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Front Cover: Surviving evidence indicates that the Jot 'Em Down Store was introduced into LUM AND ABNER during August 1933. This photo was one of the first to depict L&A in their new business, and was taken in the small town of Peninsula, Ohio. (Courtesy UALR Archives)

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL August 2003

In This Issue:

70 Years of Lum & Abner 4

Lum & Abner: Attack of the Clones 7

The 2003 NLAS Convention 9

The Untouchable Robert Stack 10

L&A Meet Little Orphan Annie? 12

New L & A CD Releases!

The response was so great to the original offering of RESTORED Lum and Abner episodes on CD that our friends at **First Generation Radio Archives** have expanded the series! We are now offering an additional FIVE CD's containing the next 20 L&A episodes. These are episodes #641 through #660, covering June 21 to July 25, 1944. (The old, unrestored versions are on **Tapes #143 to #146** in the NLAS Tape Library.) The NEW 5-CD sets are \$25, plus \$2.50 postage (at \$5 per CD, you can't beat that with a stick). In addition, the previous 10-volume set is still available for \$50, plus \$2.50 postage. Until you have heard these L&A shows in their restored, pristine sound, you have no idea how clear they can be. As we pointed out before, during this period the L&A episodes were being distributed to the Keystone Network with no opening or closing music (although on one of the shows in the new 5-CD set, part of the theme was accidentally caught by the recording technician!). Send orders to the **NLAS Executive Secretary, 81 Sharon Blvd, Dora, AL 35052.**

70 YEARS OF LUM AND ABNER®

As part of our observation of what was going on in the world of LUM & ABNER 70 years ago, we present here the earliest known script of one of the show's regular episodes. This program was heard on September 12, 1933, but those of you who are familiar with a later era may find some familiar elements in it. The storyline seems to be basically the same as that which was heard in the summer of 1944, with crook B. J. Webster trying to bilk Grandpappy Spears out of his heath-giving spring. Apparently that plot was first cooked up some 11 years earlier. As with most L&A scripts, this one does not have the announcer's opening or recap of past episodes.. it simply starts out this way:

ABNER: Yea but them fellers is tellin it around that they're going to change the course of that creek back to wher it was.

LUM: Well they'll get their seves in a batch of trouble medlin with that creek too.

ABNER: They claim that the spring was offen that land when Grandpap give em a deed to the farm and they're goin to have it back.

LUM: (MAD) Well Abner the creek has changed its course and the spring is on the jinin farm now. And hits agin the law to meddle with a creek when it forms the boundry line twixt two farms thataway.

ABNER: Well dont jump all over me bout it I aint the one thats figgerin on changin it.

LUM: Well it jist makes me mad to think that anybody would even try to change the boundry line on property thataway... Hits dishonest as it can be. The deed reads that Briar creek is the boundry line and if the spring is on Grandpap's side of the creek the spring blongs to him.

ABNER: Yea but that aint goin to stop them fellers.

LUM: Well alright but I can tell em right now if they ever meddle with that creek any I'm goin to have em in the pennintentury jist shore as the world.

ABNER: Well Lum you're talkin bout it bein so terrible fer anybody to try to change a boundry line thataway. You was tryin to

change it yersef awhile back.

LUM: I know I was thats the reason I handled it the way I did. When I found out hit was agin the law, I was keerful to see that I never got into no trouble over it and it worked out fine.

ABNER: Yea hit worked out alright but you never had nuthin to do with it.

LUM: Why didn't I?

ABNER: Why the rain caused it.

LUM: (L) Yea but I had things all figgered out long fore it happened. The dam was what caused that creek to change its course.

ABNER: Well you never built the dam, them fellers Haskins and Roberts was the ones that built it.

LUM: I know they did.. I never did let on to you and Grandpap Abner but I was the one that put them fellers up to buildin the dam.

ABNER: You was?

LUM: Yessir. (L) You see I knowed if I could git that creek dammed up hit'd back the water up to wher hit'd warsh out and run down the old creek bed.

ABNER: You had all that figgerd out huh?

LUM: Yea but I never wanted to build the dam mysef or let Grandpap build it fer cordin to my understandin of it, when the boundry line is changed thataway and hit benefits the one that changes it, the other property owner can take it to court and git it changed back again, but the

way this was done these fellers aint got no come back at tall.

ABNER: Well I do know. How'd you ever talk em into buildin the dam?

