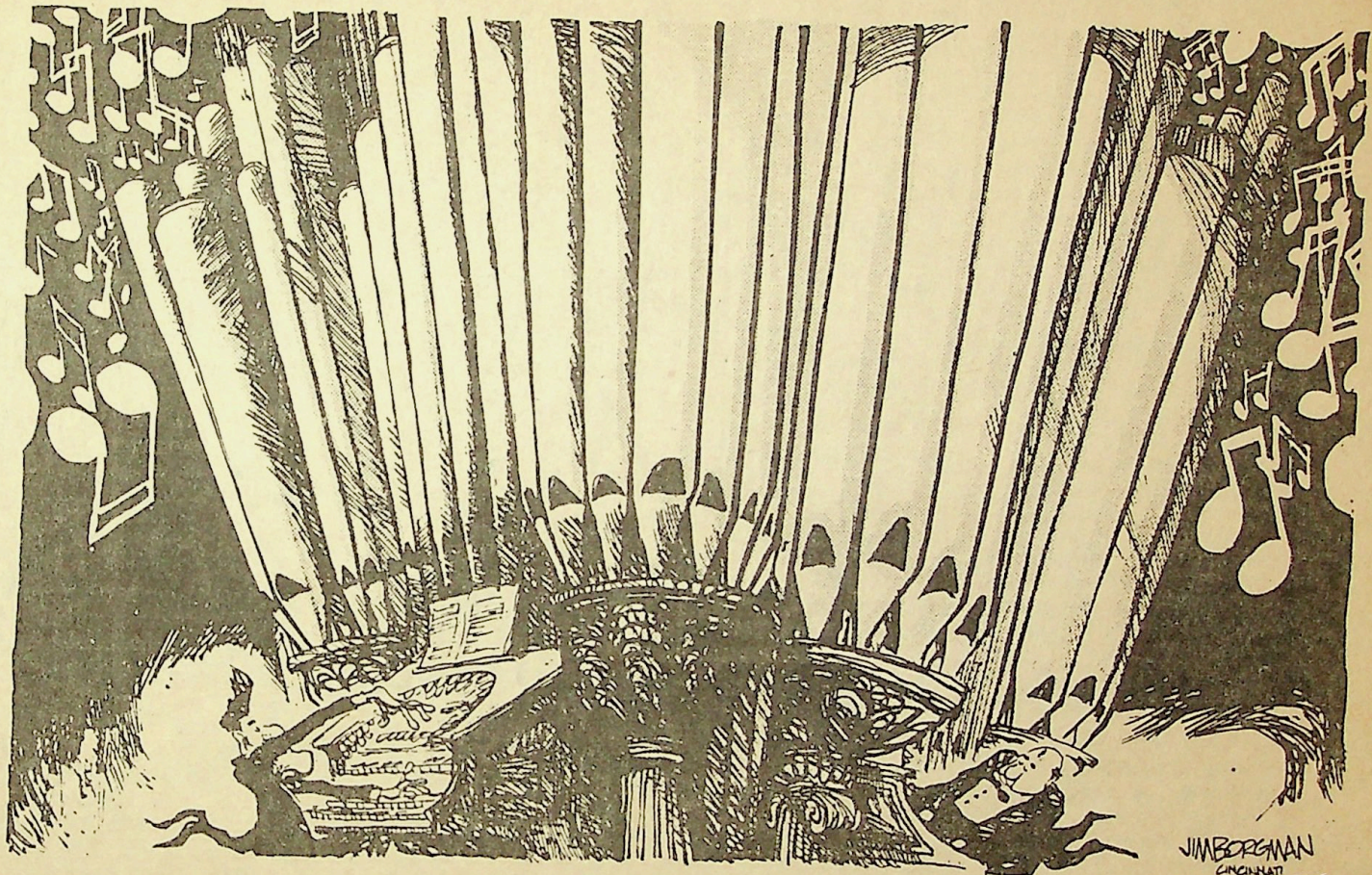
