

April 2001

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ

All too often, the NLAS must sadly report the passing of a friend, colleague or family member of Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff, better known as Lum and Abner. For a recent period of two days, the "ossifers" of the NLAS engaged in a strange roller coaster ride regarding some shocking news. The story you are about to read is true, but the unhappy ending has been changed to protect the innocent - as you shall see!

As a fan of the *Charlie Chan* series (since the 1960s), I was thrilled to meet two actresses who played roles in those films. Kate (Kay Linaker) Phillips and Louise Currie, each appearing in her own Lum and Abner film, also performed in Chan features, and managed to (between them) bridge the tenures of Warner Oland, Sidney Toler and Roland Winters (Chan actors). Miss Currie flew in (almost in Captain Marvel's arms) for the NLAS for the 1992 convention, while Mrs. Phillips parachuted down (almost - but that's another story) to Mena in 1998. Thanks to NLAS member Leonard Kohl, I checked out www.charliechan.net on the Internet recently, and introduced myself on their message board, letting everyone know of the NLAS and our L&A/Chan friends, Louise and Kate.

Shocking news greeted me the next time I logged on, and



shortly, Louise Currie's obituary (as it appeared in a London newspaper, *The Independent*) was forwarded to my e-mail address! According to the report (which was also picked up by the Internet Movie Database), Miss Currie passed away in August 2000! I knew this had to be false, since "Singin' Sam" Brown had spoken to Louise's son in December, and he had just taken her to the airport where she had departed for yet another interior decorating assignment in Mexico!

A quick e-mail to "Singin' Sam" was followed by his immediate phone call to Louise Currie herself, who happily reported she is alive and well! And yes, in response to a couple of questions e-mailed back to me, she is the one and only Louise Currie of *The Bashful Bachelor*, *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*, *The Ape Man*, and *The Chinese Ring*!! Thankfully, the British newspaper article we received was accurate in all its details... but one! Many thanks to fellow Chan fans Leonard Kohl and David Lewis for keeping us informed.

We're so glad you're still with us, Louise! What a fright! We didn't know whether to call Captain Marvel or Charlie Chan... Lum and Abner were too "wore to a fraz-zull" from shock and dismay!

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

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 #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL
 35062.

THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

April 2001

In This Issue:

**THE NATIONAL
 LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**

Zekatif Ossifers

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Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT

Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Tim Hollis

Cover: Promotional photo for the
 brand-new radio show *Lum and
 Abner* of KTHS, Hot Springs,
 made by Mena photographers
 Oscar & Eloise Plaster, May 1931.
 (Courtesy of Harold Coogan)

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 trademark. Used by permission of
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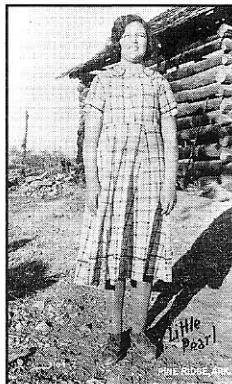
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 A key player in L&A preservation is gone.

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 Better start packin' yore valise!

R.I.P. PEARL, 1941

The April 17, 1941, issue of *The Mena Star* carried the following notice, which was picked up by other newspapers across Arkansas:

Thrown from a horse Saturday while riding in the woods near her home at Pine Ridge, Miss Eva May O'Neal, age 18, is reported to have suffered fractures in both legs. She was taken to St. Joseph's hospital at Hot Springs. The injured young woman is a daughter of R. W. O'Neal and according to information received in Mena Sunday, was in a critical condition, with a later report Monday stating that she had died as a result of her injuries.



The other Arkansas newspapers, unlike the Mena one, made it a point to note that Miss O'Neal was considered to be the real-life model for Abner's daughter Little Pearl. How true this was we may never know, but it was Miss O'Neal pictured as Pearl on the postcards that Dick Huddleston was still selling in his Pine Ridge store even 10 years after her death (see left). It is also said that Miss O'Neal planned to become a nurse, as the "radio Pearl" eventually did during World War II.

70 YEARS OF LUM & ABNER[®]

By now it should be fairly obvious that this month officially marks the 70th anniversary of the *Lum and Abner* program. A we shall see in a moment, there is really some question as to just what date in April is the true anniversary, but what is certain is that their debut was on Hot Springs radio station KTHS. In his comprehensive study of radio & television in Arkansas, *Arkansas Airwaves* (1974), the late Ray Poindexter led into the L&A section with this basic background information:

[KTHS manager] Cam Arnoux maintained a continuous search for talent. In 1931, his search led to a bonanza. Two young Mena businessmen had established quite a local reputation by entertaining the home folks with their blackface act. They were members of various civic groups including the Lions Club. Chester Lauck had been born in Allene, Arkansas, in 1902. Norris Goff had entered the world in 1906 at Cove, Arkansas. Both had moved to Mena while still young boys. Lauck (known to his friends as "Chet") had been at the University of Arkansas from 1922 to 1925. Goff had been there during the first semester of 1923 before transferring to the University of Oklahoma.