LUM: Well I knowed that I couldn't come right out and ast em to build a dam, they'd figger they was some trick in it so I wrote em a annynonimus letter and never signed no name to it and advised em they could dam up that creek and make a artfyscial lake ther.

ABNER: Well (L) I swan to goodness Lum thats the outdoineest thing you've did yit.

LUM: Oh anybody could of thought it up I reckon. Nearly anybody.

ABNER: No they couldn't neither, that was smartness on your



This summer 1933 photo was the very first attempt to depict the newly-opened Jot 'Em Down Store.



The photos seen here were part of a set taken in the small community of Peninsula, Ohio, in the summer of 1933.

part.

LUM: Oh I dont know I'd go so fer as to say that, but I will admit hit jist goes to show what a feller can do agin he sets his head and then does it.

ABNER: Yea. Grandpap ort to be turible obliged to you fer all you've did fer him. When Haskins and Roberts talked him into givin them that deed to his farm and they turned around and put him offen his own place, he wouldn't a had nuthin if you hadn't a takend that five hunderd dollars you fined em fer vilatin that old traffic ordinance and bought the old Dillard farm fer him.

LUM: Well I never done no more'n I ort to. Grandpap and Aint Charity is gittin old and somebody had to step in and hep em outa that tight.

ABNER: And now you've got the spring of water back fer em.. Reckon what Haskins and Roberts'll do now, thats all they wanted with Grandpap's place was to get that spring.

LUM: I dont know. I hope they pull out from here. They're dangerous men both of em, I wouldn't put nuthin past em. They're jist wolves in sheeps clothes.

ABNER: What kind a clothes?

LUM: Sheeps clothes.

ABNER: (L) Well I never heard thaten before. Sheep clothes. (L)

LUM: You mean you never heard of wolves in sheeps clothin'?

ABNER: Why no. I never heard of wolves in any kind of clothin.

LUM: Thats a old Edards sayin, I've said that fer years.

ABNER: Well I'd cut it out sayin it if I was you.

LUM: Why?

ABNER: Why hit dont make sence. Sayin wolves run around dressin therseves up like sheep.

LUM: Well what it means is that some fokes goes round bein nice as pie and makin you think they're yer friend and they'll do anything onery they can behind yer back.

ABNER: Well yea, I know that but whats that got to do with sayin wolves wears sheeps clothes.

LUM: I never said wolves wore sheeps clothes. I said Haskins and Roberts wore em.

ABNER: Well they never have had em on anytime I've saw em.

They'd a smothered wearin sheep skin jackets here in the summer thisaway.

LUM: Well Abner they dont really wear sheep skin clothes.

ABNER: You said they did.

LUM: I know, but I mean jist reglar sheep skins, the whole hide.

ABNER: Well reckon what they're idys is in doin that.

LUM: Well Abner they dont really wear em, thats jist a——

ABNER: I dont bleave they're wolves neither.

LUM: Course they aint wolves, they're humings.

ABNER: Well if they aint wolves and they dont wear sheep skins, whats the sence in sayin all that then.

LUM: Jist let it drap right wher its at fore I loose my impatience. I swan Abner you're the beatenest feller to try to argue I ever seen in my life.

ABNER: I wern't tryin to argue you said they was wolves in sheeps clothes and I knowed in reason——

LUM: I said we was goin to quit talkin bout it. Now shet up.

ABNER: Well alright but I still dont see no sence in sayin one thing then turnin right around and——

LUM: You git started on sompin thisaway and (((((TELEPHONE)))))) you dont know when to let up on it.

ABNER: I bleave that was our ring ther.

LUM: Yea I'll answer it hits more'n likely Evalener... HELLO... THIS IS LUMMY... HUH?... OH (L) YEA DAN WHAT WAS YOU WANTIN?... OH TIS. (to Abner) I grannies the furniture is here.

ABNER: What furniture?

LUM: The furniture I bought when I was in at the county seat yistidy. WHY DAN TELL EM TO DRIVE THE TRUCK ON OVER AT MY PLACE AND THEY CAN START ONLOADIN IT THER ON THE FRONT GALLERY. I'LL RUN OVER AND GIT EVALENER I WANT HER TO SEE IT WHEN THEY GO TO ONPACKIN IT.... ALRIGHT DAN MUCH OBLIGED FER CALLIN, ALRIGHT... HUH?... YEA THEYS A SECTION OF THE FENCE DOWN ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE YARD THEY CAN DRIVE RIGHT IN THER.... YEA.... GOOD BYE. (CLICK) (L) Evalener's goin to be tickled plum to death agin she sees that.

