



November 2, 2008

RADIO SOMEWHERE

By MAUREEN
NEVIN DUFFY

By midnight of Day Three of Friends of Old-Time Radio's four-day annual convention, Jay Hickerson and his wife were kicked back in a corner of the lounge in the north Newark Holiday Inn with a few fans. Hickerson, now of Leesburg, Fla., was asked who he thought could take over for him when he's tired of running the convention.

"I have no idea," he said. "I posed the question last year and had not one taker."

Maybe that's because no one feels they could do a better job of lining up scores of actors from every corner of the country, including Chuck McCann slipping easily from the high-pitched perennial student Walter Denton, of "Our Miss Brooks" fame, to the melodramatic announcer in the Saturday night re-creation of The Lone Ranger, with Michael Gwynne's stirring deep bass voice breathing life back into the masked crusader.

Gwynne's closing lines reflected the script's and the series' birth year of 1933: It's every man's right to be rich, an admirable state that encourages others to aspire similarly. Don't envy your neighbor because he has a house; try to build your own, or words to that effect, echoed the uneasy sentiments of a Depression-Era world when industrialists were coming under fire from unions, and wealth inequities were fueling fears of political upheaval.

The team of Lucie Arnaz and Laurence Luckinbill re-created the fictional battling husband-and-wife team The Bickersons, as well as fine performances in the sci-fi X-1 drama, "Mars Is Heaven." In the latter, written by Ray ("Fahrenheit 451") Bradbury, a space crew lands on Mars to find their deceased loved ones living utopian lives. It's still a gripping story.

Of course, no one brings as much to a live radio broadcast as the sound person. So we were really pleased to see Bart Curtis, of Elmira, N.Y., the soundman for these conventions take the Allen Rockford Award for his exceptional talents. And, Elaine Hyman won the Florence Williams Award for acting.

We met people from New Hampshire, Connecticut and points all over New Jersey, many of whom have no connection to radio other than listening. An attendee since the '80s, Martin Adler drives up from South River and stays over the four days. Judy Welshons, of Montclair, who owns a house in Lake Como, has attended the last three conventions. Same for Greg Zeigerson, a writer and artist and graduate of Asbury Park High School. Zeigerson, who lives in Garwood now, has a more hands-on interest. He hosts an iPod broadcast over www.zigory.com.

www.solidvox.com.

Perhaps the most reassuring mix of people among the largely older audience was the Luty family: mom Lillian, daughter Crystal, who has been attending since she was 8 (she's 29 now), her sister Heather Luty and her 3-year-old daughter, Mia, all from Norwalk, Conn.

Crystal explained that her father started it all when one night he discovered Max Schmid's 30-year

Golden Age of Radio show over WBAI. Hear Schmid from 7-9 p.m. Sundays over 99.5 FM or online at www.WBAI.org. (Hear my interview with Schmid and others at www.asburyradio.com.)
