

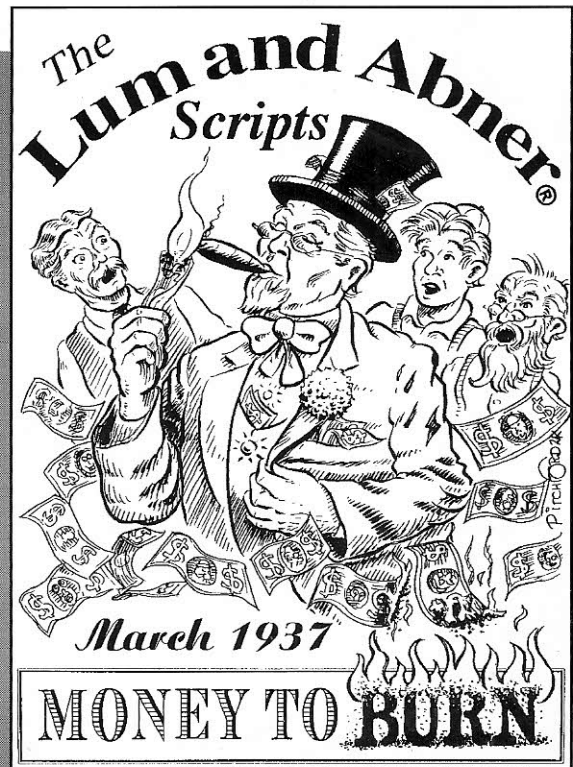
August 2000

NEW VOLUME OF THE LUM & ABNER® SCRIPTS NOW AVAILABLE!

If it's August, it must be time for the latest volume in our series of books reprinting the unrecorded *Lum and Abner* scripts of the 1930s. As you can see, the newest release is *MARCH 1937: MONEY TO BURN*, and it actually went on sale at this year's convention in Mena. Now it is available to all!

As related in the previous two volumes, Abner has inherited a fortune from an eccentric seed company executive, and this dramatic change in lifestyle causes many problems for old Mr. Peabody. Before the month is over, his wife Lizabeth has "separated him," and a phony Russian aristocrat, Count Moskovitz, is about to marry Little Pearl. Can Abner save the day? As the month ends, he and Lum begin a new business venture that will figure heavily in the next few volumes!

MARCH 1937: MONEY TO BURN is \$5.00, as are the few remaining copies of the preceding volumes, *JANUARY 1937: WHERE THERE'S A WILL* and *FEBRUARY 1937: EARLY TO BID*. Send orders to the NLAS Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062.



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The Jot 'Em Down Journal,
 Volume 17, Number 1 (Whole
 Number 97), August 2000.
 Published bi-monthly by the
 National Lum and Abner Society.
 Membership, including a subscrip-
 tion to the *Journal*, is \$15.00 per
 year. Send editorial and subscrip-
 tion correspondence to the
 Executive Secretary, Tim Hollis,
 #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL
 35062.

THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

August 2000

**THE NATIONAL
 LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**
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PRESIDENT
 Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT
 Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
 Tim Hollis

Cover: Famed radio actress
 Barbara Fuller "meets" Lum and
 Abner for the first time during the
 2000 NLAS Convention.

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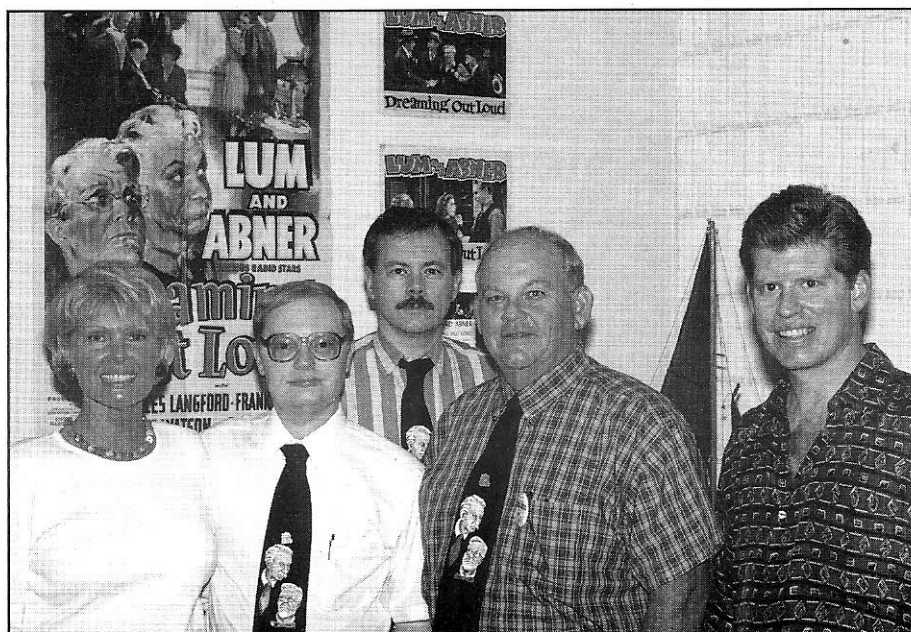
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Order yours today!



At the 60th anniversary showing of *DREAMING OUT LOUD* (l to r): Karen Lauck (wife of Chet Lauck Jr.), Tim Hollis, Uncle Donnie Pitchford, Singin' Sam Brown, and Scott Lauck ("Lum's grandson").

The 16th Annual



Barbara Fuller captivates the Convention audience with her anecdotes of the golden age of radio.



Robert Cates is reunited with his dad Opie's "dream girl," Barbara Fuller.



"Kathryn Brown" reacts to Robert Cates' impersonation of Opie's clarinet playing!