ABNER: What sort of furniture did you git?



LUM: The best they had, I told em they wernt nuthin too good fer the little lady that I was goin to marry. Got a foldin bed fer the parlor with a big lookin glass in it and a awful nice wicker set fer the settin room and a beautiful golden oak mission style dinin room set.

ABNER: Well course hits you're own bizness but looks to me like that furniture you had over ther was as good as abody'd want. Plenty of chairs.

LUM: Yea but they was all outa style I got to git them old four poster beds and them corner what nots and marble top tables outa ther. I want Evalener to have furniture she can be proud of.

ABNER: Oh yea hits all old but hits all solid walnut and hits mighty hard to wear out.

LUM: Old, I reckon hit is. Hits been in our family fer three generations. Wood worms has got in some of it. I'm plum ashamed of them worm holes in it. No, them old secretarys and high boys and sich as that is all outa style now. Why they never had a single base rocker in that whole furniture store I was at yistidy.

ABNER: Well I do know.

LUM: I gotta hide all them old kiverlids and bed kivers I been usin, Evalener'll think I'm gittin turible old fashioned. My old Grandmother carded spun and wove the thread them things is made out of too. Sorter hate to part with em.

ABNER: Yea I dont blame you abody sorter gits attached to them things.

LUM: Yea but I dont want to be behind the times. I gotta be modern you know.

ABNER: Oh yea... Wellsir they aint but one thing I'm pertickler bout in the way of furniture, and thats a good bed. I do love a feather mattress.

LUM: Oh yea they're comfot alright but they aint up to date. Thats another thing I done yistidy bought a good iron bed stid and a fine set of springs and mattress. Paid seven dollars jist fer the springs.

ABNER: Well thats money well spent. Abody works

hard he's got to have a good place to sleep of a night.

LUM: Oh yea. Well I better call Evalener and tell er I'll be by ther fer er dreckly. I'll jist have to leave the store here with you. You'll have to close up.

ABNER: Thats alright dont worry bout that I'll see that she's closed up good.

LUM: Be shore and lock up good and set a pitcher of milk on the floor fer the cat.

ABNER: Yea I'll (((((TELEPHONE)))))) tend to all that, you jist go right ahead.

LUM: HELLO..... SISTER SIMPSON?..... IS EVALENER THER?... I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO ER PLEASE... (L) I dont think Sister Simpson likes it very well on account of me bein the cause of her losin Evalener as a border.

ABNER: Yea I reckon she'll miss Evalener alright. She's bordered ther so long.

LUM: She'll miss that ten dollars a month board and room too...

ABNER: Yea (L)

LUM: HELLO... EVALENER THIS IS YER LITTLE LUMMY.... GUESS WHATS HERE?..... NOPE SOMPIN ELSE..... YEA... HOW'D YOU KNOW..... THATS RIGHT I FERGOT I TOLD YOU HIT WAS COMIN IN TODAY..... WELL THEY'RE OVER THER ONLOADIN NOW AND I THOUGHT I'D COME BY FER YOU AND WE'D GO OVER AND SORTER SHOW EM WHER TO SET IT ROUND IN THE HOUSE.... YEA..... I KNOW HITS JIST GOIN TO BE A REGLAR LITTLE LOVE NEST WHEN YOU MOVE IN OVER THER WITH ME..... (L) I CAINT HARDLY WAIT... WELL I'LL SEE YOU DRECKLY THEYS LOTS A THINGS I'D LIKE TO SAY OVER THE PARTY LINE BUT I KNOW EVERYBODY'S LISTENIN IN..... ALRIGHT.. ALRIGHT JIST QUICK AS I CAN DRIVE OVER THER..... OH SHUCKENS, JIST WEAR WHAT YOU GOT ON.... WHY SHORE.... ALRIGHT GOOD BYE. (CLICK)

ABNER: I doggies yonder comes Grandpappy Spears might nigh in a run..

LUM: Well I aint got time to talk to him now he'll more'n likely want to set and talk for a hour....

ABNER: Yea git started talkin to him and he dont know when to shet up.



LUM: HIDY GRANPAP.

ABNER: COME IN GRANDPAP.

