

April 2000

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COMMENTARY

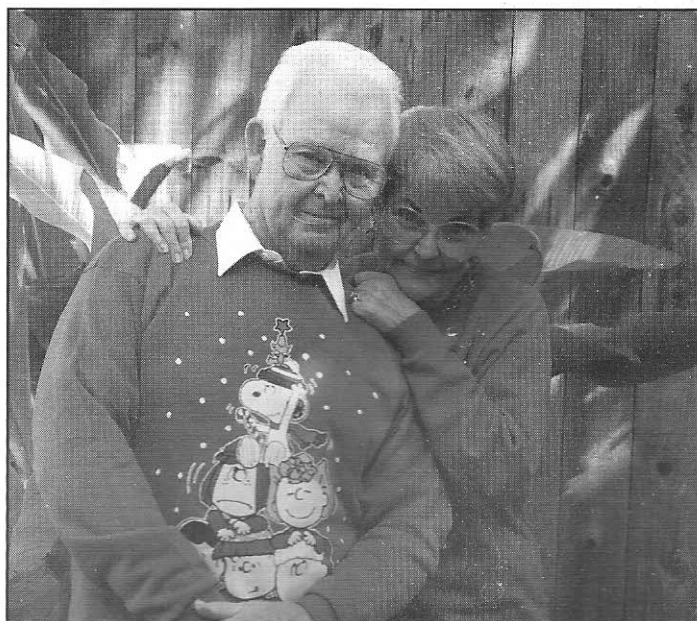
TO THE NLAS: I want you to know how very much I appreciated receiving the copies of the *Jot 'Em Down Journal* containing the article about Bobs. It was an absolutely excellent article.... so inclusive of important facts of his history and containing some pictures that I don't remember seeing before. I loved the one of his presenting the boat to the NLAS archives. It reminded me of the great time we had with you all in 1990. The picture of Bobs talking with Chet Lauck in 1940 was so touching to me. Bobs is so serious in that picture. He was full of fun and mischief all through his life but he was very serious when he was working.... always the perfectionist.

It is sad to think that he will not be able to be with you all when you celebrate the 60th anniversary showing of *Dreaming Out Loud*. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that he will be with you all in spirit. As you are watching the movie, don't be surprised if you hear someone laughing in great appreciation, with the sound coming from nowhere. Bobs always loved watching his old movies... they brought back good memories to him... he wouldn't miss it!

Thanks again for a well written article. Bobs would definitely have approved.

Sincerely,

Jaye Watson



Bobs and Jaye Watson, circa 1996.

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

April 2000

**THE NATIONAL
 LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**
Zekatif Ossifers

PRESIDENT
 Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT
 Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
 Tim Hollis

Cover: One of a series of fine
 character studies showing Lum &
 Abner's newly-created makeup for
 their screen debut, *DREAMING
 OUT LOUD* (1940).

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 trademark. Used by permission of
 Chester Lauck, Jr.

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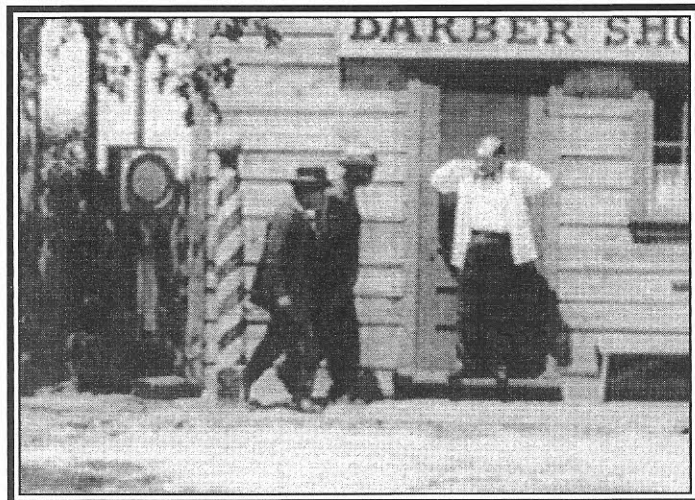
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In the opening scene of DREAMING OUT LOUD, Mose Moots makes an extremely brief cameo appearance, the only time the Pine Ridge barber was actually depicted in an L&A movie. There is an odd thing about this sequence, though. In most 16mm prints of the movie, the scene appears just as you see it above. However, there are also existing prints that are framed slightly differently, and the name MOSE MOOTS can actually be seen above the BARBER SHOP lettering. Baffling, isn't it?

LUM & ABNER'S ROAD TO HOLLYWOOD

Back in only the third issue of THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL (February 1985, long since out-of-print), Prez Uncle Donnie Pitchford penned a show-by-show account of how the LUM AND ABNER radio programs gradually led up to the making of the team's first movie, DREAMING OUT LOUD. As you know, throughout this year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of that film's 1940 release, and we thought it was only appropriate to go back and look at Uncle Donnie's analysis again. At the time this article appeared the NLAS had fewer than 200 members, and now that number is over 600, so it will undoubtedly be new to many of you!

Chet Lauck (Lum) and Tuffy Goff (Abner) were soon to enter a new phase of their careers: "Movin' Pitchers!" Chet and Tuffy were already broadcasting from Hollywood, but as far as the radio audience was concerned, Lum Edwards and Abner Peabody were firmly rooted in Pine Ridge, Arkansas. Little did they realize when Elizabeth Peabody (Abner's "womarn") became Chief of Police on Friday, March 1, 1940, that Lum and Abner might be headed for a film career, as well as the temporary end of their radio program. It seems Lizabeth became a "girl gangbuster" upon capturing three desperate bank robbers five days later, attracting a Hollywood film producer, Jack Votion, to their small village; on Friday, March 8, Mr. Votion of Voco Pictures (portrayed by Chet Lauck in his Snake Hogan voice, minus menace) enters the Jot 'Em Down Store in search of "Lucky Liz," with hopes of discovering a new "glamour girl of Western pictures."