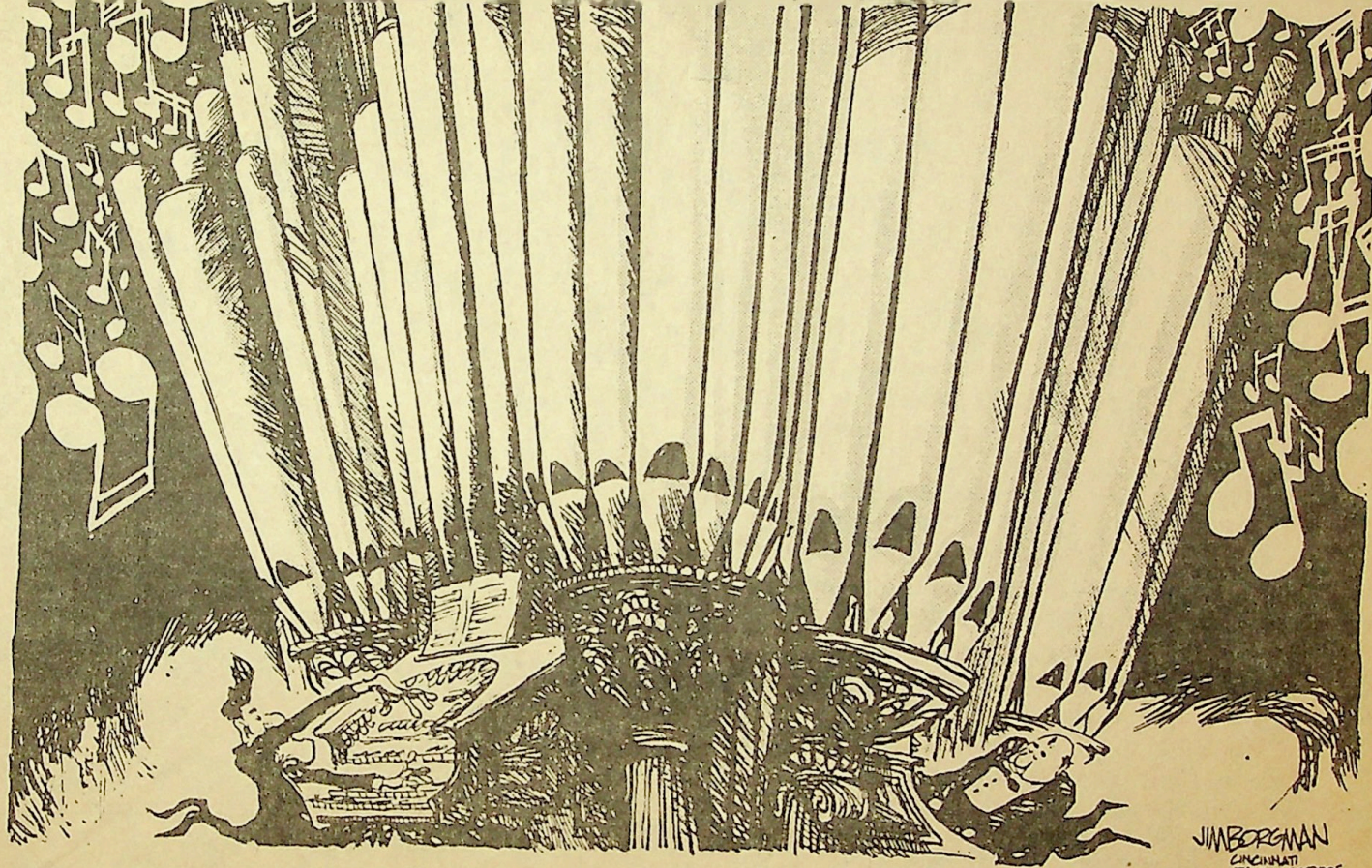


