City Interest in Pianists Proved

BY E. CLYDE WHITLOCK

Fort Worth always has had an especial interest in pianists. This interest was further prov-
ed by the remarkable out-pouring of citi-
en for the sessions of the Van Cliburn Interna-
tional Piano Competition. Not only were the three hearings of final-
ists completely sold out, and also the individu-
ual recital by the first prize winner, before it
was known who he was to be, but the semi-
finals had overflowing houses.

It remained for Mayor John Justin to explain this predis-
position for pianists. He stated that soon after the estab-
lishment of Camp Worth by Maj. Ripley Arnold on the bluffs of the Trinity 113 years ago, the first article of household equip-
ment mentioned in an inventory of the effects of Mrs. Arnold was a square piano. So "The Battle of Praguer," "The Awak-
ening of the Lion" and "Sil-
very Waves" may have mysti-
ified the Indians who camped on the
neighboring prairie.

"Thanks to Many"

The competition is now his-
tory, and there ensues the pleasant duty of acknowledging the
thanks due to a long list of per-
sons and organizations, a com-
plete roll of whom will never be
known.

As examples we mention a few
who would not be known to the
public.

Millie Katims, conductor of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, who came down to conduct the three programs by finalists, re-
mitted a large part of his fee.

The pianos, three of them, were provided with no end of unforeseen impediments by the Bruce and Whittier firms of Fort Worth and Dallas, and the Stein-
way headquarters in New York kept a man here during the con-
test to keep the pianos in order.

But one of the most useful physical contributions was en-
tirely unknown to the citizens, This was the help contributed by Boswell Dairies and its presi-
dent, Lorin A. Boswell, who also

was head of the financial com-
mittee and was the hero of the competition, and by V. W. Bos-
well, general manager of the
firm.

For more than a year Bos-
well Dairies provided free office
space, a part-time secretary and
typewriters, and even purchased a dictaphone for the use of Mrs.
Grace Ward Lankford, competi-
tion chairman, and her staff.

The Boswell switchboard han-
dled calls for the competition
staff, including long distance calls all over the world. They
provided the use of their postage meter for the mailing of thou-
sands of announcements and let-
ters, and took on the bookkeep-
ing for the social security ac-
counts of competition employees.

The value of all this cannot be put into figures.

"Hostesses Important"

Then there were Fort Worth hostesses, who took into their homes for two weeks contestants from 16 countries, some of whom
could not speak English. And
there was Mrs. Ewell Bohannon, who tirelessly arranged all the ho-
ousing, and smoothed out de-
tails throughout the duration of the contest. She doubtless could write a book.

Mrs. Lankford never can be
adequately compensated for her leadership. Her courage, re-
sourcesfulness and vision, and the contacts she made here and
abroad, carried the enterprise
to a rewarding conclusion.

Miss Laura Jane Musser did
the unusual thing in providing
not only the cash prize for the
second place winner, usually a
forgotten man, but securing for
him two professional engage-
ments.

The Fort Worth Symphony
Orchestra has not had due rec-
ognition for its share in the final
programs. While the members
were paid the scale for their services, they did their duty with enthusiasm and the full intention of giving their best.

The orchestra and Katims worked together with the finest cordiality and mutual regard, an attitude which mitigated the
boring routine of playing the
same four works numerous
times.

"Orchestra Credit"

The orchestra, drilled before-
hand by its regular conductor, Dr. Robert Hull, played with
clean ensemble, especially sen-
sitive response to dynamic re-
quirements and admirable bal-
ance with the soloists. They
were not disturbed by variations in interpretation among the
many players.

The city in all its history
never had heard so much superlatively fine piano playing within two weeks, and this will
remain one of the greatest events in the musical annals of the city.

A final reflection. We realize, as perhaps never before, what a remarkable instrument the piano is. Here is a contrivance of wood, iron and wires, a mechanical creation, yet in beauty of tone, enormous dy-
namic range, resources of phras-
ing and powers of intimate mus-
ical expression it is at the very
center of the world's musical
establishment.