

WHAT HO, THE HORLICK'S

We recently received the following note from our friend Kathy Stucker, who runs the Jot 'Em Down Store and Lum & Abner Museum in Pine Ridge with her husband Lon:

A few weeks ago, a man who has just moved here from CA brought us a gift. He had gone to a health food store in San Jose while he was getting his last load of belongings packed and shipped. He just happened to notice a large jar of Horlick's Malted Milk powder and decided he had to buy it for the museum. The label gave the following info: Horlick's is now manufactured in India, and owned and distributed by a company in the UK!!! I wonder what Mr Horlick and Lum and Abner would think of that.

We posed that question to prez Uncle Donnie Pitchford, and he replied with this:

ABNER: *Doggies, who is this feller a-comin' in th' store?*

GRANDPAP: *Looks like a dandy!*

ABNER: *Mind out, mind out...*

(SOUND: DOOR)

CHET LAUCK'S ENGLISH ACCENT: *Wot ho, chops?*

ABNER: *Huh?*

LAUCK: *Allow me to introduce meself - I am Sir Reginald P. Horlick, the new owner of Horlick's Malted Milk!*

ABNER: *Well, I do know! What happened to ol' William Horlick?*

LAUCK: *Advanced decomposition!*

ABNER: *Huh? What's 'at mean?*

GRANDPAP: *Hit means he cain't write complicated music, Abner.*

ABNER: *OH! Shore, I knowed that - I think - SAAAAY, who's this feller jist walked in with th' towel on his head?*

LAUCK: *This is my partner, Prince Ali Kush Horlick of India!*

JERRY HAUSNER: *SHALOM, BWANA!*

GRANDPAP: *Pigeon-toed knock-kneed spavin-legged furriners! I'M AG'IN 'EM!!!*

Don't worry, folks, we don't plan on using that as the script for next year's convention in Mena.

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VISIT

The Jot 'Em Down Store &
Lum & Abner® Museum



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(the "Lum & Abner Highway")

PINE RIDGE, ARKANSAS

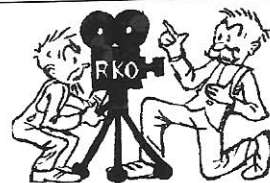
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 Hollis, #81 Sharon
 Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062,
 e-mail CampHoll@aol.com.

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Zekatif Ossifers
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*Front Cover: The Dick
 Huddleston store in Waters, Ark. as
 photographed in the summer of
 1932 for the book LUM & ABNER
 & THEIR FRIENDS FROM PINE
 RIDGE.*

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

October 2002

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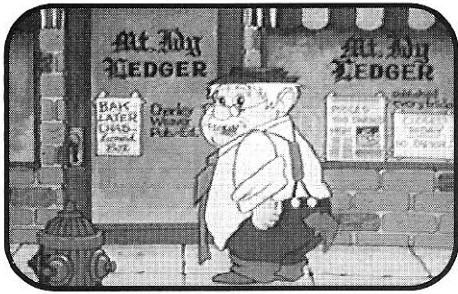
Lum & Abner: Attack of the Clones 9



Does this look like the cast of LUM AND ABNER as they might have appeared in a parallel universe? No, it's a scene from THE CAT MOUNTAIN BOYS, a feature of radio station WSGN in Birmingham, Alabama in 1947. The original caption for this photo reads: "Effie seems to be causing quite a furor in the old country store as she searches vainly for some loose change. Grandpappy is surrounded by (L to R) Announcer Jim Cleary, Effie Cook, Amos, and Orville." For more on radio shows that were "L&A Clones," see the article beginning on page 9 of this issue.

A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT from MOUNT IDY

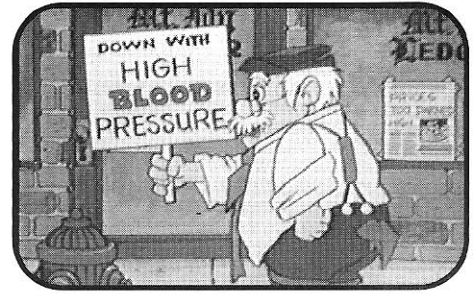
While preparing material for this year's convention, Uncle Donnie Pitchford located a rare video recording of a public service announcement from the early 1970s. The notable thing from our standpoint is that it featured an animated version of L&A alumnus Cliff Arquette as Charley Weaver, continuing his "Mount Idy" routine that he developed while on the Lum & Abner show. We present the spot here in storyboard form.



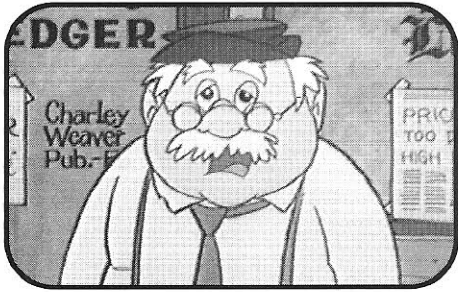
CHARLEY: Ya know, folks are down on high prices an' high taxes..



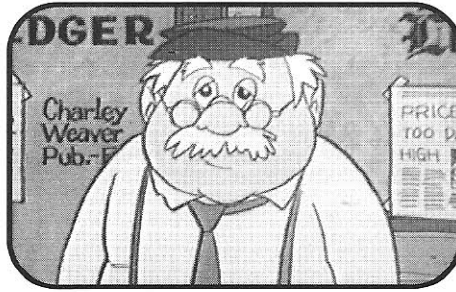
I say "Down with High Blood Pressure!"