e At Geneva: Why Gorbachev Need.



Reagan And Gorbachev At The Mighty Wurlitzers



Reagan And Gorbachev At The Mighty Wurlitzers

Organ concert a sweet feast, short on nutrition

By Robert A. Masullo
Bee Reviewer

OAKLAND — Watching George Wright seated at "the mighty Wurlitzer," I was struck by how much the grand theater organ resembles an old-fashioned juke box.

The sweeping curves, the multi-colored, brightly lit parts — they all looked the same. And then it hit me. Of course. Wurlitzer also made juke boxes. Probably the same guy designed both.

But the similarity didn't end with looks. The music that Wright, the foremost exponent of the theater organ today, played with considerable technical facility was the same kind of music that juke boxes originally played — "Jazz Me Blues," "Laura," "Singin' in the Rain."

And the audience, which filled most of the Oakland Paramount's 2,800 seats, deeply appre-

Music Review

ciated the musical confetti Wright sprinkled. They were true believers, fans of a fading form.

In addition to old songs and the organ's sound effects of drums, tubas, tambourines, cymbals, screeching autos, claps of thunder and heaven knows what else, the presentation featured Wright's between-tune folksy tales — sort of like Liberace without the glitter.

We learned that he broke his leg last year, that while it was in a cast he ate too much and got so "there's considerably more of me to love," that he likes to drink "a little booze" with musical cronies, and (at least a half-dozen times) "that I'm a very happy man."

Twenty different selections — among them standards ("Stardust," "Am I Blue"), semi-seri-

ous (Albienez's "Tango in D," a truncated "Rhapsody in Blue"), patriotic ("National Emblem March," "God Bless America") and gimmicky ("Mexican Hat Dance," "Carioca") — made up the evening.

It was a light, fluffy and quite sweet evening.

Certainly, the elaborate instrument being played in the even more elaborate movie palace (restored to museum-like luster — and a show in itself) was evocative. Never having heard a theater organ concert before, I was glad I went. For the first 15 or 20 minutes at least.

After that?

Devotees of the theater organ, I'm sorry, but it quickly became painfully obvious to me why the instrument and its diminutive relatives (accordion, concertina, harmonica) for so long have been waning in popularity: Every tune they play sounds the same.

Reviewer piped overboard

Editor: Well, The Bee has done it again!

This time, it sent some food (?) reviewer to cover an instrumental music review in the likes of a Robert A. Masullo, with his "sweet feast," "short on nutrition," and "fluffy and quite sweet . . ." This was his write-up of the George Wright theater organ concert (Scene, Nov. 18) at the Oakland Paramount.

By his own admission, Masullo says that this was his first exposure to a theater organ concert. I strongly suggest that he do a little homework on his next intended subject, be it musical artist, musical instrument, or musical program.

Should he be able to rise above his jukebox mentality as regards to the theater pipe organ, he might well learn something of this instrument through the local Sierra Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society.

Incidentally, George Wright (local boy makes good) played one of his best live concerts in the past 10

years, with all of his small talk.

— **John P. Picco, Ed.D.**
Chairman, Sierra Chapter, ATOS
Carmichael

Editor: I can't believe a paper the caliber of The Bee would allow such a review of the George Wright concert to be published.

The reviewer is ignorant and knows nothing about the instrument or the artist. The American Theatre Organ Society and its members take extreme exception to this type of review; it is inexcusable that one man can cause so much distortion by his lack of knowledge of the subject matter he was sent to review.

I doubt that he was even there during the last half of the program, as he certainly did not cover it correctly.

Keep this Robert Masullo away from organ concerts, or better still have him attend one of our local ATOS monthly concerts and we will try and educate him with the what and why of the theater organ.

— **"Bud" Taylor**
Carmichael

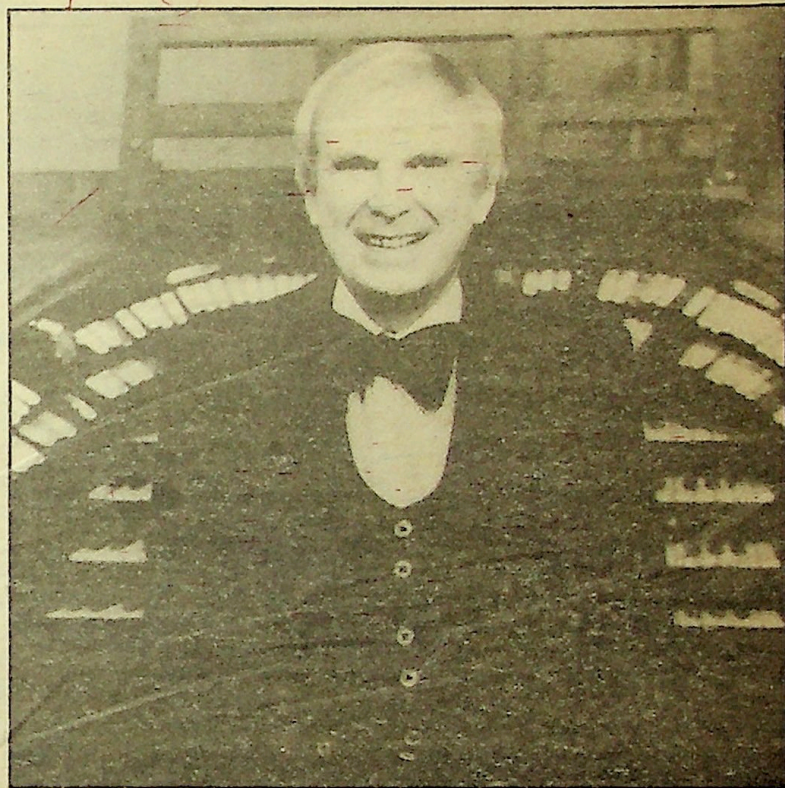
Editor: Quite obviously Mr. Masullo is personally *not* interested in theater organs and knows nothing about them.

