

WELLINGTON'S NEW CARILLONIST

But the principal failing occurred in the sailing. And the Bellman, perplexed and distressed, said he had hoped at least, when the wind blew due East. Tha, the ship would not travel due West.

FOR Selwyn Baker, however, Wellington's new Bellman at the Carillon Tower in Buckle Street—there was no doubt as to which way his ship was going. It took him straight from a position as church organist at St. Chad's, Christchurch, to the Malines School for Carillonists in Belgium, where for two years he studied the art of campanology under Professors Staf Nees and Jef van Hoof.

Mr. Baker got his opportunity to study carillon playing when at the end of the war he saw an advertisement asking for applications for the position of carillonist at Wellington. After playing test pieces on the organ, he was selected from the 12 or 15 hopefuls who applied, and his extensive war service (nearly four years with the 5th Brigade, 2nd NZEF) helped to win him a rehabilitation bursary to study at Malines, the world centre of carillon playing. Previously, he said in an interview with *The Listener* last week, he had been church organist for 12 years at St. John's, Woolston, and St. Chad's. But the peal of bells in Christchurch had always attracted him, and when his opportunity came, he took it.

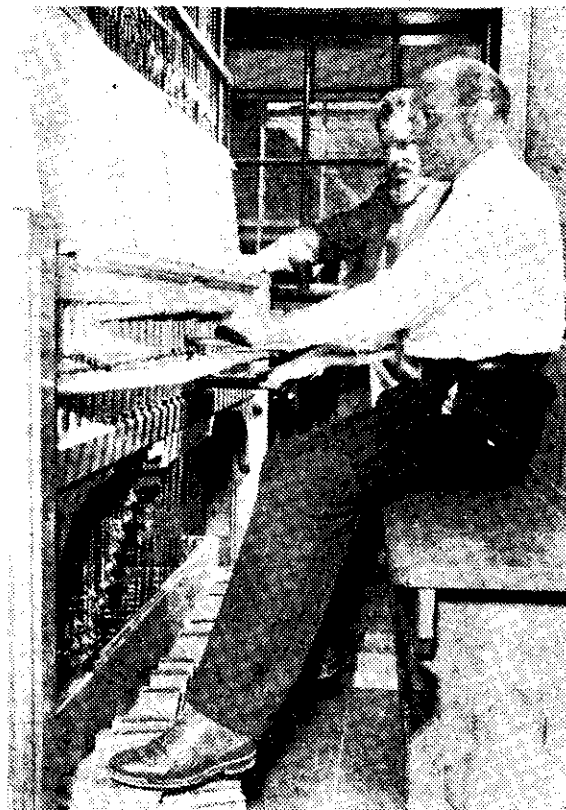
His two years' course of study in Belgium was not an easy one, he said. The students had to report every day to the Carillon School for practice, and on Saturdays and Mondays they were allowed to practise on the carillon proper. Professor Staf Nees, who taught them the art of playing, was a professor of the organ at the famous Lemmons Institute, as well as being city carillonist at Malines. Professor van Hoof was an expert in harmony and composition, and taught them how to arrange music for the carillon. At the end of their course an examination was held in St. Rombold's Cathedral, the jury consisting of directors from the conservatoires of Holland and Belgium, and the diplomas were awarded by the Mayor of Malines at the City Hall. Mr. Baker said that he was one of the few students in recent years to win his diploma with distinction.

American Visit

He played at Amsterdam during the Jubilee celebrations for Queen Wilhelmina, he said, and also during the

accession of Queen Juliana. Later he was invited to tour the United States and Canada by Professor Percival Price of the University of Michigan, who had heard him play in Belgium. He gave a total of 18 recitals in America, he said, including one on the Ottawa Carillon, on which the Wellington Carillon is modelled. In addition, one of the concerts he gave was recorded and later broadcast.

"You might think that carillon playing is more fatiguing than organ playing,"



SELWYN BAKER at the keyboard of the University of Michigan carillon. With him is Professor Percival Price, the University carillonist

he said, "and you would be right. It is only natural when you consider that the 'keys' are punched with the side of the hand (to which a small leather pad is fitted) and that the depth of the stroke is about four inches."

One hour was about the limit of endurance for any recital. Carillon playing was also more difficult than organ playing, since there were two keyboards for the hands and one for the feet (the pedalboard). Those listening to the bells would hear the music best at a distance of about 500 feet from the tower, he said. Beyond that distance the music was liable to be distorted by the elements, especially in a city like Wellington, where there were relatively few days completely free from wind.

Selwyn Baker recently described how he became a carillonist, and told listeners something about the mystery of his unusual occupation, in a radio interview which was broadcast by 2YA.



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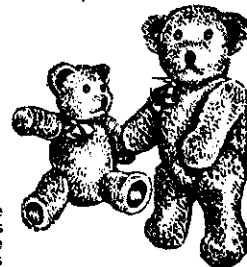


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