

petrol during the oil crisis amused him greatly as one who new the oil industry intimately. However I think he used his companies interest at the time in mining rights off the New Zealand coast-line, as an excuse to pay me a visit! Or at least that is my view of the situation! I remember very distinctly on one trip he was absolutely jubilant about his discovery of some rare Melba pressings in Melbourne which he visited prior to coming to New Zealand.

These brief oil company stop overs in New Zealand were highlighted by the Bettini saga. This climaxed a little later when Walter Norris agreed to let Michael Woolf, David Graves and myself visit him in Swannanoa in 1965 to tape his 5 inch Bettini cylinder of Marcella Sembrich singing *Voce di Primavera* with a view to bringing it out as a single sided 45rpm re-issue, Bill became very involved in this project in a number of ways. The most important being by doing a lot of research and compiling a supportive article which duly appeared in the *Record Collector*. More importantly as far as the Primo Record Company directors were concerned, Bill saw to it that a very generous portion of the pressings we had made in Lower Hutt at the HMV plant were consigned to The Stanford Archives, who acted as our agents for the American Market.

For some years after this we kept in touch and exchanged the odd parcel of records. Bill detested the time it took

in doing them up them up and sending them off. This activity between us sort of came unstuck when I happened to express an interest in obtaining some Frances Alda's recordings. Without fully understanding the consequences of this remark, I became the recipient of a very large consignment of a very comprehensive selection of the soprano's Victor recordings, most of which were songs and ballads. At first I was overwhelmed by this generous action, but as time wore on and I began a culling operations on my collection, I exchanged them with Syd Gray for some items which had more appeal for me at the time. News of this eventually got back to Bill who, being the wonderful person he was, didn't chide me unduly, but it led to the termination of our exchanges. To this day I regret how I handled this situation.

In 1977, I passed through Los Angeles on my way the England, staying a few days with friends. Unwittingly, I mentioned all this in a letter to Bill hoping that I would be able to pay him a visit, but when I saw the problems this posed in relation to how far apart we were on the map, it all went by the board. I made up for this in August of 1985 when once again I broke the journey to Europe. This time I stayed with Bill at "La Chiripa" and got a better understanding of his background six year later, this is how I reported my stay with him in 2001.

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"The rest of the afternoon, evening and following morning was taken up playing records from his collection. After showing me his card index system and explaining the coding I began to extract records and play them.

I began with a captivating song by Blanche Arral 'El Bolero Grande' (Vasseur) Victor Red Seal 64107 - recorded in 1909. I followed this up with a David Bispham Columbia 'Danny Deever' (Damrosch) 30016 - representing one of the earliest 12 inch Columbias to come on the market. Gradually working my way through the alphabet, I began to understand his collections layout, spreading as it did into several rooms and annexes. I was struck by the domination of Victor Red Seals over all other labels in his collection. In this respect, I would estimate that there would have been something in the vicinity of about 40,000 items in his collection. Of these I would say 99% would have been Victors! When I made a comment about this fact he guided me to a cabinet which held something I'd read about but never seen. They were 14 inch Fonotipias. These afforded me great pleasure as they contained solos by Bonci and other concerted groups.

For me a first hearing of Michael Bohnen's 'Erl King' by Loewe represented as it was in his collection by

an American Decca, was a complete revelation! "When I discovered this as an item on a Priser CD in Tower Records San Francisco a couple of weeks later, I immediately bought it for my collection. On another personal note it was good to re-familiarise myself with John Prouse's 'There are no more like thee' (Temple), a test pressing which I exchanged with him many years ago.

Then I got sidetracked on boxes of photographs and cuttings by famous singers from a large mahogany wardrobe. Breaks for phone calls from people like Michael Henstock, a 15 minute chat on Fonotopia matters interspersed with meals saw this activity flow over into the following day. I might add at this point that his playing equipment that involved a 16 inch transcription turntable and amplifier was mounted in a large cabinet, a configuration which prevented him from using it while seated in his motorised wheel chair. Further I might add that all his books and reference files while still accessible to a normal person, were situated in a way that put tremendous strain on a person seated in a wheelchair. I noted this at the time because I gained the impression that there were collectors out there who didn't appreciate the difficulty he had in filling in requests for information. If they only knew the problems they created in pursuing him for data, then I'm sure they would not be so impatient and ill mannered when he didn't reply or come forward with