It's got symptoms ya can't even see,



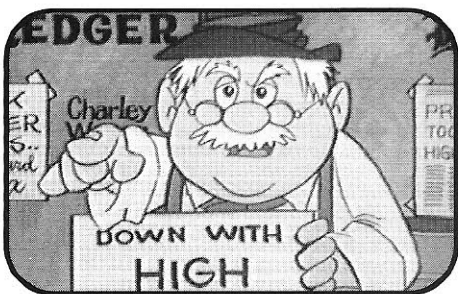
and half of you 23 million folks who have it don't even know it!



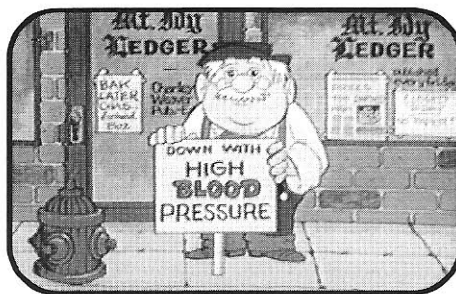
So keep seein' yer doctor regular.



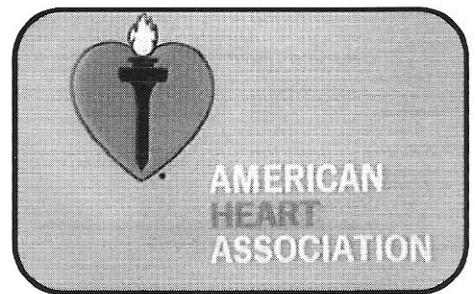
You never know!



If you DO have high blood pressure, you can control it!



Fer more information, just ask yer Heart Association. Oh.. and tell 'em Charley sent ya!



Heh heh, they're OUR kinda people!

70 YEARS OF LUM AND ABNER®

In the August issue of the *Journal* we related the story of how Lauck & Goff came to write a small hardcover book titled *Lum & Abner and Their Friends From Pine Ridge*. The sales of this book in the summer and fall of 1932 were what kept the radio show on the air via station WBAP in Fort Worth, Texas. Since this book is the most rare of any of the L&A premiums (due to the fact that it was not promoted nationally), and also since it gives us our only real idea as to what the show and its characters were like during that period, we thought it would be helpful to reexamine the volume and its contents here.

The one-page Foreword of the book begins this way:

The authors of this little book believe that the chief merit (if any) lies in the fact that it will be found true to nature. Every character sketch has been drawn from a living model, and an attempt has been made to describe them in the dialect and phraseology of the lovable old characters of the Arkansas hill country, where they may be found living their lives as their forefathers lived theirs, unaffected and unspoiled by modern progress.

The dedication page continues the gentle self-deprecating tone that pervades most of the book:

Being unable to find an individual who would consent to having this debris dedicated to him, we have decided to take advantage of those who cannot defend themselves. Therefore, we do hereby and herewith, without malice aforethought, dedicate the following pages to those few brave souls who so patiently listen to the daily episodes of Lum and Abner over their radios, yea, even to those who nonchalantly turn their dials to other stations for bigger and better programs.

The first of the "character profiles," naturally, centers on Lum

& Abner themselves, illustrated with the original May 1931 portrait of Lauck & Goff in makeup, taken by Mena photographer Oscar Plaster (who was responsible for the rest of the photos in the book as well). Of course, since L&A were a year away from opening their Jot 'Em Down Store, the text about them centers on their civic and personal affairs:

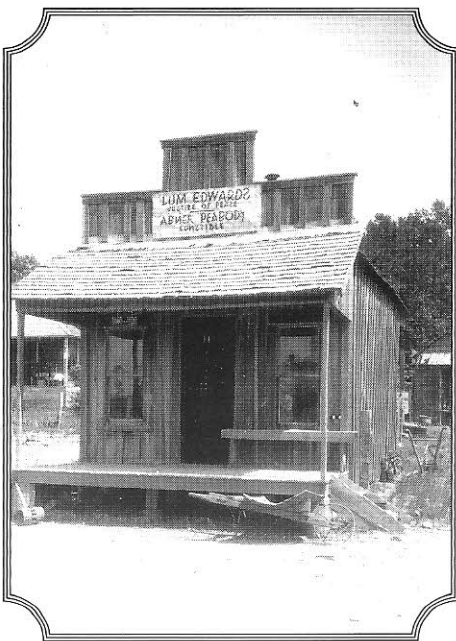
If hit wasn't us writin, we could go ahead and tell what a great Jestice of the Pease Lum has made fer the cammunity and how he has give the best years of his life a dealin out jestice cordin to the statues and sarvin as presydent of the skool board... Hits a downright shame they aint somebody else writin bout us... They could tell you that Abner is one of the greatest invinters that ever invinted, him bein the one that invinted how to make rubber outa stretch berrys and sweet gum...

This last statement seems to refer to what must have been the earliest version of the storyline that would later manifest itself in the 1943 saga of Grandpappy "Buster V. Davenport" Spears and the feature film *So This Is Washington*.

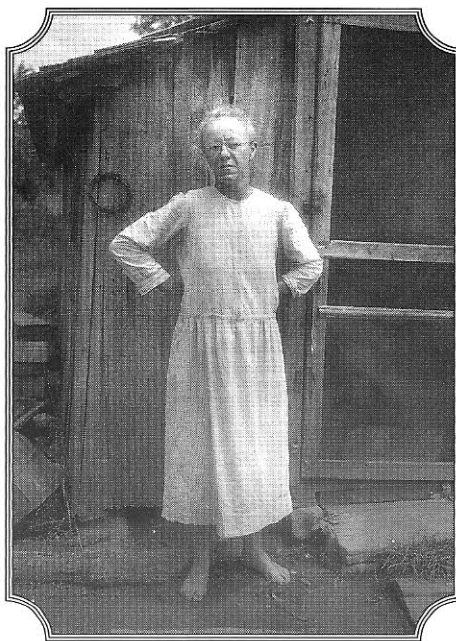
The next photo depicts the Waters, Arkansas, post office building, here standing in as "The Law & Constable Office," and the text relates that it is where Lum attends to his justice of the peace and school board duties, and Abner the town constable shares office space. The early format of *Lum and Abner* is hinted at by the following statement:

They often take recess from the treadmill of labor to discuss the "goins on" of the community, and it is these brief moments of alleged wit, humor and philosophy that you would have heard on your radio had you not dialed to another station for relief.