It was "the doggonedest thing!" After the June issue of the *Journal* had gone to press, the NLAS managed to secure a guest star for the 2000 Convention, and it just happened to be "Opie Cates' dream girl," Kathryn Brown! In reality she was (and is) actress Barbara Fuller, who found herself being escorted by "Singin' Sam Brown," Tim Hollis and "Ma" Kathleen Hollis to the one and only Jot 'Em Down Store and Lum and Abner Museum in Pine Ridge, Arkansas, on Thursday, June 22. Did she encounter Lum, Abner or Opie? No, but she was delighted to meet Lon and Kathy Stucker, who were most happy to welcome her to the real Pine Ridge. Miss Fuller's reunion with "Opie" would have to wait!

Few NLAS members witness the arduous set-up process that takes place in the Lime Tree Inn meeting room, but we "ossifers" are thankful to Jim Temple and daughters Lindsay and Kenna who pitched in to help the three of us prepare. Shortly before Friday's event, some of "those Popeye people" showed up from Chester, Illinois. Mike Brooks, president of the Popeye Fan Club, served as audio engineer, mastering some difficult sound effect cues as we rehearsed our new script with Barbara Fuller and another guest, Robert Cates (Opie's son, making his second Convention appearance), while Debbie Brooks and Cathy Rinne performed outstanding service at the merchandise and registration table.

While we're offering thanks for jobs well done, "all of the above" leaped headfirst into the process of "striking the set" at the weekend's conclusion, and were joined in this effort by Leonard Kohl, Rhet Rinne and Bob Flood. Thank you, "Popeye people," and the NLAS hopes to return the favor in September when you conduct your live radio performance at the annual Popeye Picnic. (For more information on the Popeye Fan Club, e-mail ace1@midwest.net, check out their web-page at <http://www.midwest.net/orgs/ace1> or write to them c/o Spinach Can Collectibles, 1001 State Street, Chester, Illinois 62233.)

Barbara Fuller was the star of the 5 p.m. Friday program. As she related her experiences in radio, she connected her work with that of a number of L&A associates, and the audience was treated to a variety of clips from such programs as *One Man's Family*, *Lum and Abner* and *The Opie Cates Show*. You will learn more of her associations with L&A veterans such as Clarence Hartzell, Willard Waterman, Frank Nelson, Francis X. Bushman, Jerry Hausner, etc. in our special look into her career elsewhere in this issue. We offer thanks to Ray Nielsen of the Memphis Film Festival for providing us clips from Miss Fuller's films *The Red Menace* and *Alias the Champ*, which were used to illustrate her screen career.

But just a moment... earlier we mentioned a "reunion" with "Opie," didn't we? Thanks to the miracle of e-mail, those horrendous hack writers Hollis and Pitchford cooked up another new script. As mentioned before, we were pleased to welcome Robert Cates back as our guest star. In a program entitled "Honesty is the Best Insurance Policy," Lum (Tim Hollis) and Abner (Donnie Pitchford) find themselves preparing for the 60th anniversary showing of the first L&A motion picture, *Dreaming Out Loud*. Enter Opie (Robert Cates), playing a squeaky rendition of the movie's theme song on his clarinet. Working from a Roz Rogers list, L&A have invited a number of celebrities and

NLAS Convention

friends to attend their special showing of the film. When they encounter the name Kathryn Brown, Opie becomes quite nervous - she was his dream girl from his former job with the Apex Insurance Agency!

Unable to face her, Opie hides in the feed room. Kathryn enters the store, expressing her desire to see Opie again to "give him what he deserves" for deserting his former position! Certain he is about to be punished, Opie nervously rattles about behind the closed door, nearly being discovered. Ben Withers (Tim Hollis) is certain he knows Kathryn - could she be Claudia Zincafoose? To Kathryn, Ben resembles a relative from Illinois! (Both are inside jokes in reference to the roles Clarence Hartzell and Barbara Fuller once played together on the classic soap opera *One Man's Family*.)

Squire Skimp (Donnie Pitchford) has been "dreaming out loud" himself, and plans to upstage the L&A screening with his own (he bought a print off an Internet auction), earning a tidy sum of money in admission and concession profits. Finally, Opie and a pile of feed room contents, along with the door itself, come crashing into the store proper! Shaking in his familiar cap, poor Opie is certain Kathryn is about to blow him to kingdom come, but instead she merely wants to present him with his back wages! It seems he was never taken off the payroll, and he is due several thousand dollars! Opie uses a portion of this to buy every ticket Squire Skimp has had printed for his movie showing, and after Kathryn threatens to expose Skimp's shady insurance dealings, another exchange of dollars ("hush money" from Squire) puts everyone in the right frame of mind to enjoy *Dreaming Out Loud*.

Barbara Fuller and Robert Cates enjoyed one more chance to recreate the roles of Kathryn and Opie in the closing commercial, which touts the Apex Insurance Company. Opie becomes the victim of a falling washtub, a falling tree and an out-of-control SUV, actions accompanied by prerecorded sound effects cued by Mike Brooks, enhanced with the live crashings of our announcer and sound effects artist Sam Brown.

A surprise guest was called forward to reminisce about his association with Chet "Lum" Lauck. Jim Sparks of Fort Smith, Arkansas, was informed of the NLAS Convention by his wife, and made a quick trip to attend. Mr. Sparks knew Lauck through their mutual connections with the Continental Oil Company (Conoco), and both gentlemen enjoyed getting together when in the same part of the country. We enjoyed Mr. Sparks' stories of his times spent with Chet.

Barbara Fuller was presented the Lum and Abner Memorial Award by the NLAS, plus a deluxe gift pack of Hatfield's food products from the fine folks in Pine Ridge. Following the annual-singing of "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," the Friday evening program concluded. We were thankful to have Robert Cates, along with his wife and granddaughter, with us, as well as Opie's daughter (Robert's sister), Dinah and her husband. Opie'd be right proud of his younguns!