However, on the following Monday, "Mr. Votions" informs the old fellows that, although Lizabeth won't fit the bill, he has "learned to love this little town... I honestly envy you... You personify a philosophy of life that's still unchanged and unspoiled by our so-called 'modern civilization'... This is a regular Utopia; a Shangri-La! You know, there's a story to this town; a story that millions of people who are rushing around seeking happiness and contentment, dissatisfied with the hustle and bustle of a life in the city, should know about. If that story could be projected on the screen, it would make a great picture." Imagine the amazement of the two old storekeepers when "Votions" proposes, "I know you'd hate to leave Pine Ridge, Mr. Edwards, but how would you two old gentlemen like to go to Hollywood?"

Needless to say, Lum "goes Hollywood" immediately, purchasing a garish outfit consisting of a checkered jacket, bright "yeller britches," sandals and dark "spectacles." Dramatic readings and bogus dialects abound, astonishing his Pine Ridge friends. Lum's desire to travel to the movie capital are shattered by a telegram from Mr. Votion on March 13: the film will be made right in Pine Ridge! Knowing Voco Pictures will pay a generous rental fee for the use of various Pine Ridge locations, Squire Skimp approaches Abner (while Lum is out practicing "movin' pitcher magazine"-inspired polo) with an offer to rent their store for \$25 a month. Too late to prevent Abner from signing the papers, Dick Huddleston advises him that the Squire just might be planning to collect a bundle in rental fees from Voco, now that he owns all rights to the store.

Monday, March 18: Sam Coslow from Voco arrives to select picturesque locations for the film. Writers are at work on the screenplay, and Lum is still "plumb Hollywood," sporting a British accent. A photo of the leading lady (at this time a blonde) has caught his eye, and romance is on his mind. (Obviously, the



On the set of DREAMING OUT LOUD: Publicist Harlan Hobbs, producer Jack Votion, and producer/songwriter Sam Coslow.

cast and title of the movie are not certain yet. The name *Dreaming Out Loud* is never mentioned in these programs. According to some sources, at this point the film's working title was *Money Isn't Everything*, and the eventual name was chosen after Coslow penned the title song for Frances Langford to sing in the picture.) Lum "disrecollects" the starlet's name, but wishes he had a big "yeller" automobile to "spark" her with. He offers free use of the store to Mr. Coslow, but Abner breaks the news (from a safe distance) that he has already signed over all rights to the Squire!

"That's as thick as a mail-order catalog," observes Abner on Wednesday, after being shown a copy of the movie script: Lum adds, "Worst part about it is, we got ta larn it by heart!" Our old friends inspect the script, discovering the film will feature Pine Ridge's longtime doctor, Walt Barnes, who has an office above the store. Abner corrects Lum: "That sounds like Doc Miller." Lum explains that changes in names are to be made for this film, beginning with their own "R.F.D. doctor (musta got it mixed up with the mail route)." The story has Doc Barnes' son Walter Jr. (changed to Kenneth in the actual film) in love with Alice King, the town's pretty young postmistress. (Langford's character remains Alice in the film, but her last name is not specified.) However, that does not suit Lum! He wishes to play the part of the young doctor by shaving his mustache off, or perhaps the part of Will Danielson, young Walter's rival, a "local boy makes good type." Lum admits to Abner, "I'm gonna talk to that feller Coslow. To be right honest, I been tellin' it around that I'm the feller the leadin' lady's gonna fall in love with." ABNER: "She ain't gonna fall in love with no backwoods storekeeper!" But Lum, undaunted, feels he can win the "Cademy Rewards" with his acting talent. Reading on, he realizes the Danielson part is "the town stuffed shirt, the heavy." Reconsidering, Lum decides he and Abner are best suited to portray themselves, as described on the cover of the script: "Lum and Abner in their first motion pitcher" (again, no mention of the final title).

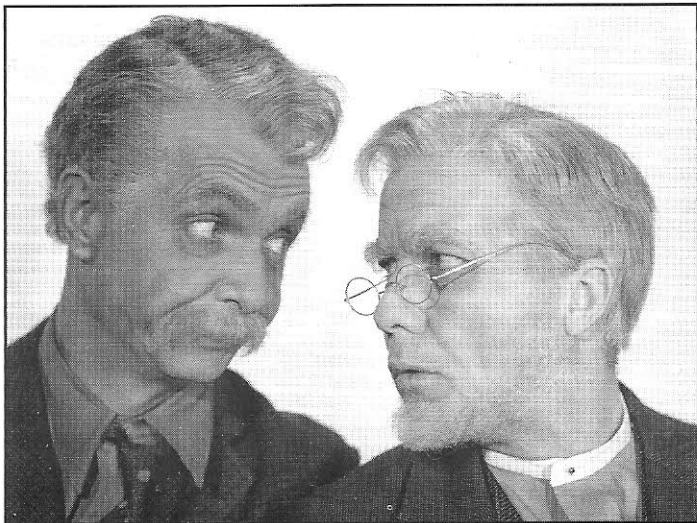
Squire Skimp returns to the store on Friday, March 22, attempting to correct a detail of his rental contract (the store must be closed and turned over to Voco, not left operational as in

Squire's contract), and Lum uses this opportunity to raise the rent to a monthly \$150. "Lum, you drive a hard bargain," complains Skimp. Lum's jubilation is squelched when Grandpappy Spears informs him Squire is getting a whopping \$500 per week for the store from Voco!

The final week of programs features a number of excellent "doubletalk" routines. While lamenting Squire's rental "skinnin'" on Monday, March 25, Lum tells Abner that Squire will "live to have his re-grets. Them thangs always come back on a feller. Chickens always come home to roost." Anyone who has heard a number of the L&A programs knows the response one of Lum's "Old Eddards Sayin's" triggers in Abner: "HUH?" Literal-minded Abner asks, "Has Squire been stealin' chickens too?" LUM: "Abner, you talk like a crazy man sometimes!" After recalling the time (in 1935) the Squire "skinned" them out of some circus animals, Abner wonders if the elephants (like the chickens) will also come home to roost in Squire's henhouse! In the midst of this hilarity, Mr. Coslow decides to send his writers over to find out if anything funny ever happens at the Jot 'Em Down Store. After discussing the matter with Grandpap, Lum and Abner decide there is no humor around the store, and quickly resume their discussion of why "chickens always come home."