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**ITEMS THAT MAY BE PLAYED ON THE 21st of JUNE 2009
93 BURMA ROAD**

Caruso/Alda HMV DL 100 1916 & 1949

Harry Champion - The Old High Hat that I was Married In -Rexophone
5243 c.1912

Collins & Harlan - That Mesmerising Mendelssohn Tune (Berlin)
Columbia Indestructable Cylinder 3065 c.1910

The Wreck of a Troopship - Zonophone X-41027 1907

Peter Ustinov - Mock Mozart (Ustinov - Hopkins) Parlophone R.3612 c.1952

INTERMISSION

Albert Sandler Trio - Leslie Stuart Songs pt.1 Columbia DO 2192 c.1945

Vasa Prihoda, Violin solo - Waltz (Dvorak - Prihoda) Polydor 1926

Julius Katchen, Piano w. L.S.O. cond. Adrian Boult - Story of Three Loves -
(Paganini - Rachmaninoff) Decca Y 6622 1953

Wiener Blut (Strauss) Ziehrer Orchestra GC 40557 c.1901-1902

Prelude Act 3 Lohengrin (Wagner) La Scala Orch. Carlo Sabaino GC 50555
c.1908-1910

Gymnopedie No.1 & 2 (Satie) Phil.Orch - Stokowski HMV DA 1688 1937

INTERMISSION

Albert Sandler Trio - Leslie Stuart Songs pt.2 Columbia DO 2192 c.1945

Rosina Buckman - Waiata Poi (Hill) HMV B.4505 1914

Hedwig von Debitzka - O del mio Dolce Ardor (Gluck) with piano by Julius
Pruwer Decca-Polydor CA 8060 1929

Annemarie & Heinrich Schlusnus - In einem Kühlen (Volkslied) Polydor
47215 1938

Fats Waller, Piano - Numb Fumblin (Waller) HMV B.4347 1929

Riverians Orchestra - Tiger Rag. One-Step (L.Rocca) Vox 1737 1925



Photograph from the Alexander Turnbull Library inscribed
"Monsieur Brooks - bien sympathiquement, Blanche Arral."

WILLIAM R. MORAN

(JULY 29th 1919 - Jan. 22nd 2004)

With the death of Bill Moran we lose both an indefatigable collector and someone who set new discographical standards. His first of over 80 contributions to *The Record Collector* was in 1952, his last in December 2000. Over almost 50 years books, discographies, articles, letters and *addenda* and *corrigenda* to published work poured from his home, since 1929, at La Cahada, California.

To encapsulate such a man is daunting. His life as a geologist, his career with Union Oil, becoming Vice President of its Minerals Exploration Corporation, and his work in establishing, at his *alma mater*, the Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound have been amply summarised by Andrew Farkas (*The Record Collector*, Vol. 35, nos. 8-10, (1990), pp.256-260.) Outside his profession, the long hours and the intellectual effort of music and musicology offered relaxation. To meet a Scandinavian collector, to visit a retired singer in Brazil, to unearth unpublished memoirs, to read the many thousands of books shelved in every room in the house or to write up his findings were all pleasures in themselves. His output of musical writings is even more remarkable in view of his many absences, often for months, in remote parts of the Pacific and South America, far from research materials.

Bill was a man of unassailable logic: for any research project he established basic, scientifically-sound principles. Earlier than most, he perceived both that discography could never be taken seriously without the scholarship expected elsewhere and that the only identification of any recording was through its complete matrix number. It seems so obvious - now - but things were very different then. Thus and otherwise, as early as the 1930s he identified those areas of the Victor vaults most likely to yield unpublished records for W.H.Seltsam's then-new IRCC. Elsewhere, he located the remarkable group of Sembrich Victor tests, finally released on IRCC L7037. His death breaks one of the last links with those exciting times.

Bill was quick to eschew the piano (whose pitch varies with environment and recent history) for pitching records; he employed the metal pipes of a fearsome, wheezing Aeolian organ, which he had himself restored to working order. He demonstrated that stroboscope speeds are whole numbers only in certain cases and - to the enduring mystification of his old friend Desmond Shawe-Taylor that this became critical when pitching to *i* rpm: *ergo*, he produced his own set of custom-made stroboscopes. He realised that using a European 50 Hz stroboscope in 60 Hz America offered further speed bands (an accidental benefit available, in reverse, in 50 Hz countries). His scientific mind exposed fakes of all kinds, ranging from fraudulent international exchanges to a purported Jean de Reszke record,

and from a 'Patti' cylinder to an 'unknown' Caruso 'Di quella pira', with a 14-second high C, 'discovered' by the irrepressible Eddie Smith. The purging from the mind of some persistent, intrusive tune was, he maintained, achievable by humming 'In quelle trine morbide'. Yet logic was usually tempered with humour: the giant cup he used at breakfast was, he explained to me, there in case the physician ever limited him to one cup of coffee per day.