GRPAP: (FADED) HIDY MEN... I WANT TO GIT YER ADVISE ON SOMPIN..

ABNER: WELL KAM YERSEF DOWN GRANDPAP WHATS THE MATTER.

LUM: WELL I AINT GOT TIME TO TALK TO YOU NOW GRANDPAP YOU'LL HAVE TO COME BACK LATER.

ABNER: Yea.

GRPAP: Well THEM FELLERS LIVIN ON MY OLD FARM CLAIMS THEY'RE GOIN TO BUILD ANOTHER DAM ACCROST THE CREEK BELOW THE SPRING AND IF THEY DO

HIT'LL MAKE A LAKE RIGHT ON TOP OF THE SPRING AND NOBODY WONT GET NO GOOD OUT OF IT.

Another major event in L&A history was only hinted at above: this is the first script or piece of L&A memorabilia to mention the Jot 'Em Down Store (although it was not referred to by name here). As of the July/August 1933 period, L&A were still running the Pine Ridge Motor Company, so the store must have been only recently introduced at the time of this September 12 script. Lum's instructions to Abner about closing up sound much like they were still getting used to the routine.

The references to Lum and Evalena's impending wedding were part of a big publicity campaign at the time. In our October issue we shall see how this was resolved... and perhaps find out why it seems to have scarred Lum toward marriage forever afterward!

LUM and ABNER®:

ATTACK OF THE CLONES

PART FOUR OF A SERIES

After the phenomenal success of *Lum and Abner* on network radio in 1931, many other similar folksy rural characters were introduced. I would like to recall some of these old favorites.

SARIE AND SALLIE (mentioned on page 12 in the *Jot 'Em Down Journal* for October 2002): The distaff duo of gossiping mountain women engaged in backyard chatter, discussing everything from home remedies to new-fangled modern inventions. The act was conceived in the fertile mind of Edna Wilson, a woman in her mid-30s. Wilson was born near Chattanooga, Tennessee, on July 15, 1896. At an informal party, she donned a sunbonnet and a pair of wire-rimmed glasses and introduced herself as a "widdier woman," Sarie Brown, and began to chatter in the dialect of a mountain woman. Her friends and neighbors enjoyed the routine and she was called upon to repeat it often.

When Wilson and her husband moved to Florida in 1930, she took the character with her. In Florida she met an entertainer named Ralph Odum, who expressed an interest in joining her act. Edna wrote a script including Odum as "Silas, an inquistive rural mailman." Together they were invited to broadcast the act over a small radio station in Tampa. The act became popular, but then Odum quit to attend law school.

In 1934 the Wilsons moved to Nashville, and Edna convinced her younger sister Margaret Waters to join "Sarie" as her scatter-brained spinster cousin, "Sallie." In long dresses and sunbonnets, the new act became favorites of the audience. The humorous pair auditioned at radio station WSM and were hired to do a daily 15-minute broadcast. On November 28, 1934, "Sarie and Sallie" debuted on WSM's *Grand Ole Opry* broadcast. The pair made frequent broadcasts on the *Opry* through 1939, and also went out on personal appearances with many of the *Opry* cast members.

In Hollywood, they appeared with Gene Autry in the feature film *In Old Monterey* (1939). In 1941 Margaret Waters (Sallie) began to suffer health problems, and retired from the act. "Sarie" continued as a solo act. On station WSB in Atlanta, and later at WMC in Memphis, she created a new character, "Aunt Bunie." Margaret "Sallie" Waters died

on November 2, 1967. After many years of quiet retirement, Edna "Sarie" Wilson passed away on June 27, 1994... a month before her 98th birthday.

PA AND MA SMITHERS were a fictitious farm couple heard in comedy sketches on the WLS *National Barn Dance* Saturday night broadcasts in the mid-1930s. "Pa" was played by Dan Hosmer, and "Ma" was portrayed by actress Hazel Dopheide. Together they wrote the scripts. As a coincidence, in the fall of 1939 Miss Dopheide was heard as "Mammy Yokum" in daily episodes of the radio adaptation of Al Capp's famous comic strip *Li'l Abner*; interestingly enough, "Pappy Yokum" was portrayed by none other than Clarence Hartzell, a.k.a. "Uncle Fletcher" of *Vic and Sade* and "Ben Withers" of *Lum and Abner*.