Wednesday finds Messrs. Edwards and Peabody briskly selling all of their aging stock in an effort to modernize their store for its movie debut. (Does this remind you *Andy Griffith Show* fans of a similar plotline?) Squire Skimp is horrified upon discovering the bare, clean shelves. The old fellows have stripped the store of the charm Voco Pictures hoped to capture on film! On Squire's orders (inspired by his greed for the \$500 weekly rent), Lum and Abner proceed to repurchase their stock. Lou Crosby closes this show by informing us that "next Friday, the old fellows leave the airwaves to make their first motion picture... released through RKO Pictures Corporation," and suggests we request the film from our local theatre managers (I tried it; it didn't work in 1985).

The end of an era: Friday, March 29, 1940. Lum and Abner's faithful listeners (20,000,000, according to the *Dreaming Out Loud* posters!) tune in with deep interest. Had this program actually been the very final broadcast ever for L&A, they could have hardly departed in better form. After our friends complete their tedious and expensive restocking, we find Lum attempting to dismiss Abner's poor judgment over his rental contract with Squire. Unfortunately for Lum (but fortunately for us), he uses another "Old Eddards' Sayin':" "Ain't no use to lock the barn after the horse is stole." Across America, loyal fans grin with pleasant anticipation as Abner "Huhs" his way through another classic routine. "Whose horse is stole?" he queries, convinced that Lum is withholding information about a horse thief: "I'm givin' ye the third de-gree!" Abner tries to convince Lum that the horse must be returned to the barn, but how? The barn door is locked!



Imagine the complete exasperation in Lum's voice as he pleads with Abner, "Please... please don't say another word about it before I go stark ravin' mad CRAZY!" Harold Young, the "Director" of the picture, calls Lum. Between Lum's exchanges, Abner wonders if Young might be the horse thief: "He's got a auto-mobile, I dunno what he'd wanna steal a horse fer... Must be a kleptic-mannix or whatever they call 'em. Him with his fancy Hollywood ways!" Young informs Lum that the crew is ready to begin filming on Saturday (it's amazing how efficient Voco is). It is time to close down the Jot 'Em Down Store.

SOUND: Fire alarm ring

LUM: *Howdy everbody, they ain't no fire. This is Lum Eddards. I got a 'nouncement I wanna make. We're closin' down the Jot 'Em Down Store today. Me and Abner's gonna make a movin' pitcher. You've been hearin' us talk about Pine Ridge fer a long time... nearly ten years now. We've decided maybe you'd like to see what the place actual looks like, and us, and the Jot 'Em Down Store and all. So, we're gonna try our best to show ye. I jist hope the pitcher's as good as we think it's gonna be. Hope you'll all go see it an' let us know what you think about it.*



And by the way, it might be a good idee fer ya to call yer local theatre manager an' tell him to be shore an' git the pitcher fer yer town... then maybe you better call him back in a few days an' remind him agin... or see him an' tell him. I could stand here an' tell ya about the pitcher all day, but I know you'd rather wait and see it. But before I hang up here, I would like to ask a favor of ya. Fer over two years now, the Postum Company has made our little visits with you possible, an' I think hit'd be awful nice of you folks to set down right now and write 'em a little letter of thanks. It'll let them know you been listenin'. We'll appreciate it and I know they will. Just address yer letter to The Postum Company, the Postum Buildin', New York City. Well, I reckon that's all... I don't like to say goodbye. Abner, have you got anything you wanna say?

ABNER: *Yeah, but I couldn't say it, Lum, I'd choke up, shore as the world, I know I would.*

LUM: *Well, folks, thanks fer yer loyalty, yer many nice letters, and yer friendship. Our best wishes fer yer health an' happiness til we meet agin. Goodbye.*

SOUND: Receiver down

LUM: *(to Abner) What you all puddled up about?*

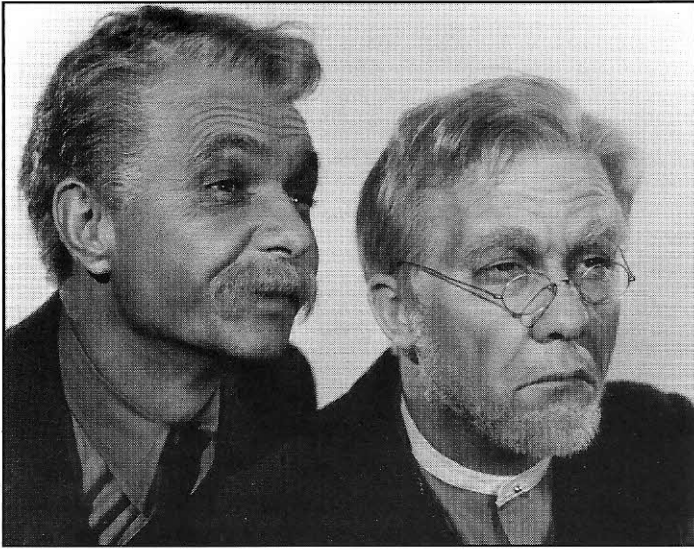
ABNER: *(crying) C'mon, let's git outta here, Lum, hit's past closin' time now.*

LUM: *Yeah. Wait a minute, let me have one more look before we close the door... What ye lookin' that way fer, the store'll always be here, we kin open up agin sometime.*

ABNER: *Yeah.*

LUM: *Where's the... Oh, you've already got the sign on there... That don't hardly look right: "Jot 'Em Down Store, Temporary Closed."*

For the final time in the Postum series, the relaxing voice of



Lou Crosby closes the program and offers, "To my old friends Lum and Abner, thank you for a swell association. Best wishes for the success of your Pine Ridge picture. Goodnight, Goodbye... This is the Columbia Broadcasting System."

- Uncle Donnie Pitchford

As anyone who has heard that closing program can verify, Lauck and Goff were genuinely in tears by its conclusion. Of course, this was not the first time the show had been taken off the air for one reason or another, but it was the first time they had voluntarily ended it in order to pursue another line of work. The next day, their hometown newspaper, *THE MENA STAR*, gave some insight into what had happened:

Friday night was Lum and Abner's final broadcast on their present series under the sponsorship of the Postum division of General Foods, and local radio listeners no doubt felt pangs of regret when the Pine Ridge philosophers bade their fans a "temporary" goodbye.