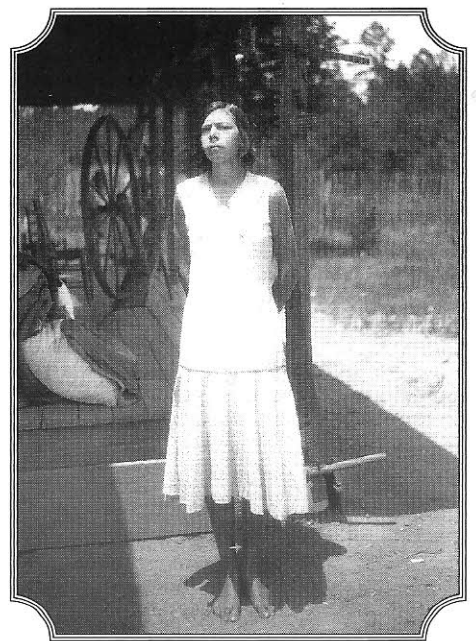
The first of the genuine Waters residents to be pictured as a fictional character is area housewife Lena Voerster, here posing as



"The Law & Constable Office"



"Elizabeth Peabody"



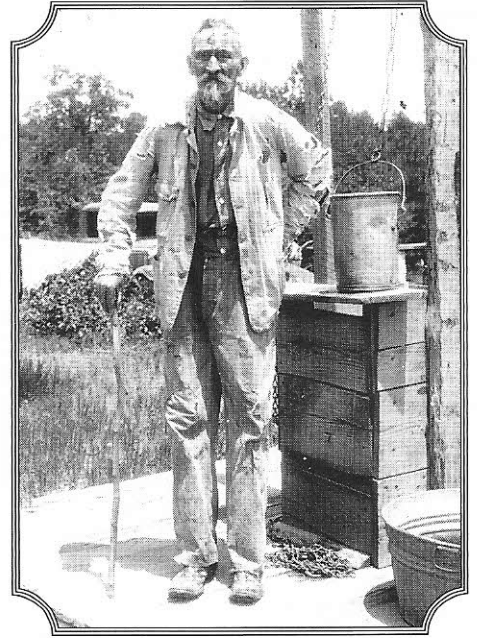
"Pearl Peabody"



"Dick Huddleston"



"Evalena Schultz"



"Grandpappy Spears"

Elizabeth Peabody. The writeup about her concentrates on "Lizzabeth's" penchant for hard work, and concludes with this paragraph:

Elizabeth never goes nowhar. Ther she is goin at it from early mornin till dark, makin hersef bleave she's bein drove to death by hard work. If she ever sets down to rest, she'll first fill the tea kettle and set it on the stove so's when it biles over she'll have to git up and pour the water out. Reckon why some fokes has got to be like that.

The next page continues the Peabody family with Evelyn Wilhite as Little Pearl. It is noted that Pearl

is jist runnin on eighteen year old but has went plumb threw the fourth reader aready and made more headmarks than arry other scholar in the class. They's some talk bout gettin her to teach the first four grades next term on acct. of her bein threw

them.

Obviously their ideas about Pearl's intellect would change by the war years, when she would become an Army nurse and then come home in 1947 to get married.

Next comes Dick Huddleston himself, the only person in the book to portray himself. The fact that he was not a fictional character always caused a bit of a problem for Lauck & Goff, since they could not use him as a buffoon or in any other way that could be construed as less than complimentary. This extended to the writeup about him in the book, which is probably the dullest of any. The same courtesy extended to the real-life Huddleston applied to the rest of his family too, of whom it was noted:

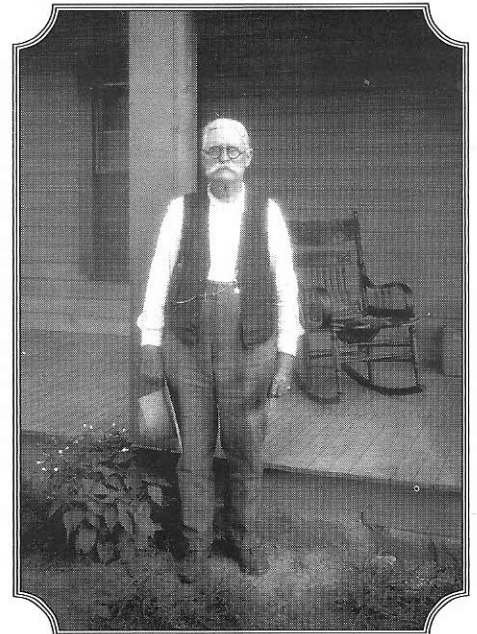
His woman takes a turible big hand in meetin matters and is the backbone of the missionary. Dick has jist got one children



"Aunt Charity Spears"