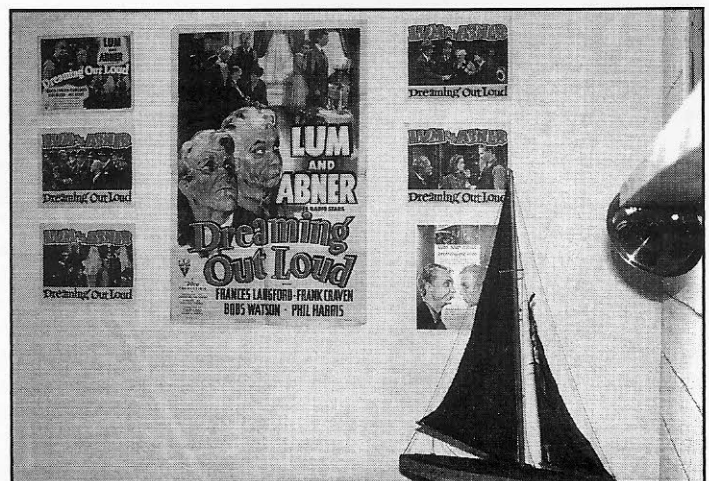
Saturday's 10 a.m. program featured three video presentations, plus an additional period of questions-and-answers with Barbara Fuller. Hitting the screen first was the January 1, 1965 episode of *The Gomer Pyle Show*, "Grandpa Pyle's Lucky Charm." Grandpa Otis T. Pyle ("U.S. Cavalry - retired") was played won-



"Popeye People" Debbie Brooks & Cathy Rinne promote the NLAS's newest merchandise items; see pages 2 and 12 for ordering info.



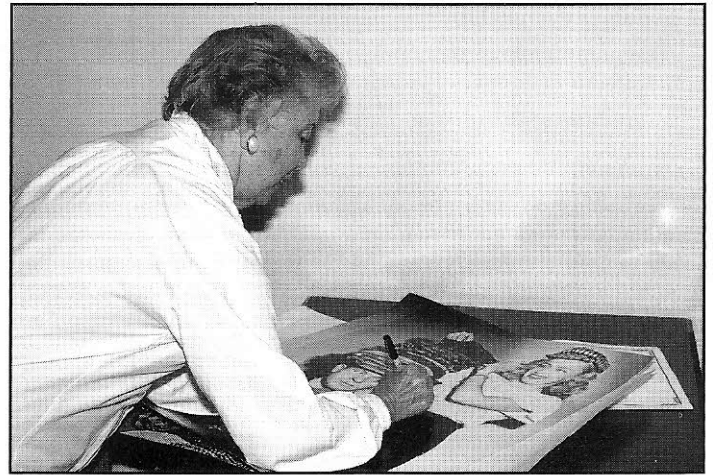
Uncle Donnie Pitchford presents Barbara Fuller with the 2000 Lum & Abner Memorial Award as Singin' Sam Brown watches.



An impressive display of original 1940 posters from Lum & Abner's first motion picture, *DREAMING OUT LOUD*.



Scott Lauck ("Lum's" grandson) and his mother Karen with the DREAMING OUT LOUD prop sailboat donated to the NLAS archives by Bobs Watson in 1990. Inset photo shows the boat as it actually appeared briefly on-screen in the film.



Barbara Fuller autographs a poster for the Opie Cates family collection.

derfully by none other than Norris (Abner) Goff! Grandpa Pyle comes to visit Gomer, who is suffering a lack of confidence when it comes to conducting close order drills. Mr. Goff is perfect for the role, and it is regrettable he wasn't called upon for more! (Perhaps his health prevented it.) This black-and-white episode rarely appears on television these days, and we are indebted to charter NLAS member David Miller for providing us with a copy.

Miss Fuller provided a 20-minute clip of an episode of *Four Star Theatre*, in which she costarred with the legendary Charles Boyer. Also in the cast was the familiar British actor Alan Mowbray, who can be seen in Lum and Abner's 1943 film *So This is Washington* (and, like several other L&A supporting film performers, in a *Charlie Chan* entry, in this case *Charlie Chan in London*).

What better television role for Tuffy Goff than that of a small-town storekeeper? Rather than Abner, Tuffy seemed to be portraying Dick Huddleston in an episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* ("Opie's Job," originally broadcast on September 13, 1965). Little Opie has wrecked his bicycle, and "Pa" Taylor is not pleased in the least. Determined to earn the money to buy a new set of wheels, Opie competes with another lad for a job in Mr. Doakes' grocery store. He wins that position, but relinquishes it when he learns his rival needs the income to assist his struggling father, who has been ill for some time. Opie's unselfish actions make Andy proud. (As reported last year, the name for Griffith's fictional son was inspired by none other than Opie Cates!)

When it came time to prepare our videotapes for presentation, it became obvious that the *Andy Griffith Show* was incomplete. No less than four separate recordings (one of them at least 20 years old) were compiled to produce the most complete version possible (but even this final product seems to have missing portions). Sadly, yesterday's TV classics have suffered mightily at the hands of those who edit them for the insertion of commercials. Speaking of commercials, the NLAS filled those slots with some interesting ones more suited to the years the Gomer and Griffith episodes aired. Chet Lauck pitched Conoco oil and gasoline to us once again, both as himself and as service station attendant Lum! Tim Hollis noted that it appeared as if L&A had gone their separate ways after the radio show ended, with Abner owning a store in Mayberry and Lum running a gas station in Pine Ridge!

Joining us for the Saturday fun were the daughter-in-law and grandson of "Lum": Karen Lauck and her son Scott Lauck! It is

always an honor and pleasure to have members of the L&A family with us.