The final program was full of pathos as the two comedians with tearful voices discussed the closing of the Jot 'Em Down Store preparatory to making a motion picture. They announced over "the party line" that the store would only be closed temporarily, which indicated that possibly before long the popular entertainers will be back on the air with a new contract. However, no mention of a new sponsor was made.

Local relatives of Chet and Tuffy reported no information regarding future broadcasts, and it was believed that perhaps the boys would not seek another sponsor until they had completed their motion picture. Also, as most big radio shows go off the air during the summer, it was thought that it would probably be after the summer vacation before Lum and Abner resume broadcasts.

In fact, there would be no *Lum and Abner* radio show on the air for over a year. During that period, Lauck and Goff busied themselves with an exhausting round of tours to promote the movie, and it is thought they may even have begun work on their second picture during that time. On April 11, 1940, *THE MENA STAR* published another article describing progress on the as-yet-untitled L&A screen debut:

Pine Ridge, Arkansas... made famous by two of the state's native sons, Lum and Abner, in the popular radio program... is soon to be seen in the movies. It won't be the real Pine Ridge, however, for the movie producers want their town to be slightly larger and different in some ways from the Pine Ridge of western Arkansas.

Jack Votion and Sam Coslow, who will produce Lum and

Abner's first picture, want the movie Pine Ridge to represent the most perfect small town in America. They have signed an internationally known artist, Bernard Herzbrun, to create the Pine Ridge of the air for picture purposes. Working from a large collection of sketches and photographs in the possession of Lum and Abner, Herzbrun is creating a miniature Pine Ridge before beginning actual construction of the town on the RKO-Pathé Studio lot.

Many Lum and Abner fans have submitted photos and sketches of streets, houses, and scenes in small towns throughout America to help Herzbrun in his work. With the aid of such sketches and photos, the artist hopes to make the final Pine Ridge to be used in the picture a combination of all the peaceful, beautiful, and memory-provoking scenes that linger in the minds of the vast number of people in America who live or have lived in small towns.

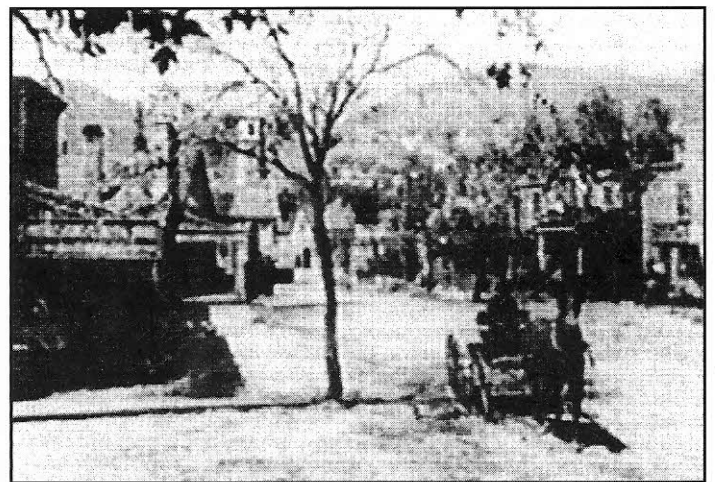
When Lum and Abner signed the contract to make the picture, they insisted that Pine Ridge must be its locale. For their radio program that has made them nationally known figures has always dealt with the "goings on" around Pine Ridge, and neither Lum and Abner nor their fans would feel right about it if this were to be changed for the movies.

Where the picture will be given its preview has not been announced, but it is reported that efforts will be made to have the initial showing somewhere in Arkansas.

Parts of this piece must have been typical Hollywood press puffery, because in fact the exterior set used for Pine Ridge in the movie was a fairly standard small town facade that turned up in several other movies around the same time. Lum and Abner's own Jot 'Em Down Store of the screen, for example, was also used as the focal point of another series of RKO movies based on another rural radio show, *Scattergood Baines*. As the press release stated, the movie Pine Ridge was deliberately made quite a bit larger than its real-life counterpart... In fact, more than one viewer has commented that it looks more like TV's Mayberry than anything else!

So, production was underway. Join us in our June issue to see how the movie-going public was made aware that a Lum and Abner movie was coming soon... and don't forget to join us in Mena on June 23 & 24 for the actual 60th anniversary showing of this cinema epic in all its big screen, black-and-white splendor!

- Tim Hollis



The opening shot of *DREAMING OUT LOUD* shows the larger-than-life Pine Ridge as depicted in the movie.

LUM and ABNER® IN THE NEWS

REPRINTS OF PAST LUM & ABNER ARTICLES

From *The Houston Press*, March 11, 1960:

LUM AND ABNER MEET AGAIN... A RICK-ROLICKING GET-TOGETHER

BY JACK MOHLER
Press Staff Writer

Lum and Abner, two of the nation's best-loved comedians of a few years ago, held a reunion in Houston yesterday... and not even Ralph Edwards could have wrung any tears out of it.

Lum, who is really distinguished-looking Chet Lauck, a Continental Oil Co. vice-president, and Abner, who is really Norris (Tuffy) Goff of California, met in Chet's handsome office on the 17th floor of the Texas National Bank Building.

Lum and a couple of local cronies whiled away the time before Abner's arrival by pitching quarters at an imaginary line on the thick carpet.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the office door.

Lum's pretty secretary dashed for the door, asking, "Who is it?"

"Campus Cleaners, lady," came the reply.

And in strode Abner, a short, sandy-colored man in a natty light tan suit. On a hanger he carried a couple of pair of slacks. Under one arm were several freshly laundered shirts.

Lum took Abner's package from him, stowed them in a closet, and they shook hands, grinning broadly.

The two men, who shared 25 years of radio stardom and made a dozen movies together, hadn't seen each other for a long time. They retired as a comedy team in 1954.

Trying to make like a reporter, I asked Abner what he does for a living.

"Just say I'm between jobs right now," said Abner, waving a well-manicured



Norris Goff & Chet Lauck hold a reunion over one of their old scrapbooks. The photo Tuffy is holding, with Lum & Lauck tipping their hats to each other, is one that is not familiar to the NLAS.

hand breezily.

And before you get all weepy over Abner's lack of employment, keep in mind that he alternates his time between Palm Springs and La Jolla, Calif., not exactly spas where old hoboos go to die.