HAPPY HOLLOW (see page 10 of the October 2002 issue of the *Journal*) was a daily program consisting mainly of music, tied together by rural dialogue. It debuted in July 1929 over KMBC in Kansas City, Missouri. The central character was "Uncle Ezra Butternut," who ran the general store at Happy



And now, let's see what's going on down in... HAPPY HOLLOW? This program from KMBC in Kansas City definitely showed some Lum & Abner influence.



A typical homey scene with Abner Peabody look-alike Uncle Ezra (Pat Barrett).

Hollow. The role was played by former college professor Everett Kemp, known in vaudeville as "the man with the million dollar laugh." During 1931-33 the show was carried by the CBS "Western Network." Scripts were initially by Margaret Barnum, then later Everett Kemp took over the writing. Other characters heard were "Aunt Lucinda," town banker "Si Perkins" (maybe not coincidentally, this name was also used for the L&A ripoff program *Si & Elmer*, in which the latter partner was Elmer Peabody!), farmer "Jonathan Probscot," "Deacon Jackson," the village villains "Harry Checkervest" and "Margaret Watson," and the meddlesome fault-finding great-great-granddaughter of Andrew "Stonewall" Jackson. The show's musical theme was written and performed by Vernon Waters, also known as "Ozie, the Ozark Rambler."

Another favorite rustic radio character was UNCLE EZRA, portrayed by Pat J. Barrett. Born in Holden, Missouri, on September 27, 1887, Barrett was the son of an actress and theatrical agent. As a child he tramped with his parents in stock companies throughout the USA, Canada, and Mexico. At the age of seven he appeared in a production of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. He once trained to become an architect, but returned to the stage. As a young man he learned how to impersonate old men in his vaudeville routines.

He formed an act with a pretty young actress, Nora Cunneen, and they were billed as "Barrett & Cunneen - Looking For Fun." The pair later married.

In 1931 Barrett was signed for a commercial radio program on

station WTMJ in Milwaukee. A year later he switched to station WLS in Chicago. The station had opened in April 1924 and was owned by a weekly publication, *The Prairie Farmer*. Ownership was purchased by Sears, Roebuck and Co., the "World's Largest Store," hence the new call letters WLS.

Barrett became known as "Uncle Ezra P. Waters" and was featured on the WLS *National Barn Dance* broadcasts. On October 19, 1934, he was given his own program on the NBC network: *Station E-Z-R-A*, a fictional "powerful little 5-watter" in the town of Rosedale. Uncle Ezra was the station's jolly manager. He was also known as the "jovial jumping jenny wren," especially when he would try to dance a jig and his old knees would buckle. He spun tall tales of country life. His wife was heard as "Cecelia," and other cast members included Cliff Soubier as "Mayor Boggs," as well as Carleton Guy, Charles Egelston, Janet Logan, Corneilus Peeles and Ann Russell. Jack Holden was the announcer, and Alka Seltzer was the long time sponsor (considering that they carried *Lum and Abner* for some seven years during the 1940s, Miles Laboratories obviously liked rural humor). And let us not forget that it was on the *Uncle Ezra* show that Clarence Hartzell first developed the old man character that would later become Uncle Fletcher and Ben Withers.

Beginning on Sunday, October 23, 1938, a new format was introduced and the show became *Sunday Afternoons in Rosedale*. The supporting cast of musical entertainers included the singing Vass Family, old time tenor Henry Burr, and blind pianist Alec Templeton, as well as the zany musical antics of the Hoosier Hot Shots, and the "Rosedale Girl Trio," consisting of Carolyn Montgomery, Betty Bennett and Fran Allison. In addition to her vocalizing, Miss Allison gained radio fame as rural comedy character "Aunt Fanny" on Don McNeill's *Breakfast Club* broadcasts. Of course, she later was a well-known TV personality, as the "Fran" of *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* with puppeteer Burr Tillstrom.

In Uncle Ezra's final year on NBC, the program was a half-hour show on Saturday nights. It continued through June 28, 1941. In 1940 Pat Barrett appeared as "Uncle Ezra" in the Republic Pictures feature film *Comin' 'Round the Mountain*. Failing eyesight forced him into retirement, and he took up residence with his wife on a farm in Illinois. He passed away at the age of 70 on March 24, 1959.