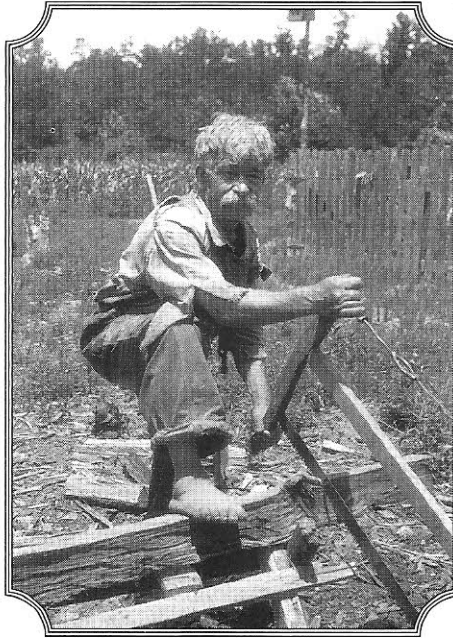
"Oscar Fields"



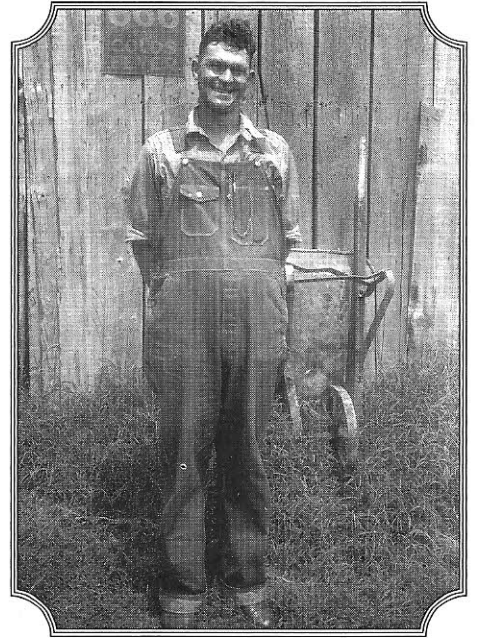
"Squire Skimp"



“Bular Skimp”



“Kalup Weehunt”



“Cedric Weehunt”

which is Ethyl. She's as purty as a peach, facts is, she win a prize fer bein the purtyest gurl in skoole when she went off to kolledge.

Longtime NLAS members will recall that the real-life Ethel Huddleston was one of our staunchest supporters and a semi-regular contributor to the *Journal* from our beginning until her death at age 92 in 1997.

The next photo shows Dick Huddleston's store building itself (not yet sporting its Lum & Abner sign), and the short writeup about it gives yet another clue about what the radio show was like in these pre-Jot 'Em Down Store days:

Dick's store is more than just a store; it is the hub of all activity in the community, a gathering place for those tired souls who can find a few spare moments from their daily routine to hear the news of the outside world. Here you may find Lum and Abner and their friends, back by the stove near the cracker barrel, discussing politics, "meetin matters," how best the government should be run, and many other grave and important questions of the day.

Every Thursday the county weekly paper arrives and upon this occasion, Dick Huddleston reads aloud, to a group of attentive listeners, together, the news with comments and explanations. Many of the scenes in the daily episodes of Lum and Abner are laid within this old building.

Next on the bill is local resident Nancy Chambers as Evalena Schultz, a character who apparently had not been part of the show for long. The opening of her writeup reads:

Whilst Evalener lives in Belleville, we call her one of our own flock, fer she taughten the last term of skoole here in Pine Ridge and had a heap better cuntrol over the scholars than arry per-fesser we've had fer years... Stid of snatchin em up and whalin the daylights outen em, she would talk kind to em and pint out wher they had the wrong slant on things. Yessir they's times when words'll cut a heap deeper than a hickory limb...

Area old-timer Cling Wilhite poses as Grandpappy Spears, and local opinion was that he was as much a model for that character as Dick Huddleston was for the character that bore his name. In fact, when Waters became Pine Ridge in 1936, Wilhite was one of only two Waters residents other than Huddleston to make the trip to Little Rock and be introduced as their radio counterparts. The accompanying writeup does not add anything new to our existing knowledge of Grandpap, except to specify that he is "runnin onto eighty seven year old."

Grandpap's long-suffering wife Aunt Charity was posed by kindly-looking Anna Risenhoover, and some of the remarks made about her in the text would eventually be cemented into place in the annual Christmas show, which would not even make its debut until December 1933:

If they's arry humin in Pine Ridge thats got a presarved seat in the Better World, hits Aint Charity... She's got her own remmydies fer curin might nigh any kind of ailment they are in the book. They's some that says her idys is a leetle old fashund, but be that as it may, if some of the doctors that claims to know meddysines had her receipt fer makin jempson weed salve and sennie tea, they wouldn't be nigh so much diggin in them lots over ther by the meetin house.

The next character is something of a puzzle. Rough-looking Waters sawmill operator Marion Bates glares at the camera over the caption "Oscar Fields." WHO? Read these excerpts from the writeup and you will no doubt come to a certain conclusion:

They's one feller that peers to go plumb outa his way to be jist as ornery as he can and that's Oscar Fields. Hit dont make no difference what abody does or says, he'll take side agin you. Hit aint ben jist once that he's been mixed up in some turible shady deals and when they's sompin did agin the law, the spishions is allus laid right on his doorstep... He's got to wher he caint git along with hissef hardly... They jist aint no pleasin him.

Now, it sounds very much like Oscar Fields eventually became the town tough known as Snake Hogan, but there is nothing to shed any more light on the evolution of the character. Perhaps "Oscar Fields" was such a realistic-sounding name that Lauck & Goff found it advisable to come up with another one for such an unsavory character.