"I'll tell you about Tuffy," said Lum, smiling wolfishly. "He gets up about mid-morning without a darn thing to do. And by late afternoon, he's got it about half done."

Abner gave Lum a dirty look and photographer Bill Cooksey stepped in and asked them to pose together, looking over one of their old scrapbooks.

They jostled each other for position and Lum said, "I have to watch him every minute. He'll upstage me every time."

"Ha!" shouted Abner. "Anybody who can upstage this character has to start awful early."

Lum snorted, "Why, I've gone as long as five years without ever getting in a picture with this guy."

Bill finally got them settled and shot the

picture, and Abner quickly piled into Lum's big leather desk chair, stuck his feet on the desk, and said to Lum, "First of all, my good man, you're fired."

Then, before Lum could recover, Abner continued: "Whose office did you borrow to impress me?"

"How long were you two in show business together?" I quickly asked.

"Twenty-five years," answered Abner.

"Too darn long," said Lum. "When I think that I could've picked Marilyn Monroe, or someone like her, for a partner! Don't know what I was thinking of."

Actually, the two men were childhood chums in a little Arkansas town. By their early 20s they had perfected their famous country store act and were well on the way to success and much money.

"How long are you going to be in Houston?" I asked Abner.

"Oh, just a visit," he said.

"Yeah, a very short visit," quipped Lum.

"I've been here five minutes," lamented Abner, "when this guy starts asking me if he can help me with my reservations back. He's telling me how many planes a day there are out of here every day for California."

"Yes," added Lum, "and if you can't get a direct flight, there are lots of planes out of here to Dallas. You can transfer there."

Bill and I had to leave... and so did Lum and Abner. They had a lunch date together, then maybe some golf.

Lum shoots in the low 80s. Abner said, "He hits a real long ball. I won't say where he hits it, but he hits it hard."

Then they walked off down the hall together, arm in arm, laughing over some long-remembered gag.

LUM & ABNER: MARCH-APRIL 1950

This is the conclusion of our series of articles connected with the 50th anniversary of *Lum and Abner's* two seasons as a weekly half-hour situation comedy. In this installment we look at the existing programs from this format's final two months, March and April 1950.

MARCH 8, 1950: The school kids of Pine Ridge are bored with their history lessons, so Lum writes a "Pageant of Livin' History" to make the subject more palatable. This program may be composed of the most non-L&A humor of any episode in the series' history. This does not necessarily mean that it is not funny, but does seem more suited to Stan Freberg than Lauck & Goff. (Some of the material in this show actually foreshadows Freberg's classic history of the United States by over 10 years.)

Some of Lum's historical vignettes include Abner and Opie Cates as cavemen; Andy Devine and ZaSu Pitts as Anthony and Cleopatra, with Abner as a slave; Abner as Christopher Columbus and Andy as a sailor, and Opie as an Indian chief ("No can buy groceries today, stores all closed for big holiday... COLUMBUS DAY!"); Abner and Andy as two pioneers, Alba and Kirk ("Thus was founded the city of Albakirk"). Devine and Pitts seem to especially be having a good time with their lines, as Cleopatra tries to poison Anthony by hiding an asp in his drink:

ANDY: *Wait a minute... this drink has a head on it!*

ZASU: *There are many drinks that have a head on them.*

ANDY: *With two beady eyes?!*

ZASU: *Oh, that... that's just a stuffed olive.*

ANDY: *Well, it kept stickin' its pimento out at me!*

Lum's pageant ends on a satirical note that reflects the changing humor of the times...

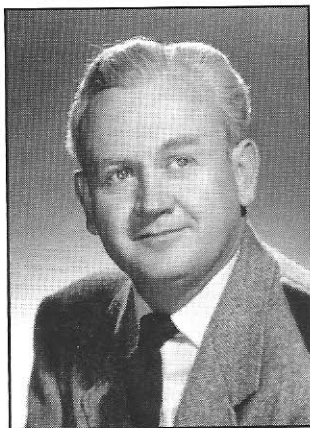
LUM: *Let's leave history for a moment an' look into the future. The H-bomb has been dropped. The world lies in complete ruin. Everthing obliterated. Only two monkeys remain, seated on a smolderin' hilltop. One monkey sez to th' other...*

ANDY: *Jes' look at that mess. Not a human bein' left.*

ABNER: *Yeah, now the two of us monkeys have the whole thing to start over agin!*

Since the show is again sustained by the network this week and there are no commercials, Opie Cates and his orchestra fill the middle break with a hot number, "Jazz Me Blue." And incredibly, after this show was broadcast, Lauck & Goff actually received a letter from a history teacher in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, asking for a copy of the script so the "pageant" could be presented in her own school. Now, figure THAT one out.

MARCH 15, MARCH 22, and MARCH 29, 1950: These programs are not yet available to us, but something notable occurred somewhere within this span of time. With only a few programs to go, a new cast member was added: Cliff Arquette, in the exacting role of Cliff Arquette. As we all know, Arquette had been making his living playing old men on the radio since the 1930s, and he went on to television to win immortality with his character of Charley Weaver. It was during his time with *Lum and Abner* that he supposedly was exposed to the routine Lauck and Goff would use to "warm up" the studio audience before each broadcast. This skit, which dated back to their stage appearances of 15 years earlier, involved Abner reading a letter from Lizabeth's sister, with he and Lum making comical comments all the way



Cliff Arquette

through. It is said that Arquette was inspired to create his famous series of letters from "Mt. Idy" through this association with L&A... although, to be fair, other comedians had used this technique as well, as it certainly precluded the necessity of memorizing the routines! What is certain, however, is that Arquette would never have heard the name Mt. Idy if L&A had not used it so much on their show.

APRIL 5, 1950: With again no sponsor, and the 30-minute version of *Lum and Abner's* days numbered, apparently by this time economy was the watchword. This week's show is nothing but a straight repetition of the May 8, 1949, episode in which Lum tries to write an article for *Reader's Digest*. Even Willard Waterman is back to play the literary agent Mr. Carter. At least they had the decency to credit Roz Rogers as co-writer of this reused script, even though he was no longer working on the show regularly.