WILBUR AND EZRA, as mentioned on page 12 of the October 2002 *Journal*, was a series aired live over WLS in 1932. It was the continual tale of two elderly bachelors living in a one-room walk-up apartment in Chicago. No cast credits are known, but in all probability the characters were played by Pat Barrett as Ezra and Cliff Soubier as Wilbur. Both actors were working at WLS at that time, and as stated earlier, Soubier appeared as Mayor Boggs on the *Uncle Ezra* program.

- Charles Stumpf

NOTE: Charles Stumpf is the author of many articles and several books on the subject of old time radio. His most recent book, *The Great Gildersleeve*, is available from bearmanormedia.com, or contact Ben Ohmart, P.O. Box 750, Boalsburg, PA 16827. Price is \$18.95 plus \$3 postage.

THE 2003 NLAS CONVENTION

Convention #19 offered two familiar faces to the NLAS attendees. Kay Linaker and Dal McKennon, celebrity guests from 1998 and 2002 respectively, were on hand in Mena, Arkansas to delight everyone. Miss Linaker, known today as Mrs. Kate Phillips, was invited back to celebrate the 60th anniversary of her motion picture made with Lum and Abner, *Two Weeks to Live*. That film has the distinction of being written by 1985 NLAS guest Roz Rogers, and it contains a performance by 1987 guest Jerry Hausner. As for our old friend Dal, he was one of several honorees at the 2003 Memphis Film Festival, making this a perfect opportunity for a return visit to our event one week later.

Our Friday, June 20 program kicked off at 5:00 p.m. with the 60th anniversary showing of *So This is Washington*, with its patriotic flavor blending perfectly with current events. That program also featured such short subjects as the MGM cartoon *Toyland Broadcast*, a send-up of 1930s radio celebrities, and the World War II short *All-Star Bond Rally*. The first of three door prizes, a set of the new *Lum and Abner* CDs (see our ad on page 3!) was won by Kenneth Pendergrass.

For many years, Ted Theodore, joined more recently by Opal McCracken, has been providing guitar accompaniment to our traditional closing song, "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree." This musical duo performed for us Friday evening, since they had to depart early the next morning. We were sorry to learn that they may not be able to return in the future, and thank them warmly for all their support and assistance.

Let's also give a round of applause to perfect attendance member John "Grandpap" Knuppel and his "good womern" Carol. Our setup and take-down crew included "Aunt Laura" Pitchford and Jim Temple and daughters Kenna and Lindsay. Our Popeye Fan Club friends pitched in once again with additional setup and more: Debbie Brooks, Cathy Rinne and Cindy Snider ran the sale table, Chuck Anders handled digital video and stills, Mike Brooks supplied a 16mm projector and Greg Snider whipped out his trusty laptop computer to play DVD clips.

Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m., our guests of honor burst forth with fascinating stories to tell. Animation voice actor and historian Keith Scott of Australia (the new voice of Bullwinkle) supplied several vintage radio programs from which Tim Hollis gleaned clips of "our pal Dal" which caught the actor by surprise! "Uncle Donnie" collected video clips from Kay Linaker films for which the actress supplied engrossing anecdotes. We're thankful to author / member Leonard Kohl for providing a copy of *Black Aces* in which Kay costarred with cowboy Buck Jones. Her memories of working on

five Charlie Chan films led neatly into our newly-written "Uncle Donnie" script, "Murder in Pine Ridge," performed radio-style, with Kay Linaker as both Lum's love interest and a mystery woman, and Dal McKennon as Charlie Chan and one of his helpful (?) sons. "Singin' Sam" Brown supplied sound effects and the voice of narrator Dick Huddleston while Hollis and Pitchford "mangled" the characters of Lauck and Goff.



L to R: Tim Hollis, Uncle Donnie Pitchford and Singin' Sam Brown with two happy 2003 NLAS Convention guests, Kay Linaker and Dal McKennon (displaying their special awards).

Lum's grandson Scott Lauck was once again in the audience, but didn't throw a single rotten tomato! (Thanks, Scott!) Our script included a commercial for the new Popeye Bread products, with cameo voices from the talented Popeye Players. (For information on their Popeye Picnic in September, e-mail Mike Brooks at ace1@midwest.net or write to Popeye Fan Club, 1001 State Street, Chester, IL 62233.)

Our second door prize was a VHS edition of *Charlie Chan in Rio* with Kay Linaker in a key role. Eugene and Tammy White were the lucky winners!

