

# JANSSEN PIANO NEWSLETTER

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FOURTH EDITION

JUNE 2011

## THE DOUBLE WHAMMY: HEAT AND HUMIDITY

Are you convinced that Summer has arrived? And in Georgia your piano gets a *double whammy*: heat and humidity. Both will “detune” your piano. You may have already heard the changes in your piano. It will likely sound sharper.

Why is that? The wood sound board expands and contracts with a change in the humidity...just like the doors in your home will expand and even stick during the summer. As the sound board absorbs the humidity, its crown rises and presses against the strings, causing them to tighten. The tighter strings will cause the piano to sound sharp. Conversely, in the winter, when humidity drops, the strings relax and the piano sounds flat.

You can do some things to offset the problems of humidity.

Place your piano correctly. Keep it away from open windows and drafts. Do not put it near air conditioning/heating vents or in direct sunlight. .

Have the piano tuned regularly. It is best to have it tuned twice a year according to all major piano manufacturers, but no less than once a year. Tuning stabilizes your piano.

Consider a humidity control system. It will double the life of your piano and keep your piano in tune longer. Along with major piano manufacturers, we recommend the Dampp Chaser Piano Life Saver System. We are certified Dampp Chaser installers.

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## PIANO TRIVIA

Which of the following materials are in a piano?

- Wood
- Silicone
- Felt
- Leather
- Cast Iron

Answer on second page.

## AZALEA ESTATES IN FAYETTEVILLE RECOMMENDS JANSSEN PIANO SERVICES

I have had the opportunity to work directly with Peter, owner of Janssen Piano Services, for several years and have found him to be consistently responsive to our piano maintenance needs. He provides a superior quality of service that is second to none.

Peter brings honesty and commitment and gives exemplary customer service each time he comes to our community. I would recommend him

without any hesitation.

**J. Marshall Gill Jr. Executive Director**

**Azalea Estates Assisted Living and Retirement Community**

## WHAT IS A PIANO TECHNICIAN?

### And Why You Should Insist on a “Technician”

Pianos are complex, sophisticated mechanisms. The modern piano technician must have knowledge in all facets of piano service. Most people view the technician as a tuner. But he must be able to do more than that. He/she must be capable of coping with 20 tons of string tension and advising you on the structural stresses and environmental factors which affect a piano’s tuning. He must also be able to **repair** and **regulate** the action, the heart of the piano, which has 9,000 intricate, interwoven moving parts. He also **fixes keys**, **restrings**, and **voices** and even **fixes pedals**. The skilled technician can diagnose problems by the sounds he hears. Buzzing, clicking, hissing, etc. all have significance to the experienced tuner.

Not only does the technician want to keep your piano in tune, but he is also concerned about the responsiveness of the keys to touch. Unlike those who focus exclusively on tuning, his goal is to provide the player with a beautiful sound but also to restore, when necessary, the vast range of responsiveness to varying touch, giving the player the utmost in musical control and playing pleasure.

### HOW LONG SHOULD A PIANO LAST?

Like parrots, pianos can outlive people. I have rebuilt pianos which have been inherited from a grandmother or even great-grandmother. A well built piano, like well-built furniture, may last generations.

How long your piano will last depends on: (a) how well it was constructed to begin with (materials, workmanship etc.) (2) the environment in which the piano resides (3) how it is used and (4) how well it was maintained.

In many respects, the life of a piano is analogous to the life of a car. The better made car will last longer if kept in a garage, rather than in the elements, if driven properly and if regularly maintained.

But no piano is without redemption. The question is: "at what cost?" Here is a photo of a piano I rebuilt from the case out. The piano had been sitting on a porch in the elements for an unknown period of time. Some structural elements of the case had rotted away and had to be reconstructed. I replaced most of the 12,000 parts, repaired the cracks in the sound board, and restrung the piano.

The before/after photos below show just the restoration of the hitch pins, plate, and bridge with new bass strings.



**Before Restoration**



**After Restoration**

**In the end, only the owner can determine the true value of his/her piano, which may be very different than the market value. Often restored pianos bring back fond memories of those whose hands once caressed the keys.**

Answer to Trivia Question: All materials, except silicone, are found in your piano. Technicians often find foreign objects as well: candy wrappers, pencils, pens, paper clips, crayons, pet toys, and coins. Often the fall board must be removed to remove the objects; or special tools must be employed to avoid damaging the delicate moving parts. We check the inside of your piano when we tune and we extract any foreign objects. We will also point out any problem areas, so that they don't escalate into a major repair job. Not all tuners/technicians provide this service.