Opie Cates and his orchestra play "Royal Garden Blues" as the middle break in this show. During Wendell Niles' closing PSA for Easter Seals, his speech about helping crippled children is strangely interrupted by much laughter from the audience, leaving us only to speculate as to what was going on on stage during what should have been a serious announcement.

APRIL 12, 1950: Lo and behold, the Ford Motor Company has come back to sponsor *Lum and Abner* (after sponsoring a few other episodes back in January). The show opens with a routine that, due to its inclusion in several audio histories of radio, has become the single most common L&A excerpt ever: the "You hold the nail in place while I whack it with the hammer" bit. This is followed by an exchange that indicates just how far the L&A program had moved away from its roots in the 15-minute days:

LUM: *We've got to move. This street is dead! All the traffic is now two blocks over, on the state highway.*

ABNER: *What state highway?*

LUM: *The four-lane super-speed highway they put through in 1923.*

ABNER: *They did?*

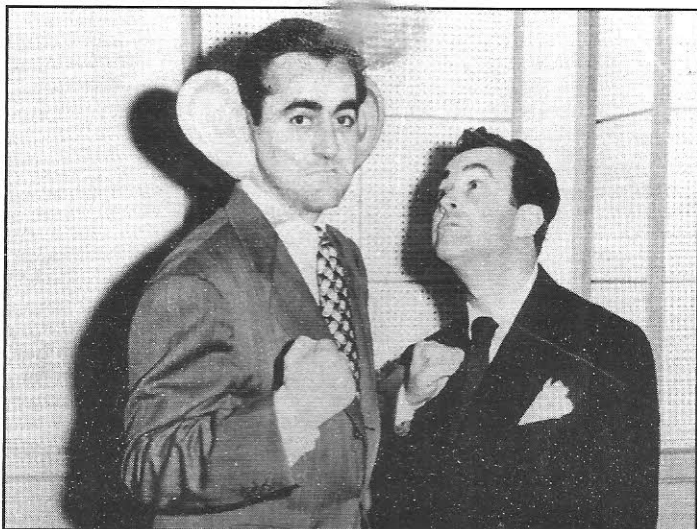
Strange that the L&A show had been on the air since 1931 with no mention of a four-lane superhighway running through Pine Ridge, but we guess those little details could be easy to overlook. L&A learn that a new subdivision is being built near the town by businessman F.W. Randolph, whom Lum recognizes as an old school chum "who used to spend 3/4 of his time studyin' up ways to gyp me." Mr. Edwards determines to get even by getting as many lots in the new subdivision as he can; this elaborate plan involves ZaSu Pitts posing as his wife (which she is only too happy to do), Andy Devine as his son, and the 18 members of a Cub Scout troop. Cliff Arquette has a funny routine when he describes a recent party at the old folks' home:

ARQUETTE: *Well sir, I don't like to brag, but did Louella Attlebury make a play for me. First she winked at me, and I winked back... she winked at me again, I winked back... She winked, I winked...*

ABNER: *Yeah? Then what happened?*

ARQUETTE: *Nothin', we was both tuckered out from winkin'.*

The role of Randolph is played by one of the most unusual actors ever to be cast with L&A: Jim Backus, who had just begun his voicing of cartoon character Mister Magoo the year before, and whose Thurston Howell III days were still far in the future. At this time Backus was known mainly for his rich-guy Hubert Updyke role on Alan Young's radio show, but his performance with L&A is strangely subdued. We will not even speculate on how likely it is that Lum and a Jim Backus character ever went to school together. (Way back in 1989, just before his death, Backus sent word to the NLAS that he had worked with L&A before this, when they were all just starting out in



Jim Backus (left) with frequent L&A supporting player Jerry Hausner, circa 1950.

Cleveland, Ohio, in 1932-33.) In the predictable ending, Randolph gets the best of Lum again when it turns out that Lum's multitude of lots are not in a new subdivision, but in the cemetery.

APRIL 19, 1950: Ford is again the sponsor, but this would be their last time to do so. Lum decides to sell out his half of the store, and Abner is only too happy to see him go. However, Lum soon finds that his business talents are in less than heavy demand around town. He sold his half of the store to Charlie Redfield for \$500... he got \$20 in cash and the rest in sauerkraut. For some reason, Lum's goal of being the sauerkraut king of Pine Ridge just doesn't work out too well.

Cliff Arquette tries to help Lum find a job by calling his old friend Kermit Gibson over at Hatfield. This routine sounds much like it may have originally been written as one of Clarence "Ben

COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM COLUMBIA SQUARE PLAYHOUSE 6181 SUNSET BOULEVARD — HOLLYWOOD		Wednesday APRIL 19 1950 7:30-8 p.m. Doors Close at 7:15 p.m.	No. 999
STUDIO C CBS	CBS PRESENTS THE LUM & ABNER SHOW		
CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE WILL NOT BE ADMITTED			

Withers" Hartzell's famous phone call scenes. Fortunately, Kermit has an opening for a store clerk, and to apply for the position Lum has to be in Hatfield early the next morning.

At Gibson's office, announcer Wendell Niles gets to have a few lines as a worker. Within moments, Lum discovers that the employer needing a store clerk is none other than Abner himself, so that deal is off:

ABNER: *Look, Lum, I'll jes' make you do HALF the work I used to do.*

LUM: *Why, you slave driver!!*

Lum makes unemployment sound so attractive that Abner also sells his half of the store to Charlie Redfield and joins his old partner. At the unemployment office, L&A encounter Mr. Fishback, another character played by semi-regular Willard Waterman. Fishback has the perfect job for L&A: running the Jot 'Em Down Store while owner Charlie Redfield is away for the summer. In the closing seconds of the show, L&A manage to get the store back for themselves.

The script is credited to "Roz Rogers, Jay Schwartz, and Betty Boyle," so it may be that this was a remake (or partial remake) of a show from the first season.

APRIL 26, 1950: This is it, the end of the ill-fated 30-minute

version of *Lum and Abner*. Fittingly, but also ironically, these two seasons of non-L&A humor came to a close 19 years to the day since Lauck and Goff made their first broadcast from station KTHS in Hot Springs, Arkansas. A lot of things had happened during those 19 years, but now it looked like the end of the trail. This very last program again had no sponsor, and once more the script was recycled from the first season, the April 10, 1949, broadcast to be precise. Again Lum is trying to line up a famous author to speak to his high class culture literary group, and thinks he has secured Hemingway. It is actually Joe Hemingway, a plumber from Mena.