Our third and final program started at 7:00 p.m. with more short subjects, including an amazing surprise for Dal McKennon: a 16mm screening of the Woody Woodpecker cartoon *Woodpecker From Mars*, featuring Dal as all supporting voices, particularly that of "Captain ZOOM!" which was based on his popular 1950s children's TV host *Captain Jet*. Dal almost "ZOOMed" into outer space himself when this film rocketed onto the screen! Thanks go to Ray Nielsen of the Memphis Film Festival for helping us locate this gem.

Of course, our primary focus was on *Two Weeks to Live*, the 1943 Lum and Abner film with Kay Linaker as the "bad girl!" The actress reminisced about her days on the set with Chet and Tuffy, and related the interesting coincidence that their fathers had been business associates while all were residents of Arkansas! Following the 16mm film screening, C. R. Ivy of Cherry Hill won our final door prize, a VHS edition of the Disney film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, with Dal McKennon's voice talent a highlight. We were honored to have Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cates in our



Dal McKennon and Kay Linaker visit the Lum & Abner memorial in Mena's Janssen Park.

audience for our third program! Robert is the son of the gifted clarinetist Opie Cates who conducted the orchestra and played "himself" during the half-hour L&A series! Both Dal and Kate were presented plaques of appreciation for their contributions to radio/film/television history as well as to the NLAS, and Lon & Kathy Stucker, curators of the Lum & Abner Museum, presented the guests with commemorative coffee mugs.

"Our gal Kate" departed Arkansas to return to her university stu-

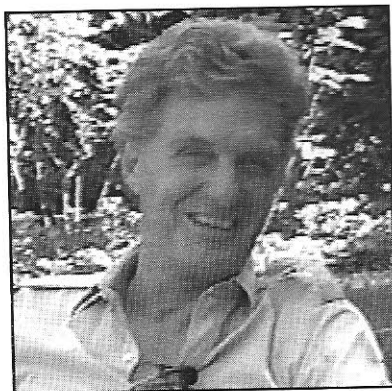
dents, while "our pal Dal" traveled to Orlando to lecture and perform for guests and employees of Walt Disney World. As for the NLAS, we plan to celebrate two anniversaries next year: the 60th anniversary of the film *Goin' to Town* and the 20th birthday of the National Lum and Abner Society! We hope you'll all be "Goin' to Town" for that one!

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

THE UNTOUCHABLE ROBERT STACK

1919 - 2003

When Robert Stack passed away at age 84 on May 15, 2003, most people remained unaware that his path crossed with that of Lum and Abner... or more correctly, with Chet Lauck and Norris Goff. When the Arkansas Educational TV Network (AETN) produced its 1986 documentary on the team, *LUM & ABNER: LAUGHTER NEVER DIES*, Stack was one of their former associates who was interviewed for the show... and his interview was also the only one conducted that had no portion of it used in the final product. While it is true that it roamed far afield from the subject of L&A proper, Stack's memories of growing up in Hollywood's golden age puts L&A's personal lives and their work into perspective. Stack was well known for his unpretentious and irreverent attitude toward show business, and that comes through clearly in this conversation. Here we reprint the interview exactly as it was conducted:



AETN: First of all, just give us your memories of how you first got together with Chet Lauck and Norris Goff... how did it all come about?

STACK: When I was a kid, skeet shooting was a very social part of Hollywood, as opposed to now when guns are sort of a dirty word. Then, we had people like Howard Hughes and Gable and Cooper and Bob Taylor, Fred MacMurray, Fredric March.. and everybody would bring lunches and we'd sit around and shoot skeet, and it was great. I grew up as a kid with people like Chet Lauck, who taught me golf, and Andy Devine.. It was just something to do, and being a sportsman then was sort of nifty, as opposed to post-Vietnam when people don't do it so much. We had a wonderful time together. When I was a kid, I was All-American when I was 16 years old, so I was a younger guy with guys who were "old," like 25 or 30.. old people like that. They put up with me because I was a good shot, and they treated me like a young man, and I made friends I've had all my life. And Chet was wonderful.. There was no artifice, no performing, nobody was a "performer," whether it was Gable, or Cooper.. we were all just a bunch of shooters. An example: I was shooting one day and someone said, "There's Fredric March, he just won the Academy Award." I was 15, I think, and I said, "Yeah, but he's a lousy shot!" And that was pretty much the way we all communicated, it was on the basis of who was the best shot. I didn't get mixed up in the drinking afterward, but it was a different kind of time then. Hollywood was different, it was kind of a

country club people belonged to, and it was personal friendship.. no discussions of the picture business after you stopped working. Sports, hunting, fishing, horses.. and it was a great time to grow up.