Lauck had majored in art and drama. He had wanted to become a cartoonist. After graduation he had studied art in Chicago. Both had returned to Mena after their formal education was completed. Chet managed an automobile finance business, and "Tuffy" (a nickname Goff had received when someone had commented about his football play, "He may be little, but he sure is tough") worked with his father in the wholesale grocery business. He called on stores throughout the area.

Someone had suggested that they get on the radio. In response to that suggestion, Mena citizens had been told that the two would be on the radio from Hot Springs and they could be heard in the Elks Auditorium where a loud speaker had been placed. A

good crowd gathered and listened to the "program," only to have Chet and Tuffy walk downstairs and tell them that the mike had been upstairs and not in the Spa City.

Somehow, after this practical joke on their fellow townsmen, Lauck & Goff and some other local talent did secure a one-shot spot on KTHS, and made their first trip over to the Hot Springs station on Saturday, April 18, 1931. Now, this is where the first question about Lum & Abner's debut arises. Without the benefit of any transcription discs, it is impossible to know whether or not the two old characters made their first appearance on this broadcast. The following week, *The Mena Star* reported on what had transpired:

KTHS RADIO STATION FAILED

Listeners disappointed as Local Talent Was Broadcasting Program

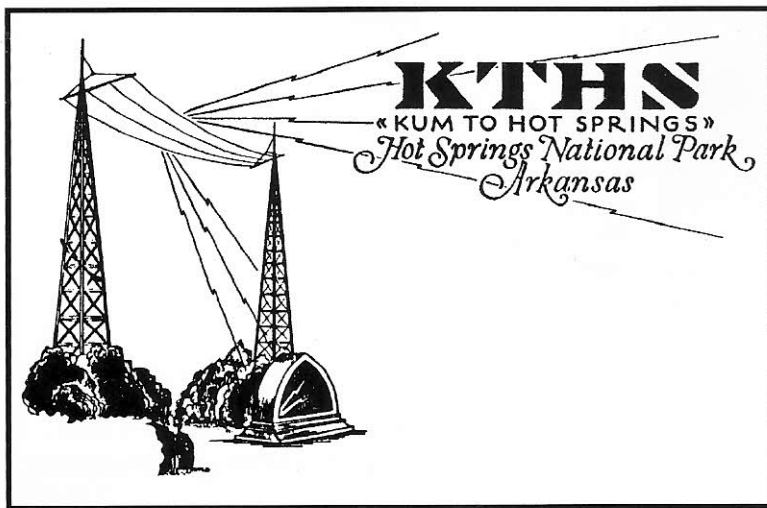
Mena's radio entertainers met with misfortune Saturday morning in the broadcast at KTHS at Hot Springs. Something went wrong after the local bunch had been on the air less than ten minutes, and KTHS was dead so far as Mena listeners were concerned. What caused the cessation of the program was not made known, and the many friends of the performers listening in were disappointed. Chester H. Lauck, Norris Goff, Bill Beavers, Cliff Beavers and Olen Wilhite were those taking part. "Chet" and "Tuffy" were just going good when the entertainment abruptly ended at 10:10. Later the announcer at KTHS announced that failure of the broadcasting equipment was responsible for the stopping of the Mena program, which was sponsored by the Lions Club, and an apology was made. The local performers will be given another audition next week.

In the same edition, the paper gave further information on the Mena group's upcoming second try:

"CHET" AND "TUFFY" BACK ON AIR APRIL 26

"Chet" Lauck and "Tuffy" Goff, whose broadcasting stunt over KTHS was interrupted last week, will try again Sunday afternoon, April 26, when they have been allotted time on the program from 5 to 5:30 p.m. They will be assisted by the Beavers Brothers trio with musical selections. The broadcast program is sponsored by the Mena Lions Club.

Now, Lauck and Goff often told the story of how they



intended to do a blackface act on KTHS, but decided that the airwaves were already overcrowded with potential Amos 'n' Andys, so at the last minute they decided to be a couple of backwoods old duffers named "Lum and Abner." Whether that event occurred on the aborted April 18 broadcast or on the April 26 second attempt may never be known. What is certain is that for the rest of their careers, April 26 was given as the official debut date of *Lum and Abner*, so that may be the only indication we have that they were still doing their original blackface act on April 18.