After an afternoon break for lunch and visits to Pine Ridge, the convention group gathered at 5 p.m. for a "big screen" 16mm presentation. For our cartoon, we enjoyed the rural humor of comic strip character Snuffy Smith in "Jughaid for President" (quite fitting for an election year!). Our friend John "Perfect Attendance/Grandpap" Knuppel secured the use of a rare travelogue, *Southern Belle*, from the Kansas City Southern Historical Society. If you were with us in 1990, you may recall that this film depicted the initial 1940 voyage of the luxurious passenger train which brought Tuffy Goff to Mena for one of the grand premiere showings of *Dreaming Out Loud*. Thank you again, "Grandpap!" And another thanks to Mike Brooks for the use of a second film projector, which allowed the uninterrupted showing of the three reels that comprised our feature film.

Prior to the feature, we listened to the prerecorded memories of cast members Phil Harris (1986) and Bobs Watson (1987), as well as publicist Harlan Hobbs (2000). Each gentleman shared his particular impressions of his experiences with Lum and Abner's first motion picture.

First shown in Mena in 1940, the NLAS screened *Dreaming Out Loud* ten years ago. Actor Bobs Watson (the young boy Jimmy in the film) was our guest of honor, and presented the NLAS archives with the actual toy boat prop which appeared in one of his scenes. Lauck and Goff purchased the prop from Selznick Studios and offered it as a gift to Bobs. This boat, named "Dreaming Out Loud" by Bobs as a child, was again on display for our 2000 showing.

Our final piece of business was to present the "Distance Prize" for the member who traveled the greatest number of miles to attend. Once again, this prize went to Budd Bergman of Manhattan Beach, California. He received a original 1934 edition of the premium *The Pine Ridge News*! (It pays to attend the NLAS Convention!)

The "ossifers" wish to sincerely thank everyone who attended the 2000 convention. Our months of planning and our hours of labor are all worth while when we see the smiling faces of the many who attend and enjoy these programs. We encourage everyone to join us next year, as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of Lum and Abner themselves! (HINT: Depending on our guests' schedule, there is a possibility that the 2001 convention may be held one weekend earlier, June 15 & 16. Watch the *Journal* for details!)

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford



LIVING A Fuller LIFE



The name Barbara Fuller is one that should be extremely familiar to any devotee of old-time radio, as she was one of the busiest actresses during that period. Of course, the question that immediately comes to most of our minds is, "Did she work with Lum and Abner?" The short version of the answer would be, "Not quite hardly, but almost practically." As we go along you will see what we mean, because she may not have been directly associated with the two old Pine Ridge characters themselves, but she worked intimately with just about everyone else who was involved with their program.

While still a pre-teenager Barbara made her first venture into radio. Her mother happened to be the casting director for the NBC network in Chicago, but Barbara stresses that this had nothing to do with her initial audition... in fact, quite the opposite. "A producer was having some trouble finding the right child actress for a part. Someone said to him, 'Why don't you try Georgia Fuller's daughter?' He said, 'I didn't even know Georgia Fuller had a daughter.'" The fact that Barbara was an avid reader and always had a book with her further encouraged the producer to test her and see whether she could read aloud as well. She demonstrated that ability more than satisfactorily, and landed her first continuing role on an obscure children's adventure series, *The Eye of Montezuma*. Playing her brother was little "Georgie" Gobel, who would later end up on *The National Barn Dance*, and further along in life as a TV comedian.

By the time Barbara reached young adulthood, her talents were quite in demand for the myriad Chicago soap operas. She had continuing roles on at least three of them simultaneously: *Scattergood Baines*, *Stepmother*, and *Painted Dreams*. This is where her



Barbara Fuller (center) with a small portion of the ONE MAN'S FAMILY cast, circa 1947: Mary Lou Harrington, Tom Collins, and J. Anthony Smythe & Minetta Ellen as Father & Mother Barbour.

where her "almost" connecting with Lum and Abner began. *Scattergood Baines* featured in its cast the comic relief of Dink Trout in the role of Pliny Pickett; of course, Trout's high-pitched whine was heard often on *Lum and Abner* from 1945 on, initially as ornery gas station owner Zed Whitsett ("I don't sell ethyl!"). On the half-hour version of the show he played equally

crabby Luke Spears to great comic effect. (Barbara was not featured in the handful of *Scattergood Baines* movies that were released by RKO in the early 1940s, but they were filmed on the same exterior sets as the Lum & Abner movies that were in production at the same time.)

Dink Trout was also featured with Barbara in the *Stepmother* program, along with quite a few other future L&A cast members. Most prominent among these was Francis X. Bushman, the former silent movie heartthrob who, by the late 1930s, was carving out a whole new career for himself as a character actor in radio. On *Stepmother* he played the role of Barbara's father; after Bushman left the show, the same part was played by Willard Waterman, another frequent L&A co-star in his pre-*Great Gildersleeve* days. (The fact that Bushman and Waterman sounded nothing alike seemed to bother no one on the *Stepmother* staff.) Also in the cast were deep-voiced Ken Christy, who would be heard often on both the 15-minute and 30-minute versions of *Lum and Abner*, and Bess McCammon, who played Widder Abernathy in their unsold 1949 TV pilot for CBS. See how neatly this all fits together?!

Less is known about Barbara's work on *Painted Dreams*, but she does recall that on one of these Chicago series her mother was played by Isabel Randolph, best known as Mrs. Uppington of *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and in 1948-49 as Lum's latest romantic interest, Miss Rowena. By Barbara's count, by the time she departed Chicago for Hollywood (via a brief sojourn in New York City), she was appearing on 25 broadcasts per week... three shows with two repeats daily. A typical story from that era: "John Larkin and I were sweethearts on *Painted Dreams* at the same time that we were married and getting divorced on *Stepmother*. One show was done in the second floor studio at CBS; the other was done across the street in a studio on the 11th floor of the Tribune building. John and I had to get from one to the other during the few minutes the commercial was on!"