Since the theater was almost filled during the concert, there must be many who hold an interest for good talent and beauty of a great instrument. While I have no axe to grind in behalf of George Wright, he did live in Sacramento for many years in the 1930s and was the local boy pipe organ prodigy then and became *world famous* since.

My parting comment is, if you know absolutely nothing about a subject, how do you intelligently review it?

— **Ray L. DeVault**
President, Deutronix Organs, Inc.
Sacramento

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Bee file

George Wright "played one of the best live concerts in the past 10 years."



MARC MARTIN Los Angeles Times

of downtown Long Beach, built entirely by hand with balsa wood.

Bird's-Eye View

Miniaturist Reduces Downtown Long Beach to Table-Top Size

By DAVID HALDANE
TIMES STAFF WRITER.

LONG BEACH—Fernand Martel has this city's downtown literally spread out on a table in his apartment building.

There are, of course, such recognizable structures as the World Trade Center, Sheraton Hotel and City Hall. Then there are other, less prominent ones, including a major expansion of the convention center unlikely to exist for another two years and the Landmark Square building scheduled to open in December.

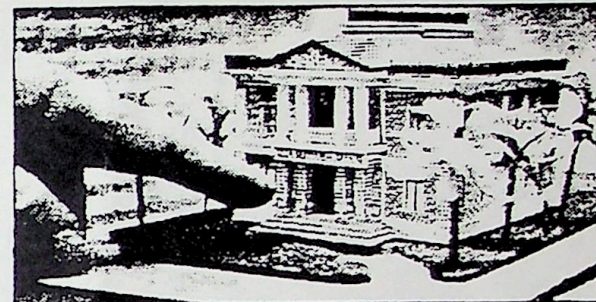
"I finished it two months ago," boasted Martel, a 70-year-old retired opera singer and organist who five years ago embarked on a new career creating detailed miniature buildings, particularly historic structures of Long Beach, out of balsa wood and glue.

His latest project is even more ambitious: reconstructing the entire downtown area, including buildings that have been approved but not yet built, on a base that will eventually cover an area of 225 square feet.

"I want people to appreciate the value of what they are living in," Martel said. "This is a beautiful city."

According to Martel, the work was suggested by a city official who believes the model-in-progress can help planners visualize their architectural goals for the downtown redevelopment area.

"As the city grows and we monitor its growth, to be able to see a three-dimensional model is vital," said Bob Ringstrom, urban design officer for the



Model of Long Beach's first city hall from 1899.

city's Department of Planning and Building. "This model is not a mantelpiece or a lobby display for the purpose of announcing our exploits; it is designed as a study model so that we can give serious attention to the relationship of the buildings and the streets as it relates to the entire urban fabric."

Constructed of modular pieces, Ringstrom said, the model could eventually be stored at City Hall, where architects and planners would be able to reconstruct existing city blocks or construct new ones to measure the visual and aesthetic effects.

"When you just look at a site plan that is flat you have to go through the additional mental effort of realizing the vertical height of the building," Ringstrom said. "With a model you can do that instantaneously; it helps you understand the developing personality of a street."

Although the city has yet to make a formal

Please see MODEL J8

Fair Oaks will unveil its Mighty Wurlitzer

By Kathryn Eaker
Neighbors staff writer

When movies added sound, theater organs almost became the 20th century's dinosaur.

Most were pulled out of theaters, sold to churches, installed in private homes — or junked. By 1952, only a fraction of the original number had survived.

One survivor, a Mighty Wurlitzer estimated to be worth \$15,000, is being installed in the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse, giving Fair Oaks Park the distinction of being the only public grounds in Northern California to sport the unique instrument.

