



## Matthews Family Honored at Organ Dedication

by Paul Overly

How often it is that from the ashes of tragedy, a flame for good is ignited. This past year we witnessed this phenomenon with the dedication of the newly refurbished organ in Rodeheaver Auditorium, an organ dedicated to the memory of Judith Matthews Grant. Judith, a 1985 BJU graduate, lost a 15-year battle with cancer in March of 2002, leaving behind a husband and three children. To honor her memory, her parents, Ralph and Anne Matthews, along with her brothers, Tim, Paul, and Joel, and her husband Mike, all Bob Jones University alumni, designated a large contribution to the School of Fine Arts for the purpose of rebuilding the Rodeheaver organ.



The Matthews family has long been interested in music and especially the organ. Many years ago, Mr. Ralph Matthews sang in the BJU Church Choir, then under the direction of Dr. Dwight Gustafson. During his student years at BJU, the organ was a major feature of campus life. Someone played organ at all three meals, for the prelude and postlude in Sunday morning church, and in performances and postludes at Vespers (then held weekly). He developed a love for the organ and over the years began collecting organs. (I can't imagine what my wife would think of that!) One of his sons, Joel, studied organ as a student at BJU. With the tragic passing of their daughter and sister, it seemed fitting to memorialize Judith with this gift.

Perhaps you are wondering, "What was wrong with the old organ?" It was a fine instrument in its day, designed and built by W. Zimmer & Sons of Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1968. It contained 57 ranks of pipes and a console powered by a pneumatic electrical system that sent signals to a relay box in the basement of Rodeheaver. The signals were then relayed up three or four stories to the pipes. This caused a significant delay from the time one pressed a key until the time a pitch actually sounded. The console style went out of production years ago, and the Zimmer company eventually sent their extra parts (primarily springs) to Dr. Dunbar to help keep the keys operational. After its being utilized either for practice or performance from six to eight hours a day for nearly 40 years, performing on the organ became quite an adventure. One never knew what keys would stick or whether there would be enough electrical current to activate all of the stops. For over a decade, the University delayed an organ overhaul because of the significant

financial investment one would require, opting instead to keep patching our existing instrument. The Matthews family came to the rescue.

The new organ console was designed and constructed by Cornel Zimmer Organ Builders. Cornel Zimmer, son and grandson of the men who built the original organ, is an industry leader in combining digital and pipe organs. This majestic instrument now sports a beautiful new console constructed with quarter-sawn oak, featuring hand-carved copies of the BJU crest. An additional 43 digital stops nearly doubles the size of the organ. The solid-state electronics allow for a much quicker response time. The digital sounds were sampled from some of the country's greatest organs and then matched to the timbre of our own organ. The new design even includes placing pitch sensors in the existing pipes. As the pipes drift out of tune over time, the sensors allow the digital side of the instrument to make the necessary pitch adjustments to keep the organ in tune with itself. If only my trombone did that!



Dr. Ed Dunbar, University organist and chairman of the Division of Music, dedicated the new instrument with a recital on Saturday, February 14, 2004. The recital also commemorated the 25th anniversary of his first faculty recital at BJU and incorporated works from that recital. The recital commenced with a choral improvisation by Charles Tournemire. The first section also included a Bach toccata and fugue and a work by Nicolas de Grigny, a French Baroque composer. The middle portion of the recital included the Pachelbel *Partita Über "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan"* and several "Hymns of Comfort and Assurance"--arrangements of several of the Matthews family's favorites. Dr. Dunbar closed the recital with a performance of a striking work by Maurice Duruflé, *Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain*, Op. 7, a work in memory of a friend who perished in World War I. Between pauses in the recital, Dr. Darren Lawson and Mr. Stephen Jones gave public honor to the Matthews family, all of whom were in the audience for the recital.

The occasion was in many ways bittersweet. The music was beautiful and fitting. The instrument was magnificent. However, the presence of the Matthews family (especially Judith's three young children, Jonathan, Christen, and Anna) at the occasion lent a particular solemnity. This struck me especially as Dr. Dunbar played the Pachelbel chorale setting, loosely translated "What God does is well done." Only believers "looking for that blessed hope" can both sorrow and celebrate at the passing of a loved one.