Herb Vigran appears as Joe Hemingway, as he did in the 1949 version. In the original, Lum was trying to impress Lady Brilton (Edna Best) with his literary taste, but since that character had long been dropped, in the 1950 rendition he is after the approval of Lydia Van Cleaver, a "new woman stayin' over at th' boardin' house." Ms. Van Cleaver is played by Isabel Randolph, the actress most famous as Mrs. Uppington on *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and who was a semi-regular as Lum's love interest Miss Rowena during the first half of the 1948-49 season. As before, the literary discussion doesn't get much further than "OH SEE NED THROW THE BALL TO TOM. WILL TOM CATCH THE BALL? OH SEE THE DOG."



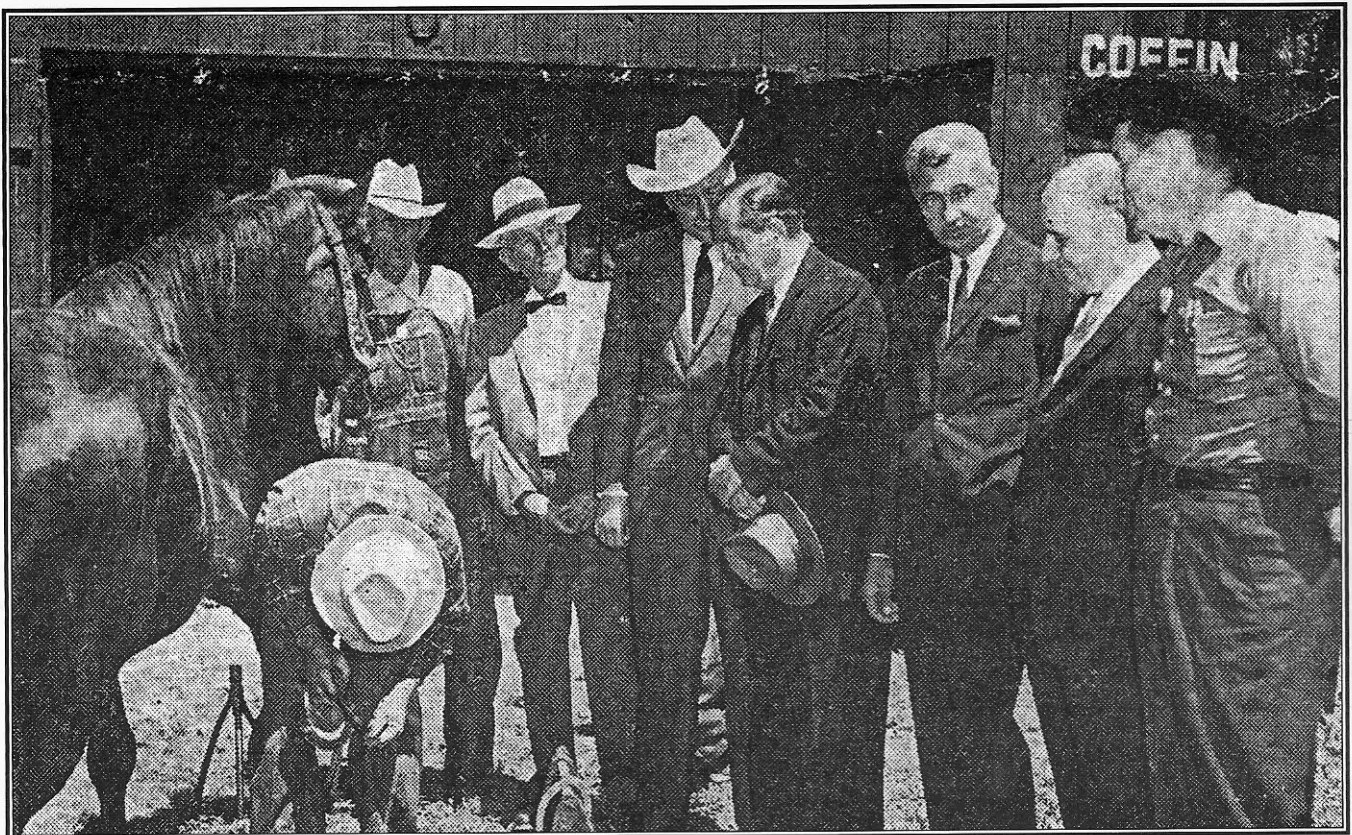
Isabel Randolph

With no middle commercial, Opie Cates and his orchestra fill a couple of minutes by playing a rousing version of "Muskrat Ramble." Over the closing theme music, Wendell Niles announces, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is Lum and Abner's last show for the season. We'd like to thank you very much for being with us. Have a good summer... we'll see you next fall." But they wouldn't.

When the fall of 1950 rolled around, there was no *Lum and Abner* on the air. The same went for fall 1951 and fall 1952. We now know that throughout this period Lauck and Goff were alternately working on various TV pilot ideas and also nursing Tuffy's somewhat fragile health, but as far as the public was concerned the two old storekeepers had simply dropped completely out of the business. They would return in February 1953 for one more year of their traditional daily 15-minute program, most of the episodes of which would, again, be adapted from earlier material. By then any attempt to rescue radio from its one-eyed rival television would prove to be futile, but it was nice to know that the weird characterizations and offbeat humor of the 30-minute *Lum and Abner* had not completely ruined the show. In fact, once the programs resumed in 1953, it was as if the two years of half-hour shows had never existed... outside of one January 1954 reference to Opie Cates still living in town. To our knowledge, this was their only later on-air acknowledgement of those two ill-fated seasons.

In interviews late in their lives, Lauck and Goff personally seemed to shy away from discussing their 30-minute programs. Tuffy usually referred to them as "Lum and Abner in name only," which seems a fairly accurate assessment. Chet Lauck would often counter criticism of this type by pointing out that these programs usually ranked near the top of the weekly "laugh meter," proving that people thought they were funny. However, as almost everyone knows, there are lots of different types of humor... all of them valid, but some fit better than others. Gags and insult humor were great for Bob Hope and Jack Benny, but Lum & Abner were just not cut out of that type of cloth. If they had been, this format might have lasted for several more seasons than just two!