The Mena Star is of little help in resolving the above mystery, but the paper did give a glowing report of the general format of that April 26 broadcast:

"CHET" AND "TUFFY" AND ORCHESTRA MADE HIT

Mena Folks Will Broadcast Again Over KTHS Next Sunday



The first publicity photo of the new comedy team of Lum & Abner, made by Mena photographers Oscar & Eloise Plaster, May 1931.

Those who provided the Polk County program sponsored by the Mena Lions Club over Station KTHS Sunday afternoon pleased so many that the entertainers were given another place on next Sunday's program. Those who went to Hot Springs for the broadcast Sunday were Chester H. Lauck, Norris Goff, Cecil Cartwright, Olen Wilhite, Bill and Cliff Beavers. "Chet" and "Tuffy" had the talking parts and the other four, members of Beaver Brothers orchestra, furnished the music. A guitar solo by Cecil Cartwright was a pleasing feature. The musical four played instruments made by J. B. Watkins of this city. Before the Lions club program was ended, the station management announced that the Polk County entertainers would be back again next Sunday, this announcement being in advance of the invitation later extended to the players themselves.

(Coincidentally, in this same issue of *The Mena Star*, in the column next to the above report, was an article about the April 28 wedding of Tuffy Goff's sister Ione, held at the Goff family home in Mena. Sharp-eared listeners will notice that "Ione" was usually the first name given to Lum's would-be love interest, Widdier Abernathy.)

What would have been considered the second official air appearance of L&A took place on Sunday, May 3. A small report appeared in the May 7 issue of the *Star*, but it is difficult to tell whether it is referring to the May 3 broadcast or the original April 26 show. It read:

MENA VOICES TO NEBRASKA

W. French Writes of Enjoying the Broadcast from KTHS

Voices of Mena men carried far over the radio Sunday and brought pleasant memories of the home land to former residents. A letter from Columbus, Nebraska, brought this statement from W. French, for many years a dweller in the Ouachita highlands:

"I wish you would say through The Star that Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Eddy and myself heard the program put on at Hot Springs by the Mena boys. We certainly enjoyed it and was glad to hear voices and music from the old home town."

By the following week's paper, however, the pattern was beginning to emerge. The May 14 issue reported on the May 10 broadcast, was the first mention of the names "Lum and Abner" in print, and also gives us the only clue we may ever have as to just what the emerging *Lum and Abner* series was like at this point in time:

"LUM AND ABNER" TO CONTINUE PROGRAMS

Next Week, Over KTHS, They Will Visit the State Capital and a "Show"

Chester Lauck and Norris Goff held another "Weekly Visit of Lum and Abner" over KTHS Sunday evening and gave the best entertainment yet, so those in the radio audience report.

The Mena entertainers are proving so popular they were announced to appear again next Sunday at which time they will tell about going to court at Little Rock, at which time they also expect to attend one of those "girlie" shows they have heard about, and which will be done if possible without the knowledge of Mrs. Lum and Mrs. Abner.

It sounds as though the concept of Lum and Abner appearing in court for one reason or another was established very early on, and would be repeated countless times during the following 23 years. It is also significant that the article says L&A were going to try to attend a "girlie show," indicating that the concept of the characters' personalities may have been somewhat different. Lastly, with its reference to "Mrs. Lum and Mrs. Abner," it sounds as though at this point Lum was considered to be married (as was Chet Lauck in real life) instead of the well-known "bashful bachelor" of later shows.

Although the radio publicity mill has been known to be wildly inaccurate about some things, including many parts of L&A history, when it has been said that their rise to fame was incredibly fast, it is the absolute truth. In that same May 14 issue of *The Mena Star*, after only three appearances of L&A on the air, the following ad was placed by Mena photographers Oscar & Eloise Plaster:

"LUM AND ABNER"

Our own Radio stars, are answering their fan mail with pictures of themselves, in character and as they really are, with Photographs made by us.

The Mena Studio

Mena, Arkansas



Chet Lauck & Tuffy Goff, out of character at their first photo shoot in Mena, May 1931.

Those first publicity photos have their own undeniable, if somewhat crude, charm. One of them can be seen on the cover of this issue, with others reproduced here. Eloise Plaster later recalled that Lauck & Goff literally threw their costumes together from whatever clothes they could find, and that Abner's trademark goatee was actually a feather. It can be seen that the two comics, or the Plasters, went to some lengths to try to simulate wrinkles in the young performers' faces, much less convincingly than RKO Radio Pictures would do for their movies many years in the future.