For Bill, collecting was more than records: he endorsed the maxim of the invaluable, albeit fallible, Kutsch & Riemens, '*Colligite fragmenta ne pereant*' ('Gather the fragments, lest they be lost'). with that concern for the history of recording that led him to make major bequests of money and *materiel* to Stanford and, latterly, to the University of California, Santa Barbara, he scoured the world for ephemera, the unconsidered trifles of the collecting world and of its early artists and engineers. Thus, many a box of irreplaceable documentation, long-neglected and perhaps approaching destruction, at the back of a garage in some backwater of Wyoming or New South Wales found its way into university research facilities for preservation, cataloguing and study. How many hours, he reasoned, could be saved if the long sequence of Klein's important contributions to *The Gramophone* was collected and, above all, indexed with a single volume? Instead of wishing 'If only...' , Bill did it. A similar philosophy prodiced his Nellie Melba: A Contemporary Review, a collection of arcane pieces by a galaxy of writers, famous and obscure, on the singer whom I think he revered above all. The recently-published memoirs of Blanche Arral were his final major editing task.

Over a long collecting life Bill's research materials - cuttings, catalogies, photographs, booklets, periodicals, manuscripts and typescripts of many, kinds, books in many languages - and some 40,000 records culled from everywhere from Chile to Tokyo made him almost uniquely qualified as an investigator into the byways of record-collecting. His insistence on precision, above all in his own meticulous work, did not endear him to the practitioners of the arm waving school of writing. He saw it as a duty to share his own standards and immense knowledge with those from whom the US Mail brought a weekly barrage of appeals, even with those whom he described as asking him, as he put it, "to sew a shirt on to the button that they had supplied". It grieved him that his failing health of the last several years, commencing with the arthritis that prevented his lifting a record from the shelf, still less using a typewriter, precluded even the apologetic reply that he was physically unable to assist the enquirer.

His causes *celebres* were the stuff of legend, notably his dispute (which lasted for decades, through numerous scholarly articles from both sides) with the late John Stratton over who sang 'A ce mot' in *Les Huguenots* on that famous Mapleson cylinder. Wherever Bill is now, I've no doubt that he's explaining to Melba just how he deduced that it couldn't possibly have been Suzanne Adams.

I can still see him, whisky in hand, muffled against the chill of the back-room of an Irish pub, listening on the landlord's portable player to an LP of McCormack songs. It was a privilege to know him.

Michael Henstock

This obituary is reprinted from *The Record Collector* Vol.49 No.1 March 2004



I made this photo of Bill in his music room in 1985. It shows the Aeolian organ against the far wall which he used to get correct pitch to work out the speeds for some of his records. See Michale Henstock's obituary for further information. Also a 'Dog Model' gramophone and an Edison Home phonograph with a cygnet horn can be seen in this view. One interesting sidelight to his musical preferences came out when he told me that his Company secretly arranged a special concert of excerpts from Gilbert & Sullivan's *Mikado* in his honour at a farewell function when he retired. Another snippet I gleaned from him in conversation was when he attended a celebration for *The Record Collector* in Great Britain in the early 1970s. This could have been staged for the editor James Dennis which was held in London. It was a gathering where he met many of his fellow researchers and writers.

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the information they require”.

When I heard that Bill was writing a book on Blanche Arral, I wrote and told him I'd come across a photograph of her in the Alexander Turnbull Library's photography collection in Wellington. I duly forwarded a photocopy of this and I got a reply asking me to secure a copy and obtain a clearance for him to use it in his book which was published a year later. The picture of Arral by the way was given pride of place in the front of the book*.

When I received my copy of this, it came with a note from his nurse who was in attendance when he died.