Once Barbara arrived in Hollywood, her roles began becoming more permanent. One of radio's longest-running dramas was *One Man's Family*, which had been running continuously since 1932. It centered around the



Barbara with L&A sidekick Opie Cates during the short run of THE OPIE CATES SHOW, 1947-48.

Barbour family and their five grown children, one of whom was daughter Claudia, played by Kathleen Wilson. In 1942, Wilson left the show in order to get married, and since the program's creator and sole writer, Carlton E. Morse, had an aversion to recasting any of his



Two scenes from Barbara Fuller's movie career. LEFT: From *THE RED MENACE* (1949); RIGHT: From *ALIAS THE CHAMP* (1949), with future "Mr. Boynton" Robert Rockwell.

characters, he reacted by having a plane carrying Claudia and her family be shot down over the ocean. They had been presumed dead by all ever since. Now it was 1945, and Morse met Barbara Fuller. Ever since her Chicago days, Barbara had been confronted with the fact that she "sounded just like Claudia on *One Man's Family*," a distinction that she did not particularly relish in an industry where a voice's uniqueness was often the main ingredient for success. However, in this case it came in handy, because Morse was so impressed with her that he decided Claudia and her husband and children had been located in a European concentration camp, and Barbara continued playing Claudia until the serial ended for good in 1959.

In 1947, Morse introduced a new character into the show for a



Barbara as "Claudia" at her fictional daughter's wedding during the *ONE MAN'S FAMILY* 20th anniversary, 1952.

Library can be heard some examples of Hartzell's time on *One Man's Family*, and Barbara/Claudia's delight at his performance comes through loud and clear in her scenes with him.

It was also in 1947 that Barbara came closest to actually becoming a part of the *Lum and Abner* universe, missing it only barely. *The Opie Cates Show* was an ABC network show that starred the drawling, low-key bandleader and clarinet virtuoso; the only thing that kept it from being a true spinoff of *Lum and Abner* is that at the time Opie had not yet worked with the Pine Ridge pair! Other than that, *The Opie Cates Show* featured most of the same staff and cast as L&A's program, including head writer Roz Rogers, producer Glenhall Taylor, and cast members Francis X. Bushman (again playing Barbara's father), Jerry Hausner, Horace Murphy, Peter Leeds, and others who were regulars in the supporting cast of *Lum and Abner*. Barbara was assigned the role of Kathryn Brown, Opie's "dream girl," to whom he had difficulty making his true feelings known. When the program was unable to land a sponsor, it ended abruptly in

brief period, and his voice would have been immediately recognizable to any regular *Lum and Abner* listener of the time. Cousin Jediah X. Barbour was an eccentric old coot from Bloomington, Illinois, and he was brought to life by the inimitable Clarence Hartzell, who had been featured as *Lum and Abner's* Ben Withers for over a year by that time. Barbara recalls how much everyone in radio enjoyed working around Clarence and the half-deaf old codger that he could play to perfection; on Tape #296 in the NLAS Tape



One of Barbara's publicity shots from circa 1980.

changed her ways before the end of the story. More comedic was her performance as a gangster's moll in *Alias the Champ*, an expose about mob involvement in pro wrestling (some stories never go out of date!). In these and other Republic productions she was teamed with leading man Robert Rockwell, later known as the bashful Mr. Boynton of *Our Miss Brooks* radio and TV fame, and who has most recently been seen as the kindly grandfather dispensing Werther's Originals candy in commercials for that company.

Barbara found a wide variety of roles in television herself, ranging from dramas such as *Four Star Theatre* (in which she appeared opposite Charles Boyer in an incredible performance), *Perry Mason*, and *Trackdown*, to lighter fare, including *The Adventures of Superman* and *My Three Sons*, to commercials (in part of a long-running series of ads for Anacin, Barbara was the headache-stricken mother who bellowed, "Billy!! Get that bicycle out of the driveway!!"). Her final movie appearance was one she calls "a total mistake," a role as a dowdy housewife in the 1973 stinker titled *The Roommates*.

By that time, she had become more active in church work than as a performer. As a member of the Founders Church of Religious Science in Los Angeles, she had become enamored by the sermons of the pastor, Dr. William Hornaday, and found a whole new career by marketing audio cassettes of his talks. Although Dr. Hornaday's death in 1992 somewhat slackened the demand, she continues to make these recordings available whenever there is an opportunity.

Barbara's appearance at the 2000 National Lum & Abner Society Convention was largely because of her work on *The Opie Cates Show*, but she soon proved that she had no trouble in fitting into the world that revolved around the Jot 'Em Down Store. Considering the number of roles she has played over the years, it is somewhat surprising that she had not previously encountered Lum and Abner... but better late than never, and for her many years of fine performances (L&A or not!) she was presented with the 2000 Lum & Abner Memorial Award. Barbara Fuller has an appropriate family name, because it would be

difficult to locate anyone in radio who can look back on a "fuller" career than hers. We all love you, Barbara!