The May 28 *Mena Star* continued its coverage of the truly meteoric rise of the pair:

"LUM & ABNER" GO FAR

"Lum & Abner" of Mena are increasing the size of their radio audience over KTHS. Latest requests for photos of the young Mena entertainers have come from points as far distant as Pensacola, Fla., Savannah, Ga., and Los Angeles, Calif. They will be on the air again Sunday evening at 7 p.m.

Ray Poindexter found that at some point during the latter part of May, perhaps Memorial Day, a civic event in Mena had its tongue firmly in cheek when it reported that "Lum and Abner, the famous radio stars, have been secured for a personal appearance at great expense." This may be considered their first public appearance outside of the broadcasting studio, but it was soon followed by another, as reported in the June 11 paper:

ELKS WILL OBSERVE FLAG DAY ON MONDAY

Instructive Program Has Been Arranged; "Lum and Abner" to Appear

Flag Day exercises will be held by Mena lodge of Elks on Monday evening, June 15, at the lodge home. A program of interesting and instructive features is being prepared. The Rev. Arthur Terry will make the address, the history of the creation of the American flag will be given; "Lum & Abner" are to appear, and there will be musical and other numbers. Friends and families of the members are to gather in force and the general pub-



Postcard issued to promote the original L&A series on KTHS, 1931.

lic is invited. An informal social hour will follow the program.

Things were certainly moving fast. On June 23, the *Star* reported:

LUM AND ABNER TO TRY OUT ON BIG CIRCUIT

Will Have Audition Soon Before National Broadcasting Board

"Lum and Abner," Mena's young radio entertainers, have a chance to get on the big time circuit. Since Chester H. Lauck and Norris Goff have been giving the "weekly visits" over KTHS, their work has gained wide attention, and this week they were notified they are to have an audition before the National Broadcasting board. This will be in Chicago, some time in July. The definite time will be announced later.

We still do not know just what these early broadcasts concerned, but apparently Lauck & Goff were already using the community of Waters, and the general store belonging to their old friend Dick Huddleston, as the focal point of their skits. In the Waters news briefs of the July 2 issue of the *Star*, the following small paragraph appeared:

Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Huddleston, Mrs. Eddie Williams, Mrs. Eva Hicks and Mrs. Ola Hooper went to Mena Sunday evening to listen to "Lum and Abner" broadcast from Hot Springs.

It would not be long before Dick Huddleston would begin capitalizing upon his radio fame, but for the time being there was enough to do just getting *Lum and Abner* started. We can only imagine how Lauck & Goff must have been feeling at the time, but the July 9 paper leaves no doubt that their popularity was for real:

"LUM & ABNER" FAME SPREADS IN THE PAPERS

Arkansas Laugh-Makers Get Much Publicity; at Lyric Last Night

The fame of "Lum & Abner" continues to grow. A recently published picture of the Mena radio entertainers in the *Arkansas Democrat* has been copied by other newspapers. Chester H. Lauck, "Lum" of the team, has received word that the pictures have appeared in papers at Jonesboro, Ark., Springfield, Mo., and Peoria, Ill. "Lum & Abner" appeared in person at the Lyric Wednesday night and pleased a large audience of home folks with their wit and humor. The young entertainers, who are soon to appear before the National Broadcasting company in Chicago, told in an interesting way of their coming trip to Chicago.

When asked where they got the names "Lum" and "Abner," Chet Lauck was always quick to reply that he did not know why he came up with the name "Lum," as he had never heard of anyone who was called that. Apparently this is another bit of incorrect history, as in the July 9 newspaper was also reported the July 4 death of Polk County pioneer "Uncle Lum" Brown at age 77, and since even the newspaper knew the old gentleman by that name, it seems certain that the Lauck family would have heard of him too. Conversely, Tuffy Goff mentioned that he had known a lot of men named "Abner" in his day, but it would be impossible to select any one resident of the Mena area who could be said to be Mr. Peabody's namesake.

That is as far as we will go in this look at the beginnings of *Lum and Abner* 70 years ago; in our next installment, we will pick up with their audition at NBC in Chicago and see how the droll duo made it onto network radio, only three months after their first appearance locally. Stay tuned!

- Tim Hollis



from Whence Come Lum?

When questioned as to where he came up with the name "Lum Edwards," Chester Lauck had a standard answer: "The name just popped into my head," he usually said, adding, "I had never known anybody by that name."