Another familiar character pops up next, with Mena resident "Doc" Hammond as a bushy-mustached Squire Skimp. Apparently the concept of Squire's personality was a bit different in these early days, because nothing is said about the colossal con man he would eventually become. Instead, the burden of his text seems to be:

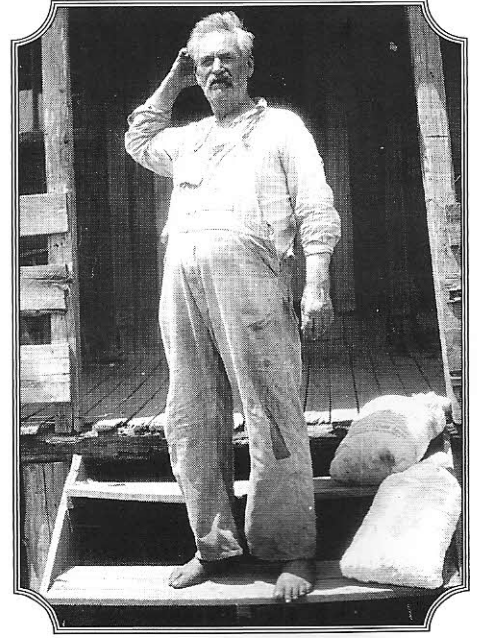
Whilst Squire aint lived in our cammunity long, he's made some of the old timers take back-water when hit comes to swop-pin whoppers. Hit dont peer to make no difference to him what subjeck is brung up, he'll tell a yarn about it and not only that but one that'll out-cap anything thats ben told. If he aint had a happenin to hissef that'll fit in, he'll tell one that he's heerd and



“Sister Simpson”



“Uncle Henry Lunsford”



“Ezra Seestrunk”

hang it on hissef like it was a experience of hissen. If the Squire had of did all the things he claims he has, he'd be runnin on to closet to two hunderd year old.

Not only was Squire's personality apparently different in 1932, he also seems to have been a family man. The next page shows lovely Lois Hooper as “Bular Skimp,” with a writeup placing her as Squire's daughter. In the later years of the program, nothing would be mentioned about Squire fathering any children at all! Just what sort of role she played in the radio skits is difficult to imagine, but her description was attractive enough:

Squire Skimp's darter Bular is sorter the flower of the cammunity. Agin she gits her hair frizzed and her cheeks cullord up to wher she looks dead ripe and dykes hersef out in a nuff silk and sating to turn a queen's head, she's bout as trim in a artickle as you ever throwed your eyes over... Dick Huddleston says that Bular has been the means of makin more men slick their hair down and keep their shoes greased than arry woman in the settlement...

Everyone knows the Pine Ridge blacksmith as Caleb Weehunt, but in this book (and in L&A's own scripts, for that matter) his name is spelled “Kalup,” and nothing is said about his career as a smithy. Instead, the emphasis is on Kalup being a “turible slick horse trader,” and how poor his farmland is.

Kalup's son Cedric fares a bit better, as it doesn't sound like his character changed very much from 1932 onward. What is interesting, though, is that L&A chose to give Cedric a sort of “backstory” by explaining his slow-wittedness:

Whilst he's a leetle shy on book larnin on acct. of not bein jist right in the head ever since he was kicked in the head by a mule when he was a kid of a boy growin up, they aint no better liked boy nowhar than Cedric is. He'll do anything you tell him to, the only trouble bein you got to tell him when to stop... Knowin how to do so many things and bein willin too, he's kep turible busy a heppin thissen and thatten all over the cammunity. He dont have much time he can call his own, but when he aint a doin fer somebody else, you'll more'n likely find him down at the creek ketchin crawfish fer bait to ketch more crawfish with. Yessir, hit'd be a good thing if a heap more of us was kicked by a mule when we was growin up.

For the book, Cedric was posed by Lasker Goble, whom it is reported was not slow-witted at all but looked the part (certainly he filled the bill better than Grady Sutton, the movie Cedric). Along with Cling Wilhite as Grandpappy Spears, Goble por-

trayed Cedric at the 1936 ceremony changing Waters to Pine Ridge, and during the late 1930s and early 1940s he toured with Dick Huddleston's vaudeville act, continuing his Cedric role.

Margaret Wilhite, wife of Cling/Grandpap, appears in the book as Sister Simpson, true to her later character:

Sister Simpson can stir up more trouble twixt fokes axidental than arry half dozen wimen can ordinary. She's allus been powerful enerjetik in everbody's business septin her own.

Lauck & Goff and photographer Plaster must have gone to a bit of extra trouble when arranging the photo of Uncle Henry Lawrence as (who else?) Uncle Henry Lunsford, because they added the detail of having him lean on a mailbox, and then when the book was printed they lettered “H. Lunsford” on the formerly-blank receptacle. Uncle Henry was never a very well-rounded character on the radio show until the war years, when he was the town marshal and played by Danny Duncan, but in the 1932 book the main emphasis is on his wealth and accompanying stinginess. “They's some that claims he's got the first dollar he ever made,” it reads, “but that might be stretchin it some, whilst hit wouldn't be at tall onreasonabul to say he's got ninety five cents of it.”

The final portrait in the book is overall-clad Bob Risenhoover as Ezra Seestrunk, and the writeup primarily concerns itself with Ezra's regular church attendance and leadership abilities. On the radio show, Ezra was always basically an all-purpose character, used in the plots whenever needed. Of course, during the half-hour days he was played by veteran Western movie sidekick Horace Murphy.

The last two pages feature a photo of one of the local schools, and a “The End” cartoon by Chet Lauck himself, depicting Abner milking a cow. Actually, would-be cartoonist Chet's drawings are scattered throughout the book, mostly at the beginning of each writeup. He also contributed a sketch of L&A arguing in their office.

We do not know just how well this book sold, but at least it was enough to get Chet & Tuffy over the worst of their hard times. When we next hear from them in our December issue, things will be looking much brighter, and this book can be relegated to the various archives in which it now resides.