- Tim Hollis

HOW *Dreaming Out Loud* CAME TO TOWN

As the hot summer of 1940 began coming to its annual close, the entire world surrounding Lum and Abner was about to change forever. After having ended their radio broadcasts in a tearful episode on March 29, in which the Jot 'Em Down Store was "temporary closed," the two comics had begun the six-week production

the ultimate title of "Miss Southern Belle," and gain the honor of having her own photograph placed as the illuminated insignia on the front of the locomotive. Needless to say, this contest was a huge success, and was documented in a promotional film that was produced by a Kansas City firm. This film, entitled simply *Southern Belle*, also included footage of Norris Goff's trip from Kansas City to Mena, and documented the moment at which he and his wife Elizabeth and children, Gary and Gretchen, alighted at the Mena depot to be greeted by his mother. On August 24, *The Mena Star* carried two articles that reported on what happened that afternoon:

Barbara Martin, Norris Goff and "Southern Belle"

These Were Attractions at KCS Station Friday - Large Crowd Gathered to See Them

When the new streamlined passenger train of the Kansas City Southern passed through Mena on Friday afternoon, it was greeted at the local stop by approximately 1500 persons who gathered at the passenger depot for the dual purpose of bidding bon voyage to Miss Barbara Martin, Mena's candidate for the title of "Miss Southern Belle" in the contest conducted by the railroad in connection with inaugurating the new fast train service, and also to welcome home Norris Goff, "Abner" of the nationally-known team of Lum and Abner of radio fame.

"Abner," with his wife and two children, rode the new diesel drawn streamliner on its initial trip from Kansas City, and was coming to the home town of Mena for a visit with relatives and friends before starting his personal appearance tour with his partner, Chester H. Lauck (Lum) when

their newest of venture, a motion picture, *Dreaming Out Loud*, is released for premiere showings early in September. While in Mena, Goff and family will divide their time visiting his mother, Mrs. Dora Goff and family, and visiting the young radio and screen actor's wife's parents, Mr. & Mrs. J. P. Bullion and family. Goff's partner, "Lum" Lauck, is expected to reach Mena within the next few days.

"Abner" Held His Audience the Longer

It's a question which attraction drew the most people to the KCS station Friday afternoon. While some will claim the new streamlined train was the greater drawing card, the friends of "Lum & Abner" can rightfully assert that "Abner" held his audience of admirers the longest.

So great was the local interest in the radio star and one of the principals in the new movie *Dreaming Out Loud*, his homecoming was still going on half an hour after the streamliner and its pretty girls had pulled away. There were many who were not residents of Mena in the crowd that greeted "Abner" and his family, and held them at the station after the train had gone.

A few days later, the actual date of the new movie's Mena showing was



Tuffy Goff in the passenger car of the SOUTHERN BELLE, en route to Mena, August 1940.

of their first movie (at first untitled), which occupied all of April and part of May. Things were pretty quiet during June and July, with only the announcement that the movie had been titled *Dreaming Out Loud*, named for a song sung by Frances Langford in the film.

Now it was August, and things were about to get hectic again. A full two weeks before the film's scheduled premiere in Mena, Norris Goff and his family made their triumphant return to the home town. Not just any sort of transportation would do, of course, and the Goffs made their entrance aboard the first run of the Kansas City Southern railroad's new luxury passenger train, the *Southern Belle*. Possessing accoutrements that many people did not even have in their own homes at the time, the *Southern Belle* was touted as "the Sweetheart of American Trains," and its launch was the subject of an intense publicity campaign that fortunately went hand-in-hand with the upcoming release of the first Lum and Abner movie.

The KCS sponsored a contest to choose one attractive girl from each town along the *Southern Belle*'s route to compete for



*TUFFY: "She's just like a mother to me."
MAMA GOFF: "Abner's a good boy!"*



Tuffy Goff poses with two of the contestants in the "Miss Southern Belle" contest.

announced. Although this screening in Mena is usually referred to as the "world premiere," such was not officially the case. It was, however, part of a series of four "premieres" that had been set up by RKO Radio Pictures for that weekend (the others being in Little Rock, Hot Springs, and Fort Smith). On August 29, *The Mena Star* announced:

Lum & Abner's New Picture Opens September 6

Radio Stars Will Make Personal Appearances at Lyric Theatre During Premiere of "Dreaming Out Loud"

The picture that Mena folk and the many radio fans have been looking forward to seeing, and made by Lum and Abner, will be shown in Mena at the Lyric on Friday, September 6, with Lum and Abner making personal appearances at the show during the several showings. The first show will start promptly at 6 p.m., with Chester Lauck and Norris Goff making their personal appearance following each showing. The picture will also be shown Saturday and Sunday, but the two radio stars will not make personal appearances at these showings.

Dreaming Out Loud is the name of the new picture, and it has as its locale the Pine Ridge section. Advance notices indicate the picture is in the winner class.

Mena gets one of the first showings in the state, and Messrs. Lauck and Goff will visit other towns in the state during the first week of the showing of the picture, making personal appearances.

At this time, Chet Lauck had still not yet arrived back in Arkansas, and he would not do so until the day of the movie's showing in Little Rock. That fact did not deter the publicity mill, though, and on August 31 *The Mena Star* ran what appeared to be a pre-prepared "review" from the film's

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pressbook. There is one major clue that this article was not written by anyone in Mena: the very first paragraph refers to "the humor and peace of the Ozarks," and it is well known that Mena has long been extremely sensitive about being misplaced in the wrong mountain range. The *Ouachita* Mountains are its correct home, and their constant confusion with the Ozarks would be a sore point for some time to come. The review was also somewhat unusual in that it consistently referred to the movie's characters by the actors' real names, which in some cases makes it unintentionally funny:

Lum and Abner Offer Humor and Pathos in "Dreaming Out Loud"

Into a world gone mad with war and hate, Lum and Abner of radio fame bring a simple story, packed with the humor and peace of the Ozarks, to their millions of fans. Playing the two kindly old storekeepers of Pine Ridge who have become so beloved, Lum and Abner make an attention-demanding screen bow in *Dreaming Out Loud* for RKO Radio, which opens at the Lyric Theatre on September 6.