- Tim Hollis



When Arkansas got its newest tourist attraction, Mountain Village 1890 near Bull Shoals, quite a group of the state's more prominent citizens were there for the dedication on May 27, 1960... including some LUM AND ABNER veterans. Seen in this newspaper photo from left to right are local farmer Allan Britt; Dick Huddleston, famous Pine Ridge storekeeper; future governor Winthrop Rockefeller; 1960 Arkansas governor Orval Faubus; Chet "Lum" Lauck; the attraction's owner, Roy Danuser; and country singer Jimmy Driftwood. Even after the attraction had been open for a number of years, it still featured "Lum Edwards" in its advertising, as evidenced by the brochure illustration at right.

"The harp strings of memory struck a tender chord when I first visited MOUNTAIN VILLAGE 1890."

Chester Lauck

"Lum" of famous Lum and Abner radio team



JOY N. HOUCK Sr, 1899 - 1999



Lum & Abner judge a beauty contest in a scene that was deleted from the final version of LUM & ABNER ABROAD (1955), produced by Joy N. Houck Sr.

The National Lum and Abner Society learned only recently of the July 1999 passing of Joy N. Houck Sr., co-founder (with partner J. Francis White) of Howco Productions. Mr. White's company was responsible for the 1955 release of the motion picture *Lum and Abner Abroad*, the final official pairing of Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff.

In all honesty, this "lucky seventh" film for "those two lovable old characters from the hill country" was an "unlucky" experience in many ways. Though it boasted a script by Carl Herzinger (late of their radio programs, and earlier a collaborator with long-time L&A writer Roz Rogers) and the direction of James V. Kern (who performed the same duties on *I Love Lucy*), *Lum and Abner Abroad* is the weakest of all L&A films. In an interview years ago, Tuffy Goff confirmed *Abroad* was the team's last picture, and added with a laugh, "That would be anybody's last picture!"

Originally produced by Nassour Productions as a three-episode television pilot (in Yugoslavia, yet), the unsold footage was edited into a somewhat disjointed feature film format for theatrical distribution. Regardless of the quality of the production, Lauck and Goff still shine as Lum and Abner, and the "ossifers" of the NLAS are grateful for the efforts of Mr. Houck and Howco Productions in releasing and ultimately preserving this aspect of L&A history.

We regret not having the opportunity to meet Mr. Houck personally! He was a born entrepreneur, entering the motion picture business as a traveling showman during the days of silent films. He pioneered the business in Lum and Abner's home state of Arkansas, opening its first indoor theater, and showing the first "talkie" its citizens had seen (Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*). Additionally, Mr. Houck was a leader in the drive-in theater field, eventually owning a chain of them that spread across the South from Brownsville, Texas to Atlanta, Georgia. At one time, he owned over 80 movie theaters outright, and another 140 in part-

nership. His Joy Theatre in New Orleans is scheduled to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As for Howco Productions, it can be said that many a "cult classic" bore that imprint. The Howco banner has been unfurled again quite recently, thanks to the investigation of the films of Edward D. Wood Jr., whose shoestring-budget crime drama *The Hidden Face* (a.k.a. *Jailbait*) featured *Lum and Abner* radio and movie alumnus Herbert Rawlinson in his final performance. (In fact, he passed away the day after production ceased!) In recent months, Howco's 1980s release of producer-director Charles B. Pierce's *Boggy Creek II: The Legend Continues* found its way into the satirical sanctuary of the Sci-Fi Channel's *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

Scanning the credits of Howco productions, one may find other links to Lum and Abner films, such as actresses Pamela Blake (*Partners in Time*) and Sarah Padden (*So This is Washington*). Such Hollywood stalwarts as Rory Calhoun, Jackie Coogan, Alan Hale Jr., Connie Hines, Sterling Holloway, Lash LaRue, Steve Reeves, Jaelyn Smith, Lyle Talbot and Chill Wills found employment in Howco films, which may not measure up critically to the product of the major studios, but provided hours of entertainment in theaters and those memorable drive-ins.

Mr. Houck's funeral was held the day he would have turned 100 years of age. For eight decades he brought good old-fashioned "B-movie" entertainment to the people who enjoyed it, starting that career in Lum and Abner's home state and including their *Lum and Abner Abroad* is his lineup of film releases. We offer our condolences to the Houck family, and wish to thank Mrs. Joy Houck for the information and photograph presented here.

-Uncle Donnie Pitchford



Joy N. Houck Sr. (right) with Arkansas Governor Dale Bumpers, circa 1980.

If It's April, June Must Be Nearby!

The 2000 NLAS CONVENTION

is bearin' down on us!

June 23-24, 2000

Lime Tree Inn, Mena, Ark.

Featuring the 60th Anniversary showing of the first

Lum & Abner movie, DREAMING OUT LOUD!

Time is drawing near for the 16th annual NLAS convention in Mena, Arkansas, and as usual plans are still very indefinite at this time. For various reasons we cannot tell you who the guest for this year's event will be... but we can tell you that we will have at least one. Maybe. We think. MOM?

As usual, there will be three programs throughout the weekend. The first will be Friday evening at 5:00 p.m., when we will introduce whoever the guest turns out to be. The second program will be at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, and will consist of sompin' or another. Don't you just love getting all the details?!

Saturday evening at 5:00 will be when L&A's 1940 feature film *Dreaming Out Loud* flashes on the screen for its 60th anniversary showing. As you know, when we celebrated this film's 50th



anniversary back in 1990, our guest was one of the stars, Bobs Watson. Sadly, Bobs passed away last summer, but we hope to pay tribute to his appearance with

us 10 years ago by featuring some of his remarks about the movie via video clips.

We have been notified that there is another convention going on in Mena the same weekend as ours this year, and motel rooms may become scarce. If you plan to attend, you should already be making your reservations! The phone number for the Lime Tree Inn (the convention site) is (501) 394-6350. Should they already be booked up, there are at least two alternatives. The Harvey House Motel is next door to the Lime Tree, and their number is (501) 394-3710. The Sun Country Inn is across the street, and their number is (501) 394-7477.

Good luck!