Well, obviously every inspiration has to come from somewhere, and it is a recorded fact that just south of the Ouachita River from Pine Ridge was a large family of Edwardses, one of whom was Zachariah Columbus Edwards, known to his friends as "Lum." Did Chet and Z. C. (Lum) Edwards actually know each other? We will never know, and since Zachariah Columbus passed away in 1970, that connection will perhaps forever remain a mystery.

It is less of a mystery to determine where the physical appearance of Lum originated. There was once a now-forgotten vaudeville performer named Chic Sale, among whose acts was his impersonation of one "Lem Putt," better known as "The Specialist." This act took the form of a lengthy monologue in which Sale (as Lem) described his long-established career as a builder of outhouses (or privies, as he politely referred to them). Just when Chic Sale began performing this routine is uncertain, but in 1929 he published the text of his speech in a slender book that became an immediate best seller. It was such a hit that the following year he tried to make lightning strike twice by issuing a sequel titled *I'll Tell You Why*, which was one of the catchphrases of his routine.

On the back cover of the 1930 edition of *I'll Tell You Why* appeared a photograph of Chic Sale in his costume as Lem Putt.



Chic Sale as Lem Putt, 1930.

That photo is reproduced at left, and when comparing it to the original 1931 Lum & Abner publicity photo on the cover of this issue, it becomes quite obvious that this shot was being used when it became necessary to devise a physical appearance for Lum Edwards of Pine Ridge.

Both Chic Sale books were well-illustrated, and the artist undoubtedly based his drawings on Sale's stage appearance. Therefore, much of that artwork bears a strong resemblance to the later Lum as well.

We know that Chet Lauck was familiar with *The Specialist*, because one of the last recordings he made before his passing in 1980 was of himself reading the text of the small book, substituting "Lum" everywhere the name "Lem" appeared. (The recording is incomplete, but can be heard on Tape #298 in the NLAS Tape Library.)

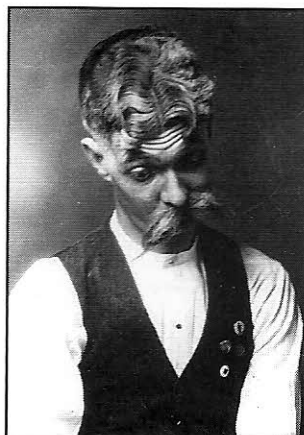
(We might also mention that in 1985, Clarence Hartzell cited Chic Sale as one of his possible inspirations for the character who became Uncle Fletcher/Ben Withers. Hartzell described an act in which

Sale wore a "Civil War era" band uniform and led his nonexistent musicians in "Go Tell Aunt Rhody the Old Gray Goose Is Dead." Apparently Sale's performances must have been something to see, judging from the influence he had on the world of L&A!)

- Tim Hollis



LEFT: Illustration from THE SPECIALIST, 1929.



RIGHT: Lum Edwards, May 1931.



Another illustration from THE SPECIALIST, 1929... or is it Lum running for President?

LISTEN TO THEM

FIZZ



Along with our continuing discussion of how the *Lum and Abner* program got started 70 years ago, we should also remember that this spring marks the 60th anniversary of the beginning of their "second wind," as it were. A little explanation, for those who may have forgotten:

After Lauck & Goff took their program off the air in March 1940 to make their first movie, *Dreaming Out Loud*, there was no *Lum and Abner* series for a little over a year. After the deluge of publicity and personal appearances connected with that film, however, the pair decided it was time to try to get back into radio. One would think that a proven comedy team such as L&A, with 10 years of success behind them, would have had no trouble jumping back into their home medium... but apparently it was still necessary for them to "audition" for prospective future sponsors.

Among the 16" L&A transcription disks is one two-sided affair dated February 28, 1941. Let's put this one on the turntable and see what it is all about. First we hear an organ theme never previously connected with any L&A broadcast... It is the soon-to-be-familiar one known popularly as "Evalena," composed and played by longtime organist Sybil Chism. Up until this point, "Eleanor" was the only theme used by L&A, and to be honest, this premiere performance of "Evalena" is done in such a way that it is initially difficult to tell the two themes apart. "Evalena" would be used on the broadcasts only for the next four years (as well as in five of the six L&A films for RKO), but would become the most familiar L&A theme thanks to its use in the syndicated L&A shows from the early 1970s to this day.