Dedication ceremonies at 2 p.m. April 4, sponsored by the American Theater Organ Society, will include a free concert, precursor of a series beginning June 20, featuring the instrument's 800 pipes and score of special sound effects.

American Theater Organ Society was founded 30 years ago by a handful of admirers of the theater pipe organ and its versatile music. Today, the nationwide organization has 5,247 members. The society's Sierra Chapter, which covers the greater Sacramento area, has 137 members.

Spokesman Carl Harris traced the history of the medium-sized organ recently moved to Fair Oaks back 57 years to the old Oakland Paramount Theater, home of Oakland's Sym-

phony Orchestra.

When talkies came to the East Bay, the organ was sold to a San Leandro church, and then to a church in Richmond, where it eventually was replaced by a modern, electric model.

Eight years ago, American Theater Organ Society acquired the organ from a Sacramento devotee and installed it in a room at CalExpo — a spot, Harris said, that wasn't particularly accessible to the public.

Accessibility is a major reason the members of the Sierra Chapter are excited about the organ's new home.

"Here, it will be a part of the community," said Harris.

In agreement with the Fair Oaks Park and Recreation District, the society will offer eight free concerts a year open to the public; monthly or bi-monthly free concerts for retired people; and occasional silent movies accompanied by the dramatic sounds of Mighty Wurlitzer.

The organ, explained Fair Oaks organist Dale Mendenhall, "is a one-man orchestra."

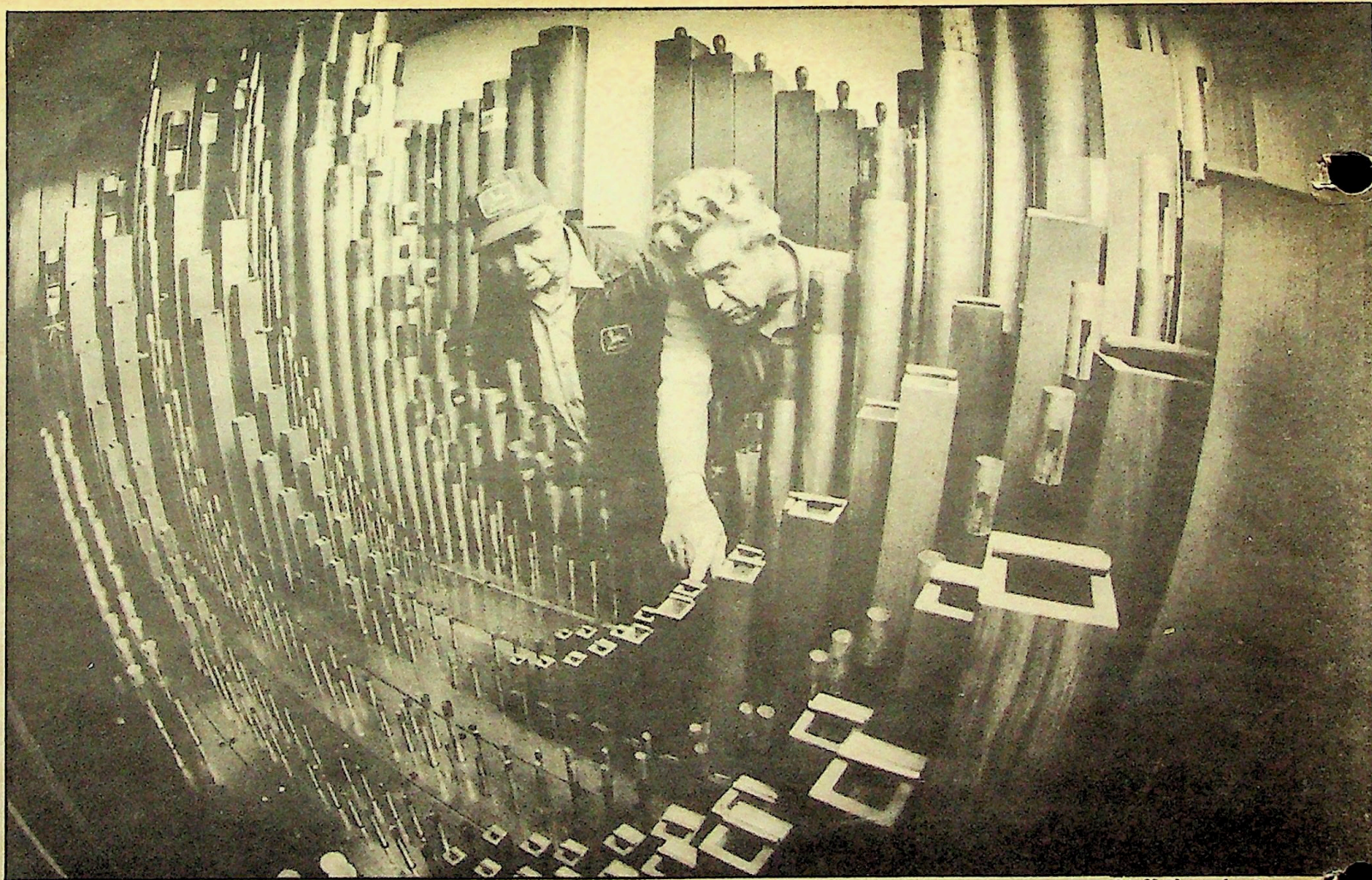
Each set of pipes imitates a musical instrument — trumpet, flute, violin, french horn (backbone of the instrument).

