



Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission Chronicle

May 2011

Austin Gould, longtime musician and educator, named winner of Encore Award

Austin Gould, the 2011 Encore Award winner, almost didn't live to see the day when he would receive the prestigious honor.

In August, 2009, he went to the hospital for a fairly common operation, a knee replacement. But there were complications—infection, followed by pneumonia that finally left him in a coma—and, he says, “they were ready to pull the plug on me.”

Fortunately, his sister and doctor refused to give up hope. He eventually came out of the coma, recovered from the other conditions and, after months of rehabilitation, was discharged on New Year's Eve, 2009, four months after being admitted for the supposedly routine surgery. Six months later, he was back to his duties at Trinity A.M.E. Church in Gouldtown, his hometown, **“They were ready to pull the plug on me”** as organist and choir director.

Encore Awards are given annually by members of the South Jersey Cultural Alliance “to honor those people who have contributed greatly to their organizations,” said Matthew Pisarski, Principal Planner of the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission, a member of the Alliance. “The Encore Awards have become a time to showcase the artistic and cultural excellence of our region.”

The 16th annual Awards presentation will be held on May 19 at Bally's Grand Ballroom in Atlantic City with a cocktail reception at 5:30 p.m. and dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Gould's musical career probably got its start at the age of “6 or 7,” he said, when he started “fooling around” with the family piano. His mother would encourage his interest in music by taking him to community concerts, where he heard many “leading



Austin Gould demonstrates his prowess at the organ at the Trinity A.M.E. Church in Gouldtown. (Photo by Prestige Publications)

artists” of the time, he recalled. He began taking piano lessons and later, organ lessons from Lowell C. Ayars, a well-known area musician and public school teacher.

After graduating from Bridgeton High School, he studied at the Ornstein School of Music in Philadelphia, then entered the U.S. Army where he was in Special Services, playing the organ for chapel services and also performing in the Army Band.

Following graduation from Temple University, where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees, he began his teaching career at Vaux Junior High School in Philadelphia; but the major part of his experience as educator began and ended with the Bridgeton school system, where he taught music, directed the chorus and became music supervisor. He toiled in Bridgeton for 36 years, retiring in June

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Millville Airport unveils mural, readies Air Show

A 55-foot mural depicting the World War II aviation history of the Millville Army Air Base was unveiled May 12 at the Millville Airport.

Artist Samuel Donovan of Woodstown, who also created the “Wall of Remembrance” mural on Millville’s City Hall in 1997, designed the new mural to commemorate the P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter-Bomber aircraft and the WWII pilots.

The Cultural & Heritage Commission, along with the N.J. State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Cumberland County Board of Chosen Freeholders,



Mural artist Samuel Donovan puts finishing touches on the new 55-foot mural at the Millville Airport. (Photo courtesy of MAAF Museum)

funded the project.

Featured in the art work are images of pilots William Rich, of Vineland, and Bernie

Borelli from Malaga, who died in 2003. Both served at the Millville Army Air Field during WWII as combat flight

instructors.

The Airfield’s calendar also includes the “Wheels & Wings Air Show,” on May 28 and 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. A feature performer will be the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, along with modern jets, historic “warbirds” and daring aerobatic acts.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children until one week before the show; tickets at the gate are \$15 for adults and the same rate for children. For tickets, visit the web site, millvilleairshow.com.

Award winner relishes busy lifestyle

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1996. He found his students receptive to music education, saying they were “motivated” to learn.

But teaching was not the only outlet to his musical talents. He performed as a concert pianist throughout the East Coast and was a frequent guest pianist on the former “Larry Ferrari Show,” which aired on WPVI-TV, the ABC affiliate.

Among his many honors and awards are:

- Outstanding Rotarian, 1975;
- Outstanding Educator of America, 1975;
- Concert pianist at the first annual President’s Luncheon in Atlanta, 1990;
- Distinguished Service Award from the N.J. Music Educators, 1992;
- Cumberland County Black Hall of Fame, 1993; and
- Bridgeton High School Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame, 2006;
- Dedicated member of the Cultural & Heritage Commis-

sion for nearly two decades.

In March of this year he represented his church at the N.J. Conference of Lay Organizations (First Episcopal District) at the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Newark.

His wife, Muriel “Honey” Denby, died in 2005, but he keeps in close touch with his two stepsons, Joseph and Gary Denby.

Now that he’s retired, he is far from the rocking chair. How busy is he? “Too busy,” he responds with a chuckle, pointing out that his position as ministry of music at the church requires a performance every Sunday and choir practice every Thursday, not to mention the preparation and rehearsal that goes with both those commitments. But he clearly loves his avocation and points with pride to the instrument that is the focal point of all the music—“An Allen organ, the closest thing there is to a pipe organ.”

And that, along with nurturing the budding musicians of his community, is apparently all the motivation he needs to continue being “too busy.”

Sample varied fare in ‘Taste of Bridgeton’

The “Taste of Bridgeton,” set for Saturday, May 21, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Marino Center, 11 Washington St. in downtown Bridgeton, will offer samplings from about 15 restaurants, including beer and wine tastings, according to Gail Gould, chairperson.

The event is part of Bridgeton’s 325th Anniversary celebration. Tickets are \$25, available at the Bridgeton Main Street office, 59 E. Commerce St. or at the Nanticoke Leni Lenape Tribal Office, 18 E. Commerce St.

Call the Main Street office at 856-453-8130 for more information.

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