After "Evalena," the familiar velvet voice of announcer Lou Crosby is heard:

You know, it's pretty hard to give you a true picture of Lum and Abner in one, or even a half dozen 15-minute episodes. Lum and Abner are not just a radio program which you can listen to, enjoy, and forget. They've become an institution, and their listeners have learned to look forward to their daily episodes like a visit with old friends. They share the joys and the sorrows of these old fellows as though they were a part of their own family. The old Jot 'Em Down Store, where millions of American people from the children up to the grandmothers and grandfathers have gathered around the cracker barrel for years, has been temporarily closed. As we look in on the little community today, we find Lum and Abner having just opened and are entering the front door of the store. Listen...

L&A comment on how musty the store has become during

their absence, and Abner suggests that "If we're goin' back on the raddio we better git it cleaned up." Lum has other thoughts, though:

LUM: I don't know, Abner, I was thinkin' awhal ago.. I don't know wher we ort to run the store again er not.

ABNER: You mean change the program all up?

LUM: Well, me an' you could be the same but stid o' runnin' the store why don't we try sompin else? Tell jokes er sing er sompin like that...

ABNER: Law, Lum, I wouldn't know what to do without the store. Gives us so much to talk about... friends drap in an' loaf... Grandpappy Spears an' Squire Skimp an' all of em...

The dialogue continues in this vein, with L&A remaining in character but discussing how their nightly programs made the audience feel at home in Pine Ridge. Abner mentions some of their past storylines: "Like when they had the oil boom here, and we started that circus, had the six-day bicycle race... run the matrimonial bureau, got out the *Pine Ridge News*... everbody peared to take a real sight o' intrust when you nearly got married to Evalener."

Lum suggests that for something new he might try telling stories over the radio, "like Huckleberry Finn and Robinson's Carusoe." This leads into a 1936 routine they filed and saved for periodic resurrection, in which Lum drives himself stark ravin mad crazy trying to explain the story of Robinson Crusoe and Friday to Abner. Finally he is forced to make a confession:

LUM: I found out one thing... I don't think that idy o' tellin' stories on the raddio is goin to work. If I got everbody as mixed up as I have you, they never would know what I was talkin about. No, I bleave we better jist stick to the store business, Abner.

Then Lou Crosby returns: "Well, we are inclined to agree with the old fellows. American radio isn't quite the same without the old Jot 'Em Down Store." The new organ theme is heard again, and the recording concludes with Crosby's "Thank you, gentlemen [referring either to L&A or to the prospective sponsor who has been listening to this disk]. Lou Crosby speaking."

Turning the disk over, let's check out the "second audition" on Side Two. After the organ theme, Crosby explains:

This is the spot where ordinarily you'd hear the sponsor's identification, and the talk about their product. For over 10 years, Lum and Abner have been heard over the networks in 15-minute episodes dealing with the interesting life in Pine Ridge. During that time, their popularity has steadily increased, and when they left the air a few months ago their Crosby rating was

the highest point throughout their career. Thousands and thousands are still writing local stations and networks, demanding that their old friends return to the air. Well, as we look in on the little community of Pine Ridge today, we find Lum and Abner down at their Jot 'Em Down Store. Abner has just been asked by a committee to place his name on the ballot as candidate for president of the school board. Listen...

The performance that follows is an amalgamation of concepts from circa 1936 scripts. Lum suggests that Abner run for the school board on the Demopublican ticket, with no mention of that being Lum's political affiliation for the 1936 presidential campaign. This turns into a discussion of the term "vice versa," which of course puzzles Abner to no end. Cedric Weehunt enters, representing the "North American All-Wool Suit & Overcoat Co." He tries to sell Abner a new suit, leading into Lauck & Goff's long-established stage routine in which Lum measures Abner for the suit.

At the close of the routine, Squire Skimp comes in to announce that Uncle Henry Lunsford is the new school board president, but Lum, undaunted, declares that Abner will run for mayor of Pine Ridge on the Demopublican ticket.

This was obviously intended to show the sponsors what the beginning of a typical L&A storyline would be like. Lou Crosby returns to the microphone:

This is merely a suggestion of the beginning of a new series. Other programs would no doubt contain more of Lum and Abner's philosophy. Some would deal with comedy situations, and others would introduce more characters as the plot or story required.

In the middle of the closing theme, Crosby puts in his last word on the matter: "You know, I could be talking to millions of people about your product right now."

We have no way of knowing just how many potential sponsors this recording was played for, but the eventual outcome was that sometime that spring *Lum and Abner* was sold to Miles Laboratories, the makers of Alka-Seltzer and One-A-Day vitamins. It is interesting to note that Miles was by that time a very busy radio sponsor, and would remain so throughout the next decade. Besides L&A, Miles' network shows included *The Quiz Kids*, *The National Barn Dance*, and others. By contrast, L&A's two most immediate previous sponsors, Horlick's Malted Milk and Postum, seem to have put all their radio advertising eggs solely into L&A's own basket.

