

Julius William Garrett, Sr. Born in Enhaut, Pa., June 4, 1924,

Julius W. Garrett Sr., perhaps the best-known piano tuner in Central Pennsylvania, is seen by many of his colleagues as an elder statesman of the profession. Garrett retired in 1991, but he still gets called by customers. Though he built his reputation as a tuner, He also sings and plays the piano.

He learned to play the organ at the age of 5. "I have a gift," he states. "I am blessed by God with an ear for music."

Born in Enhaut, Pa., in 1924, Garrett's father was a evangelical minister and his mother played guitar. They encouraged him to sing and play at prayer meetings and revivals. After graduating from high school in 1943, Garrett served with the Army for two-and-a-half years. He served with the Corps of Engineers in the South Pacific, where he helped build roads and airstrips.

Garrett is mechanically inclined and that he could combine his love of music with his mechanical talents to build a career as a piano tuner. When asked whether he prefers playing or fixing pianos, he never directly answers the question. But Garrett finds pleasure in both. "This is my thing . it was a vocation and an avocation. My work goes beyond me,". He learned piano tuning and repair in 1949 at the Harmony School in Harrisburg. His pastor gave him his start, by allowing him to tune the church's piano." I put out (business) cards, and it wasn't long before customers started calling. Word-of-mouth about my work quickly spread, He has tuned for famous artists. For the next 42 years Garrett's work gained him a measure of fame in Central Pennsylvania. Most of his customers were school districts and churches, but he had his share of famous pianists, too. He has tuned instruments played by Andre Watts, Earle Wilde, Ferrante and Teicher, George Shearing, Peter Nero and Dave Brubeck, among others.

As Garrett reflects on his career, he's comfortable with his own brand of celebrity. "I could never tell you how many people know me through my work, or have known me or seen me," he says while looking through his scrapbook of photos and clippings.

Although Garrett like most others, started out tuning pianos with their hands, ears and a tuning fork, the business has changed with the times. Garrett chuckles when he remembers how everyone once thought the electric piano would put tuners out of business. Today the work is still done primarily by hand and ear, but newer digital equipment provides some unique advantages.