- Tim Hollis

LUM and ABNER®:

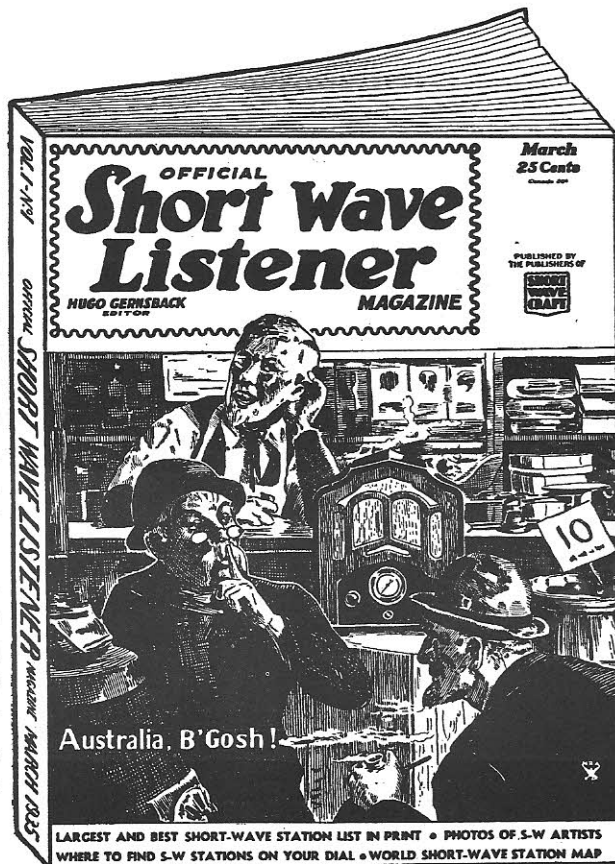
ATTACK OF THE CLONES

PART ONE OF A SERIES

It has always been, and apparently always will be, that any successful.. or sometimes even semi-successful.. element of show business will produce imitators. This holds true for television, popular music, motion pictures, and animated cartoons... and yes, it was true in radio as well. Over the course of the next couple of issues of the *Journal* we are going to be looking at some of the shows that sprang up in response to the popularity of *Lum and Abner* during the 1930s. And, just to be fair, we will look at some of the sources from whence Lauck & Goff undoubtedly took some of their inspiration.

For this first installment, however, we are going to concentrate on two 1932 radio series that were produced for the syndication market, both of which seemed to use L&A as their model. The first, and probably the most obvious L&A clone in radio history, is *Si and Elmer*.

Most of what is known about S&E has to come from the existing recordings from the series. It is known that it was recorded in Los Angeles, and that the two "stars" were Perry Crandall as Si Perkins and William H. Reynolds as (get ready for this) Elmer Peabody. Making the show even more similar to L&A was the fact that both Crandall and Reynolds played all the various roles in the show, out-economizing L&A by even having Crandall serve as the announcer. Nothing at all is known about Reynolds' non-S&E career; several years ago, the talented Gassman brothers of SPERDVAC gave us a couple of phone numbers for Reynolds' daughter, who still lived in the L.A. area and worked as a nurse, but when we attempted to contact her, her home phone had been disconnected and her coworkers reported that she had retired not long before our call. So, unless this elusive lady turns up, we



This mutated version of Lum (with Abner's goatee), Abner (with Lum's mustache) and Grandpap appeared in 1935. Was this what SI & ELMER would have looked like? (Courtesy of Loren Cox Jr.)

may never know any more about the "bootleg Abner."

It is almost as difficult to learn anything about Perry Crandall. The only time he turns up in radio history books is as the creator and announcer of another syndicated series, *Magic Island* (1936). Purportedly a children's series, the show depicted the continuing search of "Mrs. Patricia Gregory" for her daughter who was lost in the South Seas. Ex-Elmer William H. Reynolds was cast again, this time as "Captain Tex." According to our friend, radio historian John Dunning, *Magic Island* exists in its complete 130-episode run.

It is hard to say whether the entire run of *Si and Elmer* exists. Thanks to John & Larry Gassman, we have episodes #1 through #95 in our NLAS archives, with a few gaps in those numbers. If S&E was produced on the same scale as *Magic Island*, it may be that the final 35 episodes are the ones that are missing. The primary theme song for S&E was "The Farmer in the Dell," with snippets inserted of "Turkey In The Straw," "Reuben, Reuben, I've Been Thinking," and a third rustic

tune that is yet unidentified.

Inasmuch as Lum & Abner were not yet in the general store business in 1932, when this series was produced, it is not surprising that Si & Elmer were also not storekeepers. The very first episode introduces us to these two venerable citizens of "Punkinville," as they receive their long-awaited mail order course in how to be detectives. Compare this to the following statement in the book *Lum and Abner and Their Friends*, which was released in August 1932: "We could go head and tell what a good pervider Abner has allus been fer his woman and Pearl and how he has puttin deetectitive methods in the constable's



"Happy Hollow" was a feature of KMBC in Kansas City during the 1930s. Can you find Lum, Abner, Cedric, and Squire Skimp in this photo? (Courtesy of University of Missouri at Kansas City)

office since he has become elected..."

