

MY 2004 CONVENTION DIARY

By HORACE MEUNIER HARRIS

This was my fourth IAJRC Convention attendance, the earlier ones being at London, Hamburg and Indianapolis. It was a great pleasure to be visiting the city of St. Louis for the first time.

Wednesday: At 9a.m. I took my place at my first Board Meeting as a newly appointed Trustee. Actually it was 9.05a.m., as I lost my way to the appointed meeting room. The assembly was ably chaired by Ron Pikielek, the others present being Vice President Geoff Wheeler, Secretary Gene Miller, Treasurer Doug Norwood, Trustees Jack de Wied and Sonny McGown, with Gary Herzenstiel taking part on a disembodied phone link from Michigan. As a new boy I mostly kept my mouth shut, although I did propose a stiffer penalty for lateness of publication by any incoming Journal editor.

Afterwards I registered with Dan Warner at the Convention Desk, talking usefully with him and co-organiser Joe Schwab. Edwina, my wife, went out with Marcia Pikielek, Clare de Wied, Brenda Miller and Jean Adkins. She never feels alone at these functions.

In the afternoon I went to the Ballroom of this well appointed hotel, the Viking-Holiday Inn at Sunset Hills, St. Louis, to see and hear the program devoted to Ragtime and the 1904 St. Louis Fair, which was presented by Trebor Tichenor - talking, playing piano and showing appropriate historical slides. He was supported by banjoist Bill Ault, who also played Ragtime piano.

At 5p.m. I moved to the hotel's night club, called Generations, where Trebor and the St.Louis Ragtimers, comprising cornet, piano, banjo and Sousaphone, with the addition of the aforesaid Bill Ault, gave an entertaining program for 1 ½ hours.

At 8p.m. I moved to the Members' Jam in the Ballroom, firstly to hear Duncan Schiedt playing tasteful piano, plus a very competent clarinetist whose name I did not catch, and Joel O'Sickey on drums. To my surprise, Marcia Pikielek got up and sang a couple of numbers in a pleasingly contralto voice and with a very professional manner. They were replaced by

the excellent Dick Raichelson on piano and Gerald Ruark on drums. I was much impressed by the collective musical talent of our members.

After that I adjourned to the Listening Room, for a very varied program of old 78rpm records, put on in turn by Duncan Schiedt, Ron Pikielek, Chuck Sweningsen and Joel O'Sickey. Earlier, Edwina and I had dinner with Chuck, Harold Ehlers and Tristan Argenti.

Thursday: At 9a.m. I went to the Ballroom to see and hear a well illustrated program, devoted to the riverboats and jazz on the Mississippi, presented by Dennis Owsley, a local man who is an organic chemist, with his own local weekly radio show since 1983. Then I spent time talking with Janet Daly, Perry Huntoon, Tony Adkins and David Diehl. Afterwards I lunched in a restaurant across the road with Janet, Doug Norwood, Gerald and Nan Ruark.

At 2p.m., back in the Ballroom, Bob Koester gave a presentation about the early history of his Delmark label, now celebrating its 50th anniversary. He was supported by two of his original associates, Charlie Brown and John Wishart. Afterwards, I was able to remind Bob of his long and profusely detailed first class article, *Jazz In St. Louis - 1958*, that was featured in Sinclair Traill's book entitled *Just Jazz 2* (London, Peter Davies, 1958). He told me that payment was agreed to be a set of back issues of *Jazz Journal*, which Sinclair edited, but they never turned up!

At 3.40p.m. Paul DeMarinis gave a talk called *Bebop, Miles and Beyond*, but I had to miss this as I was involved in deep discussion with Dick Raichelson and Gene Miller on the revision of the Association's Monograph, *Assessing, Insuring and Disposing of Jazz Record Collections*.

At 5p.m. the attractive young local black singer, Denise Thimes, entertained in Generations, who was in turn followed by the youthful musicians from the Webster University Faculty, who gave their tribute to Miles Davis. Meanwhile, the Record Room set up and opened for business - a most impressively comprehensive display by the dealers present and their wares. I was much seduced into sundry purchases.

Friday: The morning commenced with a panel discussion at 10a.m. called *Jazz and the Retail Market*, hosted by Dan Warner, the others taking part being Bob Koester (Delmark), Al Boston (Norman), Richard McDonald and

his son, Clayton (MaxJazz). This was illuminating, as it was largely concerned with the pirating of CDs and its effect upon the retail market.

The afternoon offered a choice: In the hotel, a Black Artists Group with Dennis Owsley, followed by The Crusaders For Jazz, then the singer, Erin Bode. Alternatively, a trip was laid on by the hotel bus to the Moolah Shrine Center, several miles away, for a concert hosted by the St. Louis Jazz Club. This was founded in 1951, which now has over 1,000 members.

The bus was crowded, so Joe Schwab took the surplus in his car and I sat with Jack and Lorraine Simpson, Ron Pikielk and Gunnar Jacobsen. The concert was given by Bill Allred's Classic Jazz Band, which filled the vast auditorium with the dominating sound of two trumpets, plus Bill and his son on trombones. They had acquired and duly played some enjoyable orchestrations by Matty Matlock, featured in the 1950s by his group, The Paducah Patrol.

To my surprise, the performance was interrupted by an announcement concerning an imminent tornado warning and patrons were offered the opportunity to retire to a protected downstairs room. I did not see anyone leave and the tornado veered away so did not materialise. However, there was very heavy rain on the return trip to the hotel.

Edwina and I dined with Tony and Jean Adkins from Wales and John and Gerry Hornsby from Ontario. The evening ended with a well supported concert by saxophonist Frank Morgan. I went to the Listening Room, in the company of Duncan, Perry, Chuck, Janet and Mike Jones from London.

Saturday: The Members' Meeting was well attended. In addition to those on the rostrum, others who spoke were Perry, Gunnar, Dave Diehl, Dick Raichelson, Fred Cohen, Joe Schwab, Art Zimmerman and Jack de Wied.

At noon I attended the presentation of rare jazz films by Don Wolff, a local lawyer with his own weekly jazz radio show. Among his films were ones featuring Red Nichols, Wingy Manone, Ted Lewis, Earl Hines, Coleman Hawkins, plus an engaging scene of Louis mugging with Dizzy Gillespie.

That evening, the Banquet in the enlarged Ballroom was fully attended and very nicely organised. After dinner the presentations took place and I received from Chuck Sweningsen my Best Article Award check. I was able to talk with Carole Huntoon, Jerry Valburn and his wife, Herb and Ruth

Young, Horst Templin from Germany and Andy Smith.

Then the Convention wound up with a concert in Generations by the accomplished tenor saxophonist, Harry Allen.

All in all, it was a wonderful opportunity to meet and talk with other jazz loving collectors, both old and new faces. There were added bonuses: Arriving early on the Tuesday we were invited to dine with Ron and Marcia, followed by a guided tour in their car of downtown St. Louis, including the Gateway Arch and the giant Ferris Wheel. On Sunday, in the company of Herb and Ruth Young and Jim Kogamihalis, we enjoyed visiting the impressive St. Louis Museum of Art with a superb permanent collection, all housed in palatial premises built for the 1904 St. Louis Fair.

As overseas visitors setting foot for the first time in the State of Missouri, we felt we were in very good hands, and amongst friends old and new, with particular gratitude for the fine organisation provided by Joe Schwab, Dan Warner and their hard working committee.

(Revised August 20, 2005)