Readers of *The Mena Star* saw the following announcement on May 15, 1941:

"LUM & ABNER" WILL SOON BE BACK ON AIR

Details Are Lacking, but W. J. Lauck Had the News Direct From the Famous "Lum Ed'ards"

A new radio contract recently made will bring "Lum & Abner" back on the air again. This is expected to happen this present month of May. The pair of Arkansas-born entertainers who made Pine Ridge a nationally known postal station and changed a name from a myth to a reality are reported to have accepted a contract with the makers of Alka-Seltzer.

Details of the new deal in broadcasting "Lum & Abner's" humorous philosophy are lacking, but a long distance conversation had one recent night between Chester H. "Lum" Lauck and his father, W. J. Lauck Sr., revealed the famous pair of entertainers were getting ready to face microphones soon. Talking from Lexington, Ky., where he and other racing friends had gone to witness the Derby, "Chet" informed his dad it was expected a west coast broadcast would be made first.

Later in the year after the heated season was nearing its end, a regular network would be broadcasting the new "Lum & Abner" programs. What system would be used wasn't indicated, the Mena recipient of this latest

news from radioland explained, nor were other details made clear.

But the Mena entertainers are coming back to the air and the beloved voices of "Lum" and his boyhood pal "Abner" will be heard again by the thousands of loyal fans they've made throughout the nation because of their clean and interesting program.

It was true: the original run of *Lum and Abner* for Miles Laboratories was heard only as a test on the West Coast stations of the NBC Blue Network. The new series began on Monday, May 26, and lasted through September 19. Ten days later, NBC Blue started carrying the show on a national basis, and the second big era of *Lum and Abner* would begin.

(The two "audition" episodes discussed above can be heard on the NLAS special release cassette *BEHIND THE SCENES WITH LUM & ABNER*, available for \$4.00 from the Executive Secretary's office. The first Alka-Seltzer broadcasts can be found with their original commercials intact on Tapes #AS-1 to #AS-12 in the NLAS Tape Library.)

- Tim Hollis



In Memory Of *Dorothy McClure Stephens* *1910-2001*



Ralph & Dorothy McClure

Regular readers of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* and visitors to Pine Ridge may be familiar with the name **Dorothy McClure** or **Dorothy Stephens**. Dorothy passed away on Jan 16, 2001 at the age of 90.

In the fall of 1969, Ralph and Dorothy McClure of Fresno, CA, came to Pine Ridge, Ark., just to visit family. They ended up buying the "Lum and Abner Jot 'Em Down Store" from the daughter of **Dick**

Huddleston. Actually, it was Dick's old general store, but was the basis for many of the tales told by Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff on radio in the 1930s and 1940s.

Dorothy was born Dorothy Scott on April 26, 1910, in Beverly, KS, which wasn't much bigger than Pine Ridge, and has suffered about the same fate. (Coincidentally, *Lum and Abner* was first heard on the radio on her 21st birthday!) She was the next to youngest of the nine children of Noah Scott and Ora Sturtevant Scott. She grew up in Beverly, and later mar-

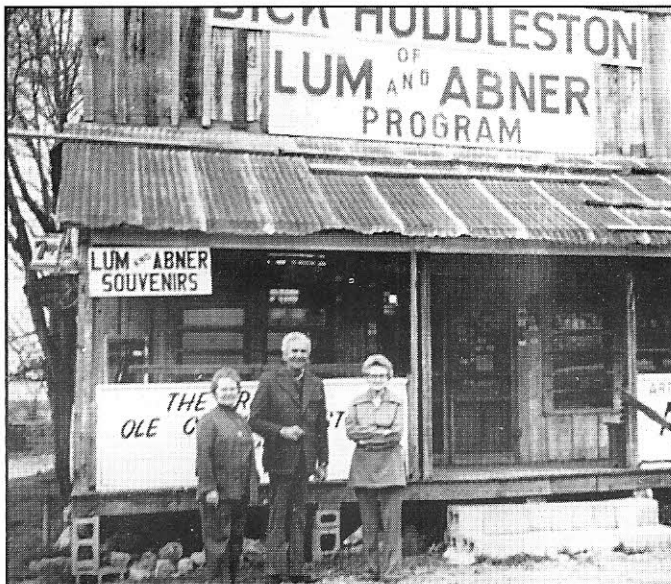
ried Isaac L. Stucker of Arkansas. Their daughter Judy was born in Kansas, but they moved to California in the 1930s, and their son Lon was born there.