Unlike the classical organ, the theater organ console is connected through pneumatic tubes to percussion instruments, such as drums, castanets, tambourines, cymbals, whistles and sirens, throwing oomph in its performance.



Jim Carpenter of Orangevale, a member of the Sierra Chapter of the American Theater Organ Society, helps install a pipe organ in the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse. Dedication ceremonies will be April 4.

Neighbors photo
by Susie Gow



Staff Photo by Steve Y

Transplanting a vital organ

Ray Anderson, left, and Dale Mendenhall check the hundreds of pipes of the theatre organ which they and other members of the American Theatre Organ Society are installing in the clubhouse in Fair Oaks'

Village Park. The massive instrument, which began its life in 1924, is being transferred from Cal Expo's theatre and will be unveiled at a ceremony in March. For more details, see page 4.

MODEL: Miniaturist Puts Long Beach on Table-Top

Continued from J6
 arrangement to reimburse Martel. Ringstrom said he hopes that the elderly artisan, after making the model available to city planners, can eventually be retained to periodically revise it to reflect new developments.

Martel said he is not working for money but for the love of his craft. Despite the lack of a formal contract, he said, he has already spent more than five months on the project and expects to put in at least 10 more before he is finished. Working from plans supplied by the city, he said he has spent about \$2,500 of his own money on supplies, an amount that could eventually double.

"When you are retired and have nothing to do," Martel said, "you want to do something that will stay while after you're gone. So why not do something beautiful for the population of your city?"

Martel did not begin building miniatures until 1985, when he retired from a musical career that had spanned several continents. Born in Quebec, Canada, he entertained troops during World War II in a Canadian army show and eventually attended Juilliard

School of Music in New York City. Later he sang with the City Center Opera Co. of New York, studied in Paris and appeared in the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. productions of "Doktor Faust," "Carmen," "Tosca," "Barber of Seville" and "Romeo and Juliet," to name a few.

Eventually, Martel became a hotel and nightclub performer, accompanying himself on the piano. Thirty years ago he began playing the organ in cocktail lounges, including some in Long Beach.