When they take the affairs of Pine Ridge into their own hands to straighten them out, Lum and Abner let themselves in for action and excitement. Frank Craven, the town's only physician, becomes their first problem. The unselfish old doctor has broken down in caring for the people around Pine Ridge.

Frances Langford, the postmistress, and Robert Wilcox, the young son of Frank Craven, are concerned too. They are in love, but Craven's ill health and the firm and bitter antagonism of Clara Blandick, Frances' aunt, prevents their marriage.

Lum and Abner enlist the aid of Bobs Watson, Frances' small brother, and Irving Bacon to bring the affairs of the friends to a happy ending. Yet they are forced to track down a ruthless hit-and-run driver, act as the "hands" of a paralyzed Frank Craven, and raise funds for a mobile hospital unit for Pine Ridge before their problems are finally solved.

How Lum and Abner handle the situation, meanwhile finding time for bickerings over their checker games, furnishes a fast-moving comedy/drama. Director Harold Young has employed clever, human touches to accent the story.

During the days immediately preceding the Mena premiere, the principals involved

had time to relax for a short time. Not only was Norris Goff present in town, but by September 3 he had been joined by *Dreaming Out Loud's* co-producer, Jack William Votion, and the newspaper reported on a brief excursion these two Hollywoodites had made out to the true "world of Lum and Abner."

Abner Goes Fishing With Dick Huddleston

The people were all smiles in Pine Ridge last Friday, for they had the pleasure of meeting their old friend Abner of the famous Lum and Abner radio team.

Abner, Dudley Lauck, brother of Lum, and Jack Votion, the producer of the Lum and Abner picture *Dreaming Out Loud*, spent the day here fishing with their good friend Dick Huddleston.

When Dick got up, dressed, and walked out on the front porch, he was made to wonder if he had been up late the night before and was seeing things, for when he retired at night there was only one car at his gate, but this morning there were two. When he went out and investigated, he found Abner, Dudley, and Jack all quietly snoozing in their car. Being so anxious to get out to Pine Ridge to go fishing, they had arrived a little early.

After they had been awakened and had rubbed their eyes for a little spell, they got out and came in the "house, and Mrs. Huddleston fixed them a little bite to eat, after which they all went off to the river.

Things would not be nearly so serene the rest of the week. On September 4, *The Mena Star* carried three different articles



The SOUTHERN BELLE even came complete with its own theme song!

relating to the movie's impending premiere. The first detailed L&A's schedule of appearances in Mena (and possibly showed the anonymous newspaper writer's age by referring to *Dreaming Out Loud* as a "talking picture"). The other two described the various honors being heaped upon the team by local and state government officials... if only Lum and Abner were as well-known in Arkansas today!!

Lum and Abner in Personal Appearances

Mena, Polk County, and the Ouachitas will come into more fame and glory with the first showing of the Lum and Abner talking picture *Dreaming Out Loud*, which appears at the Lyric on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The picture was much sought for by the larger cities, and the fact that Mena is the "home town" of Chester Lauck and Norris Goff enabled Manager Gwaltney to secure one of the first showings in the state.

Both Chester and Norris will appear in person at the Lyric on Friday night, between each show, and will then go on to other points for personal appearances. The picture will also be shown at the Lyric on Saturday and Sunday, but without the personal appearance of the two stars.

Manager Gwaltney announces there will be three shows Friday night, the first show starting at 6 p.m., and Lum and Abner will appear following each show. There is no advance in admission price for adults, it remaining 30 cents, but there will be no lower price for children, 30 cents being the one price for all.

There will be no reserved seats, but the three shows will no doubt take care of the Friday night crowds. Advance indications are that the show will be well attended from all sections of the trade area, Wickes folk trying to reserve 50 seats for the opening night.

Lum and Abner Day Proclaimed by Governor

LITTLE ROCK, Sept. 4 - (U.P.) - Governor Carl E. Bailey today proclaimed Thursday as Lum and Abner Day in Arkansas, honoring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff, natives of the state who have achieved fame through radio, stage, and screen.

Lauck and Goff will make personal appearances at the premiere of their first picture, *Dreaming Out Loud*, which will be shown here Thursday.

Following their arrival this afternoon, they will be guests of honor at a reception given by the governor and Pulaski County officials.

Official Welcome for Lum and Abner

City Council Places on Record Its Feeling Toward the Radio and Movie Stars - Publicize "County Seat"

Mena's city fathers are proud of Lum and Abner. This is no startling statement, as nearly everyone who lives in Mena is also proud of the two young radio and screen stars, but the city council wants its feeling toward the boys to become a matter of record, and therefore at its regular monthly meeting Tuesday night in the Log Cabin/City Hall in Janssen Park, a resolution was unanimously adopted after being introduced by Alderman C. A. (Zeke) Cummings and seconded by Alderman Ode McMillan. The resolution is as follows:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Mena is the home town of Lum (Chester H. Lauck) and Abner (Norris Goff) and

WHEREAS, the City of Mena has been referred to as "the county seat" in many of Lum and Abner's radio programs of the past, and

WHEREAS, the City of Mena is extremely proud of the success made by its two native sons in their radio career, and anticipates additional honors in their recently projected moving picture venture,

THEREFORE, on the eve of Lum and Abner's premiere home town showing of their picture *Dreaming Out Loud*,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Mena, by the unanimous vote of its aldermen in regular session September 3, extend the official welcome to Chester H. Lauck (Lum) and Norris Goff (Abner) on the occasion of their homecoming and personal appearance at the Lyric Theatre on Friday, September 6.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the city council, representing the citizenship of Mena, go on record as thanking Lum and Abner for all publicity they have given Mena and this section of Arkansas in the past, and for what publicity they may give their home town in the future.

