

Beginnings: “The Piano”

(As told by Fannie Ball and shared with us by Alice Irwin. Enjoy the read...)

Hi Dave!

This rainy day was a perfect opportunity for me to clean out some "piles of stuff" I have around the house and I have found some buried treasures!

A number of years ago my dear old friend Fannie Ball wrote a story about the piano at the Club (although she insisted The Piano wrote the story, not her!). She was quite fond of it and told me it had an interesting history.

I transcribed her handwritten letter and I think it may have been put into an issue of The Log.

I found her original letter today while cleaning house and thought perhaps the Club might like it for their archives so I scanned it. If anyone would like the original letter let me know.

Fannie and Stub were real treasures; I miss them both.

Have a great Thanksgiving; hope to see you guys soon!

Alice Irwin
Contributing Writer and Reporter
The Sun & Record

My Life at “The Club”

I was given to “The Club” by Mae Graham sometime in the early 1960’s or possibly late 50’s. She said I was an Upright Grand and cost over \$1,000 when she was a teenager. Mae was Terry Connelly’s aunt, and she and husband Jim rented a slip on the West side; there were no other slips then.

I had a friend piano, and when “The Club” was remodeled the first time we were pushed to one side in the dining room - which had no roof for several weeks. We sat in the rain and at times several inches of snow covered us - you know those early fall snowstorms!

It was later decided that The Club didn’t need 2 pianos, so Al Hagen bought one of us and he chose my friend. His choice - and he has never forgotten! I hear it was quite a ride my

friend endured on a pickup, with "Frenchy" tickling the keys and a male chorus singing a bit off key all the way from Irwin Street to Maiden Lane.

I was scoured with Bon Ami by Bonnie when she and Tex were managers of The Club. It was a bit scratchy but I was cleaner and it really brought out my beautiful wood grain and color. I've been repaired from time to time, and now I need more.

I've been played by the best and the worst, the young and the old. "Frenchy", who played at Connelly's for so long, John Schwabb, who was at Cinelli's for so many years, with solos by Dorothy Long, during the Fall Die Hard dinners, and Bump, of course, with Frank singing.

I've been rolled from room to room to be part of a band or just to get me out of the way. Usually I'm found by the visitors from around the Lake, who seem to really enjoy me. I sound as good as I can when they play - they may laugh a little but don't seem to mind too much because I'm missing a key or two, or that I'm a bit out of tune. I do get very damp, so I really can't be blamed.

Sure, I'm rather old and I've been misused but I think I've held up rather well. This has been my home for many years, more than many of you know. Please think of my history - perhaps I've paid my dues too. I'd like to think so.

The Piano