Many years later, Dorothy and Isaac divorced, and she married Ralph McClure. The McClures were antique dealers, and that collection is what they brought to Pine Ridge with them in 1969. They set up the museum display of old Pine Ridge memorabilia in the back of the store, their antiques for sale in the front, and added souvenirs for the tourists. Soon they discovered they needed more room, and obtained the old McKinzie Store to house the museum.

Ralph died in 1972. Dorothy continued running the store and museum by herself, with help from her friends. In 1979, her son Lon Stucker retired from the US Navy, and moved to Pine Ridge with his family. Lon and Kathy took over operation of the business, freeing Dorothy to enjoy her retirement. She married Cecil Stephens of McAlester, Oklahoma, and they traveled much of each year until Cecil's death. In 1986, the NLAS presented her with the Lum & Abner Memorial Award in recognition of the work she had done to preserve the "real" Pine Ridge. Dorothy's health gradually failed, until her death this year of heart failure.

She is survived by her two children, five grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild, plus one brother and one sister. She was buried on Saturday, January 20th, in the Pine Ridge Cemetery, one-half mile west of the Jot 'Em Down Store on the Old Waters Highway.

- Kathy Stucker



L to R: Dorothy McClure, Chet Lauck, and Jake Hatfield at the opening of the Lum & Abner Museum, 1972.



The NLAS presents the Lum & Abner Memorial Award to Dorothy McClure (second from left) and Dick Huddleston's daughter Ethel (second from right), June 15, 1986.

You'll Be Sorry Iffen You Miss
**THE 2001 NLAS
CONVENTION
JUNE 15-16, 2001**

Lime Tree Inn, Mena, Ark.
**FEATURING Lum & Abner's® ALL-STAR
70th Anniversary CELEBRATION, or,
"Lum and Abner In Disneyland?"**

It is time you began making your plans to attend this year's NLAS Convention in Mena! We have some most unusual features for 2001, with some guests who have certainly left an impression on show biz history. **SAM EDWARDS** has been a character actor most of his life, and is best known to radio fans as "Dexter," the boyfriend of the title character in *Meet Corliss Archer*. He also spent many years on the *Gunsmoke* radio show, and was one of two actors who voiced the cute rabbit "Thumper" in Walt Disney's *Bambi*. His versatile voice could also be heard as various characters on a long series of albums for the Disneyland Records label in the 1960s. Did we mention that he also appeared in the still-unseen 1961 *Lum and Abner* TV pilot which starred Arthur Hunnicutt and Edgar Buchanan?! **RHODA WILLIAMS** was a frequent co-performer with Edwards, and spent five years as the eldest daughter on the radio version of *Father Knows Best* (written for much of that time by L&A scriptwriter Roz Rogers). Like Sam Edwards, she too has strong Disney connections, having been the voice for one of the two delightfully despicable stepsisters in the 1950 animated feature *Cinderella*.

Singer **ROBIE LESTER** is a familiar name to anyone who has paid attention to cartoons (Disney or otherwise) during the last 40 years. Her most lasting role (among hundreds) was as Jessica the schoolteacher (and the future Mrs. Kris Kringle) in the classic holiday special *Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town*. Along with Sam Edwards, she was a fixture of the Disneyland Records label, and in fact was teamed with Edwards for many, many recordings... yet the two performers have never met! (Disney obviously chose to record its actors separately and then edit the whole thing together.) **DICK BEALS** is another well-known name in radio/cartoon circles; after playing children on countless Detroit radio shows (including *The Lone Ranger*), he migrated to Hollywood and found a second career in animation, most notably as the voice of Speedy Alka-Seltzer, but also in many roles for Disney, Hanna-Barbera, and other studios. He and Robie Lester were fellow cast members for a number of projects, and between the two of them played Donald Duck's three nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie.

In our next issue we will be bringing you more details about all of these guests, but meanwhile, you should be calling the Lime Tree Inn in Mena, (501) 394-6350, to make your reservations. We know there will be a Convention program on Friday evening, another on Saturday morning, a Saturday afternoon program, and a fourth on Saturday evening; by the time our June issue is published we should be able to give you more specific information. For now, start packing those bags! Why go to Disneyland or Walt Disney World for your vacation and see people dressed up in character costumes, when you can come to the NLAS Convention and visit with the people who REALLY played classic Disney creations? Everybody sing: "Who's the leader of the group no matter where they are? L-U-M! A-N-D! A-B-N-E-R!"