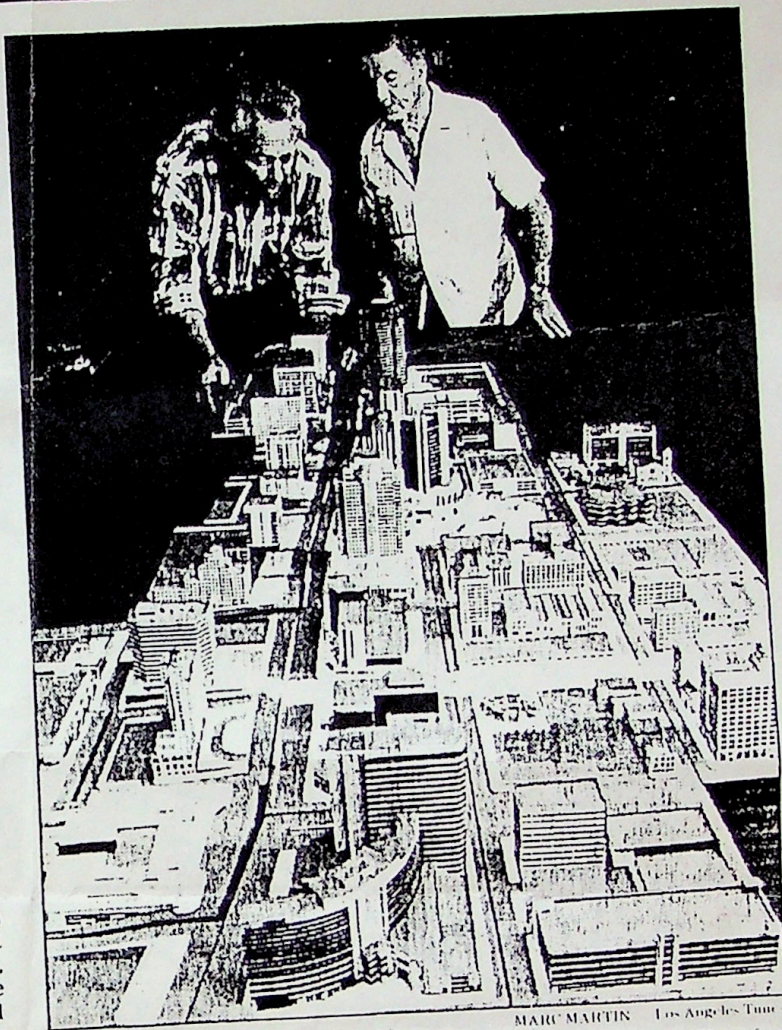
Fascinated by architecture, the elderly organist—he still gives occasional recitals around town—said he did not begin a serious study of the subject until after settling into a retirement home in downtown Long Beach.

The city is the perfect setting for such a study, he said, because it is well planned and its architecture is varied.

Beginning with commercial modeling kits that included detailed instructions for the construction of small-scale government buildings and European castles, Martel gradually taught himself the miniaturist's art. Then, embarking on his own designs, he began working on the first of 21 detailed replicas of historic Long Beach buildings—many with working lights and plastic shrubbery.

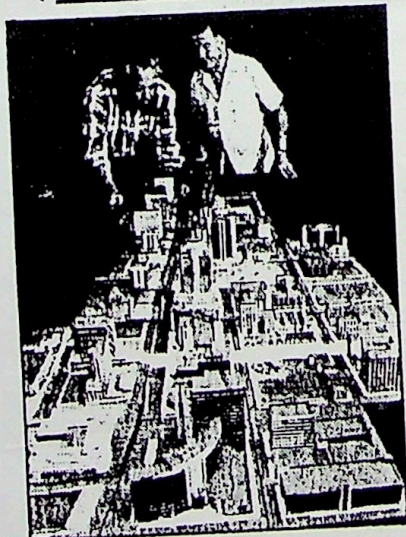
Among the buildings that Martel has copied are the Breakers and Lafayette hotels, downtown Farmers & Merchants Bank, the city's first City Hall, the Jergins Trust Building and the old Pacific Coast Club.

While some of the models have been exhibited at the Queen Mary and elsewhere, Martel said, most remain stored on the floor and in the closets of the small downtown apartment in which he works. "I



MARC MAITIN Los Angeles Times

Bob Ringstrom, left, urban design officer for Department of Planning and Building, lines up modular pieces with builder Fernand Martel.



MODEL BUILDER: Fernand Martel, right above, found a new avocation five years ago after retiring from a musical career; he builds intricate miniatures of buildings, particularly historic structures of Long Beach. Now the 70-year-old artisan is crafting a working model of the entire downtown redevelopment area. At left is Bob Ringstrom, city urban design officer. J6

have to tiptoe like a dancer in my apartment," he said, describing the care he takes to avoid damaging the models that take as long as a year to complete.

It is the downtown model, however, that he considers his crowning achievement.

Built to a scale in which one-eighth of an inch equals one foot, the model is a metallic gray complete with sidewalks, streets, shops

and parking spaces. Some of the buildings have windows intricately carved with an Exacto knife. And after taking pictures from various rooftops to help visualize spatial relationships, Martel has fashioned skyscrapers from glue and wood that feature all the markings of the real things.

"I think this should be seen by people," he said. "They just don't know how beautiful the city is."