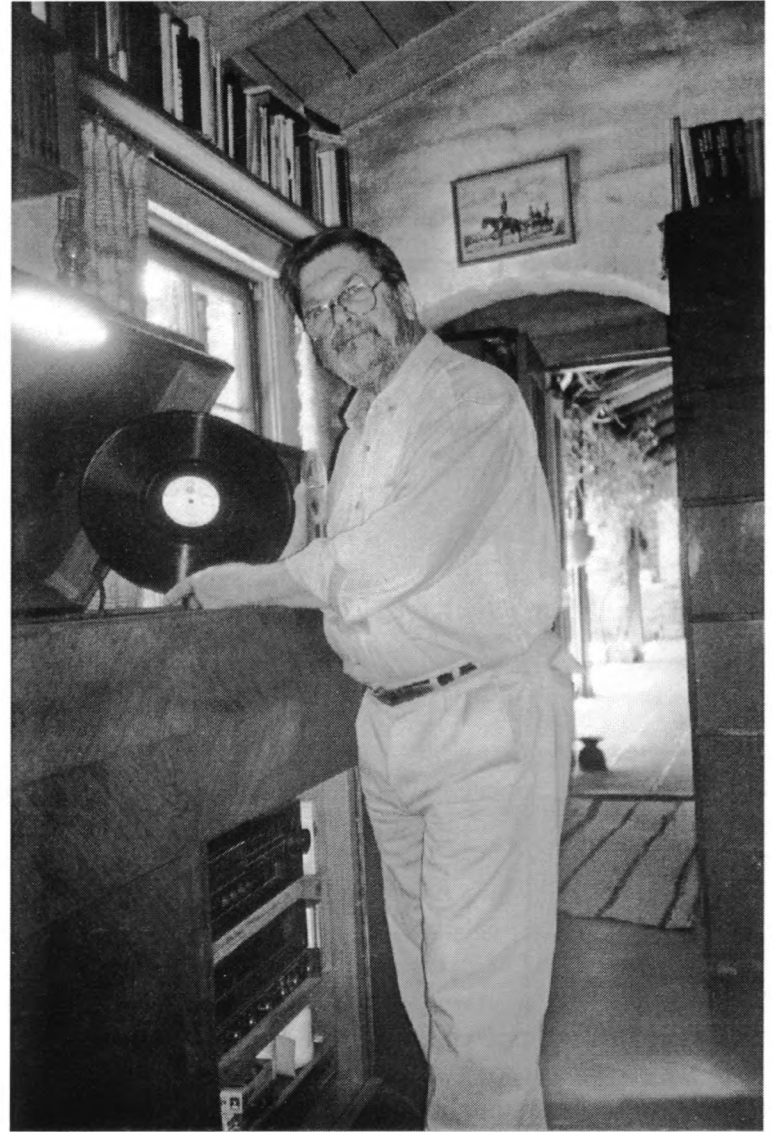
On reflection I have to admit that while one could never dream of criticising Bill for the tremendous work he put into seeing record collecting elevated to a higher level during his lifetime, with work on the Victor Company which leaves one aghast for its meticulous research. On the other hand I can say I never saw him personally comment on a singers performance either in print or verbally in my presence. One can search in vain for anything approaching an enthusiast comment on a singers interpretation of a particular performance or by simply citing upon other recordings of the same item to justify an appraisal. Lots of well researched contemporary comment from newspapers and critical reviews during a particular singers career, but you will

not find praise or criticism from him for an artists performance on a particular aria or how you might like to compare them to some of their contemporaries in direct comparison. Perhaps I'm being mean. What I point out as a missing attribute might reasonably be second generation collectors thing. Who knows!

Then again it might be symptomatic with someone whose vision becomes confined through the intensity of study on a particular topic, something I have absolute sympathy with as I have often been led astray by some of the more intrinsic characteristics of record collecting that suddenly leave you high and dry when someone says to you, "What do you think of that" as they remove a record they've just played you from the turntable. Jolting your back to the task of answering the question coherently while you've been gazing at the wonderous sight of a Pink G&T being dangled before your eyes! Concealing the fact less it be known that you love the visual appeal of the label more than the performance!

No, we record collectors are far from perfect by a long chalk!

*Arral visited New Zealand during 1906-1907 Internatioanl Exhbiton in Christchurch and gave a series of con-cets throughout the country.



Your editor in the music room of 'La Chiripa' nervously holding a very rare 14 inch Fonotopia which he is about to play for Bill Moran. This is the second time I've used this photographs to fill a space. The first time was in Vo 7, No.2 in 2001. Note the warm Californian sunlight through the arched doorway beyon my portly frame onto the vine draped courtyard.

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