CITY OF MENA
J. A. Middleton, Mayor

Now everything was set. Chet Lauck would make his belated entrance into Arkansas the following day, September 5, flying into Little Rock in time for the film's first "official" showing that evening. (As we shall see next time, Mena just may

Coming In Person



LUM and ABNER Dreaming Out Loud

for the first time on the screen for their 20,000,000 radio fans . . . With
FRANCES LANGFORD • FRANK CRAVEN
BOBS WATSON • PHIL HARRIS

A VOOCO Production
Produced by JACK VOTION and SAM COSLOW. Directed by HAROLD YOUNG. Screen play by Howard J. Green, Barry Trivers, Robert D. Andrews. Distributed by RKO RADIO Pictures.

ADMISSION 30c to All

Personal Appearances

FRIDAY, SEPT. 6.

ON THE SCREEN

SATURDAY and SUNDAY

have scooped Little Rock and had the last laugh as to just where the film was seen first.) On that day, only one small item appeared in *The Mena Star*, with a bit of trivia regarding the Lyric Theatre's special decor:

A visitor in Mena on Wednesday who noted the "Jot 'Em Down" store front built at the Lyric Theatre entrance, was particularly amused over the "Fall Clearance Sale" sign it carried. A local friend explained about the premiere of *Dreaming Out Loud*, and added, "That 'sale' ad means those who attend get a bargain, for they'll see a \$1 show for only 30 cents."

In the October issue of the *Journal* we will see just what happened at the film's four Arkansas premieres, and also take a closer look at the principals involved in the making of the movie itself. Join us then!

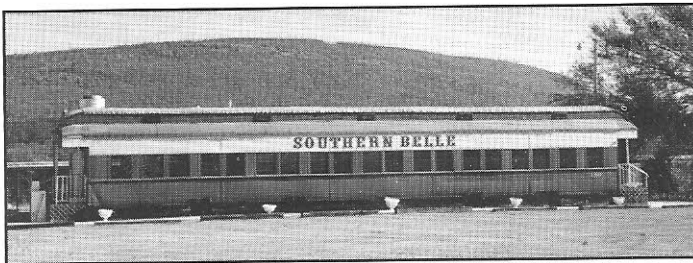
- Tim Hollis



On the preceding pages, you have read about the role the Kansas City Southern railroad's luxurious *Southern Belle* played in Lum & Abner history. Mena historian Shirley Goodner now tells the interesting story of the eventual fate of at least part of this historic train:

"The Southern Belle Diner, once part of the 'Sweetheart of American Trains,' looked anything but sweet when first discovered by Eddie Nelson of Heavener, Oklahoma. Each day for two years, Nelson passed the old passenger car sitting deserted in a field, mostly grown over by weeds and vines.

"Thoughts of what could be done with the once-active car kept running through his head. Finally he approached his wife Lisa



about buying the car and turning it into a restaurant. Her immediate reply was 'No.' At that time, the car was rusted and had a huge faded sign on the front advertising war bonds. The inside woodwork had been painted dark green, and to Lisa it just looked like a lot of hard work, and she wasn't sure it could ever turn a profit.

"But with time, the car grew on Lisa just as it had on her husband, and as they worked together for the next six months to bring life back to the old girl, she began to fall in love with what was once again becoming a beautiful piece of machinery.

"Eddie Nelson didn't give up his day job as a social studies/history teacher and bus driver at the local high school, but the Nelsons took the plunge and opened the Southern Belle Diner. In the beginning Lisa did most of the cooking, but today she has some help. The young ladies who wait tables are decked out with bandannas around their necks and striped crewmen

caps. The inside of the diner is beautiful, and the walls sport well-framed photographs of trains in days gone by. Tables line both walls, with plenty of walking space between.

"The restaurant serves sandwiches, steak, seafood, and chicken dinners, as well as some delicious homemade pies. They are located on U.S. Highway 59 North in Heavener, Oklahoma, and are open five days a week."

- Shirley Goodner



NEW NLAS CONVENTION VIDEOS NOW AVAILABLE!

As is our custom at this time each year, we now have two more installments in our series of NLAS Convention video tapes available. If you have never attended one of our conventions, these videos are the best indication of what goes on at them... and besides, they contain oddball L&A material that you will not see anywhere else!

The 1994 NLAS Convention featured a very special guest: **Shirley Lauck Babcock**, the first child of Chet (Lum) Lauck and his wife Harriet. Shirley was actually born in Mena before the *Lum and Abner* radio show began, so she was certainly able to give us a unique perspective on growing up with the radio characters as a part of her life. Her stories of growing up in the world of Chicago and Hollywood radio are fascinating, and not to be overlooked is the sequence in which she conducted the NLAS Ossifers on a walking tour of the Mena home in which she was born and spent her early childhood years.

As an added bonus, the 1994 video also contains "Our First 10 Years," a commemoration of the NLAS's initial decade, with the



Shirley Lauck (1994)



Parley Baer (1995)

complete story of how the Society was formed and its activities up to that point.

The 1995 NLAS Convention starred another legendary figure in the radio world, character actor **Parley Baer**. Parley is best known for his role as Chester in the radio version of *Gunsmoke*, but his other credits are truly amazing. For over 30

years he was the voice of Ernie, the Keebler elf, and is also well known as cranky Mayor Stoner of Mayberry on *The Andy Griffith Show*. He worked with L&A in the late 1940s, and during the convention he had somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,267 stories to tell about his show business career. The 1995 convention also celebrated (if that is the correct word to use) the 40th anniversary of L&A's last (and least) movie, the ill-fated *Lum and Abner Abroad*.

As usual, the convention videos are \$10 each. The previous years (1985-1993) are all still available as well for the same price. Send orders to the Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062.