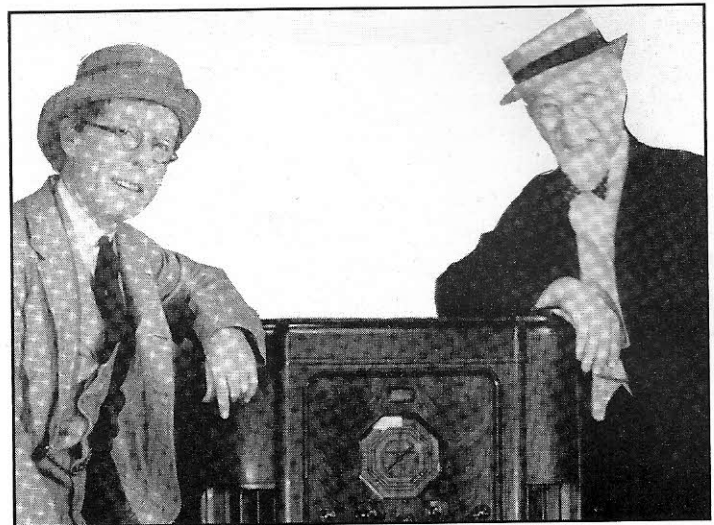
Si & Elmer's personalities were also quite similar to L&A's; the big difference was that S&E took the Pine Ridge pair's primary traits and over-exaggerated them to be the point of being more obnoxious than lovable. Contrary to what one might assume from their names, Elmer Peabody was the Lum equivalent; the instigator of most of their plots, he was boastful and conceited, constantly taking advantage of his more weak-kneed partner. Much the same could be said for Lum, but there was always an underlying sense that L&A really were the best of friends, while the strained relationship between Si & Elmer seemed a bit shallow. The most noticeable feature about Elmer's speech pattern was his whistling S's, which were sometimes used as the focal point of a gag. The hypochondriac Si Perkins, as the Abner clone, spoke in a whining voice and constantly complained about his "misery."

As mentioned earlier, both Crandall and Reynolds followed the lead of L&A (who were, of course, following the lead of *Amos 'n' Andy*) by playing all the other characters in the show themselves. Some of these supporting players may have been patterned as much after L&A's cast as the two lead characters were, while others may have been sheer coincidence. It was certainly no coincidence, though, that Si & Elmer's primary confidant and ally was the local general storekeeper Steve (no last name given, though it could just as well have been Huddleston). Perry Crandall played this part in his natural voice, just as Tuffy Goff played Dick, and Steve's function in the stories was identical; to straighten S&E out when they got into trouble. The other major character, played by Reynolds, was the local sheriff Hank

Hawkins. Personalitywise, the sheriff had no immediate counterpart on *Lum and Abner*, but his voice was a dead ringer for the early version of Goff's Squire Skimp voice, before Squire developed a more "jowly" sound. Other residents of Punkinville were heard from on a more occasional basis: Reynolds was heard in blackface dialect as Sam, the counterpart to Cedric Weehunt, while Crandall put on an effeminate "sissy" voice as a local wimp named Clarence (who would have been the parallel to Mousey Gray except that Mousey's debut was still some nine years in the future).

The *Si and Elmer* plots were somewhat uneven, at times appearing not to know just where they were heading.

However, their most skillfully-woven plot stacks up favorably against anything done by L&A. Episodes #14 through #30 involve detectives S&E being called to investigate some strange happenings at a nearby railroad camp, where workers are mysteriously disappearing during the night as the sound of a nonexistent "ghost train" is heard. This storyline manages to evoke a genuinely eerie feeling, and gives all the characters a chance to act in a more realistic manner. In the course of this tale, Reynolds gets to put on an Irish accent as section boss Pat O'Houlihan and later a Mexican accent as local rancher Manuel



"Herb & Hank" were heard over station WHAM in Rochester, New York.



"Pa & Ma" was a series from KFBI, city unknown. RADIO DIGEST described them as "an old couple living on the outskirts of Tinkerville." Dan Hosmer was Pa, and Christine Crans was Ma.

Caliente. (*Si and Elmer* was a much more "ethnic" program than *Lum and Abner*, with such foreign dialects appearing frequently throughout its run.)

A major difference in the plotting of L&A and S&E is that *Lum and Abner*, generally speaking, unfolded in "real time;" theoretically, each episode took place 24 hours after the previous one (with occasional lapses to allow for night scenes or early mornings, as the plot required). *Si and Elmer* followed the format that would later be adopted by daytime soap operas, when one scene could stretch over several days. For example, in the aforementioned "ghost train" story, the single night in which S&E attempt to take flash photos of the phantom train occupies at least four consecutive 15-minute shows.

Unfortunately, it seemed impossible for the show to recapture the marvelous flavor of this series. After its conclusion, S&E jump into a story of a baby being abandoned on the steps of their office (anticipating L&A's similar storyline by 10 years), and Elmer's jealousy because Si is dating his sweetheart, Widder Snodgrass. This plot is wrapped up rather abruptly, and after a couple of other false starts S&E launch into their second-best tale, involving mysterious doings at a haunted house. Unfortunately, just as the denouement is near, there is an 11-episode gap in the existing recordings, and when the shows resume, S&E and Sheriff Hawkins are investigating some threats being made against Punkinville's resident millionaire Steven Gregory. The collection ends before this storyline is resolved, but it does give a chance for one of the series' best lines. Exploring Mr. Gregory's library in his mansion, the Sheriff explains that "some of these books are rare first editions, over 100 years old," causing Si to remark, "If Mr. Gregory's so rich, looks like he could afford to buy some new books instead." Spoken like Abner fer shore!

The other *Lum and Abner* clone we are concerned with here also began syndication in 1932, although it is possible that it existed in some form prior to that time. *Eb and Zeb* were played

by Al Pearce as Eb and Bill Wright as Zeb, and the show was produced out of San Francisco, where the two leads were members of the cast of the variety show *Blue Monday Jamboree*. Just how long they had been performing their routines on that series is not known, but sketchy records indicate that Episode #1 of their recorded, syndicated *Eb and Zeb* series was heard on May 10, 1932, and sponsored by Shell gasoline. At the beginning of that show, the announcer introduces them to the audience as "your old friends," indicating that they were already known from previous work. The theme song was a leisurely rendition of "Down By The Old Mill Stream," strongly reminiscent of L&A's own dreamy "Eleanor" theme.

Unlike Si & Elmer, Eb & Zeb were storekeepers in the small town of Corn Center, a profession that Lum & Abner did not enter until the summer of 1933. Otherwise, the characters would be thought of as an even closer clone of L&A than they really were. E&Z's personalities were almost interchangeable, with neither of them possessing very super intelligence. In fact, listening to the shows it is sometimes difficult to even remember which character is Eb and which is Zeb; as a rule, Eb (Pearce) speaks with whistling S's, a trait that may have inspired Elmer's similar speech impediment. If anything, Eb seems to be the Lum figure, constantly trying to explain things to the totally uncomprehending Zeb. When faced with an outside character, such as a traveling salesman or other authority figure, Eb & Zeb both exhibit extreme obtuseness, usually causing their adversary to leave their store as a blithering idiot.

Probably because of their many co-workers on *Blue Monday Jamboree*, Pearce and Wright did not attempt to essay all the roles on *Eb & Zeb* themselves. Unlike L&A and *Si & Elmer*, female characters (played by real women) appeared frequently. One of the first to be introduced was the haughty and totally unlovable Hortense Schultzenheimer (one is tempted to think of Evalena Schultz's name, but only until the character has been heard for about 10 seconds). Later, such characters as Miz Newbride appear, in her case simply as an excuse to get off some old jokes about newlyweds.

That is the main departure of *Eb & Zeb* from any of its predecessors. While there is always a nominal plot, sometimes with a fair amount of mystery involved, on occasion, for absolutely no reason, the plot will freeze in its tracks while an entire episode is devoted to Eb & Zeb



This tiny, poor-quality shot is the only known photo of "Eb & Zeb" in makeup.

exchanging old vaudeville-style routines with each other or with additional characters. *Eb & Zeb* probably contains more outright "jokes" in its approximately 100 existing episodes than appeared in 23 years of *Lum and Abner*. As a way of demonstrating the superiority of the sponsor, Shell gasoline, E&Z install a gas pump of an inferior product, Longshot Gas. This sets up a great

exchange in which the Longshot salesman promises that selling his product will increase the store's business. "You mean Longshot Gas makes cars stop?" the rustic pair asks. "It sure does!" the salesman assures them with fullest confidence.

E&Z's most recurring supporting character was Hector Smith, played by Al Pearce in the same half-mumbling voice he would later employ as door-to-door salesman Elmer Blurt ("Nobody home, I hope I hope"). Hector was the most joke-laden character in the show, always ready with a smart aleck remark to annoy Zeb. At one point, Hector brags about being a hero for saving a baby's life. "I was in another town," says he, "when I saw a little baby in the middle of the street.. and a big car was headed straight for it.. and I saved that baby's life." "What did you do?" queries Zeb. "I put on the brakes!" Hector smirks.

Most of E&Z's so-called storylines are very loosely constructed. In rapid succession, they help capture a wanted bank robber known as the Gray Ghost, investigate reports of a ghost in nearby Ortega Canyon, help Hector run for mayor of Corn Center and run afoul of the mob, and help lady movie producer Heebie Beebie film a movie in Corn Center (helpfully rewriting scenes when a goat eats part of the script).

According to radio historian Frank Bresee, from whom our archived copies of *Eb & Zeb* came, the characters remained a radio staple for years, even after their syndicated series ended. Eventually they were incorporated into the long-running and better-remembered *Al Pearce Show* as an occasional comedy skit, no longer attempting to continue a storyline.

Although no recordings have yet been found, there was a third series that sounds strongly like the ones discussed above. Instead of being syndicated, this one was a feature of Chicago radio station WLS, founded by the Sears, Roebuck & Co. mail order chain ("World's Largest Store"). Instead of speculating, let's just listen to what the April 1932 edition of *Radio Digest* had to say in its review of *Wilbur & Ezra*:

The PRAIRIE FARMER voice has always catered to the rural ears, but this time they've aired a quarter-hour, across-the-board skit worth anyone's while. Wilbur and Ezra are two beloved old bachelors, living in a one-room walk-up. The sketch is built around the adopting of a baby by these two yokels, and while the dialect is of the rural type, the situation and lines are too humanly interesting and genuinely entertaining to limit its scope to

country listeners.

The boys sprinkle their quarter-hour with lots of laughs about babies, with here and there a dash of tear-jerking melodrama guaranteed to move the most jaded. WLS listeners are sending baby clothes to the boys, making a nice tie-in for the Assistant City Prosecuting Attorney of Chi, who now has an abandoned babe on his hands. It was left on the doorstep. The act sends all the clothes they receive through the mail, and everybody seems happy about the whole thing.

Their idea of spotting the same skit twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, is a good one and the act itself should prove real meat for some commercial sponsor trying to please the home folks.

As we said at the beginning of this discussion, *Si & Elmer* and *Eb & Zeb* (and, apparently, *Wilbur & Ezra*) were only the most obvious clones of *Lum & Abner* and its format. In future installments we will be taking a look at some of the others, and seeing just who may have been copying what from whom (HUH?).

- Tim Hollis



Lum & Abner clones came in the female variety as well. This WSM (Nashville) photo was captioned: "Well, as I live and breathe! Sarie and Sallie, WSM's outstanding sister team, enjoying a little choice gossip over the party line."

If reading about these Lum and Abner clones has made you curious as to what they actually sound like, we have good news for you! We have now released the existing episodes of *Si and Elmer* and *Eb and Zeb* into the NLAS Tape Library, designated as the "SE" and "EZ" series, naturally. If you already have a tape catalog, you can obtain the new SE/EZ pages by simply sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the NLAS Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Blvd, Dora, AL 35062. If you wish to update your catalog, you can get a complete new copy for only \$3.00; order from the same address.