AETN: Was Chet Lauck a good shot?

STACK: Yeah, Chet was a good shot, a darn good shot.. and so was Tuffy. Andy Devine was, too. I mention that because they were all kind of in the same genre, although Chet was much more sophisticated in real life.. he was kind of like Gary Cooper in a way. Chet may have given the impression of Lum & Abner, but he was a very straight together guy. Gary Cooper was kind of "Yup" and "Nope," except that he really wasn't.. he was very sophisticated. Gable was Gable, that was just the way he was.. what he appeared to be.

AETN: You seem to have a fun attitude toward Hollywood, and you say it isn't fun anymore?

STACK: Well, it was different then. There have been stories about how the intellectuals have come in and taken over the business.. intellectuals in the sense that you have people who are lawyers and whatever, whereas you are dealing with a highly emotional business. There was an article about the "pirates," or the people who ran the business in the old days, and one of the ironies of the whole business was that there was this guy named Sam Goldfish (who changed his name to Goldwyn), who couldn't speak the English language but through his pride in what he was doing.. maybe even arrogance.. he made two of the best motion pictures ever made. In other words, his sense of taste didn't relate to the normal sense of behavior. But he loved what he was doing. And there was that love, which I don't think is there any more, because now it's so couched with bankers, above the line, below the line, percentages and the whole song-and-dance.. Back then it was a club people belonged to, and they were bizarre people, crazy people! Like Mike Romanoff, who was made a prince by Bogart! (laughs) And all the guys got together and got him his own restaurant, and he was Prince Romanoff from that time on! That was the way the business was. It was great fun.

AETN: It sounds like you like to laugh about the business.

STACK: Here's how it was.. I was just starting in the business,



This photo of the "Hollywood Muskeeters" skeet team does not include Robert Stack, but does feature some of his companion sportsmen. According to the faded autographs on it, L to R are Wally someone, Ray someone, an unidentified guy, Chet Lauck, and Andy Devine.

I don't think I had even gotten a job yet, and I was one of those actors who was going to dramatics school. I was out with a beautiful blonde gal at a drive-in when this really good-looking guy named Alan Ladd came up and said, "Hello, Mary," or Lana, or whatever her name was.. and as he walked away I said to the girl, "That's really a good-looking guy." She said, "Yeah, but he's so short.. he wants to be an actor but he's never gonna make it!" (laughs) And that, of course, is the dichotomy of our profession.. "He's too short, he's never gonna make it," and all these value judgments are made before they become the world's biggest star. Whether it's Stallone, or Dustin Hoffman.. who "didn't have the face for motion pictures." You say I laugh about the business.. the business is insane! It makes no sense whatsoever!

AETN: You say that you and Chet and the other people would come out here and shoot together.. would that have been after work or on a weekend?

STACK: It was pretty much a weekend thing, and it was a social thing for them, as I said.. to me it wasn't, because I took it very seriously. I didn't have any brains, but I could shoot a shotgun. Being the best in California.. or one of the two best.. I got a lot of respect from them, so I had much too much respect actually. Like when I was playing polo with Spencer Tracy, I was a fairly good polo player and one day I told him I was going to become an actor. He said, "Oh my God, we're going to lose a good polo player and end up with a lousy actor!" They gave me a lot of advice, but by the same token they respected me in this silly sense because I was a good athlete. When I walked on the set and saw Spencer Tracy for the first time as a performer, and not as a polo player, I realized I was walking with the gods all of a sudden, and here I was, a klutz who didn't know what he was doing. So when I stopped being an athlete and tried to become a performer, and I saw them in their proper guise, it was a different world.

AETN: You were an All-American from southern California.. Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff were country boys from Mena, Arkansas.. both had educations but they weren't sophisticated men when they first started in the radio business. Was Hollywood a much more democratic place as far as social structure was concerned.. anyone who had talent could fit in, it didn't matter if you were a lumberman's son?

STACK: I think that still holds true now. I just think it was looser then, that what you were is what you played. For instance, they cast by the way you looked. Gable would walk into a room

and women's heads would spin off their necks. I can't think of anybody like that today, with the possible exception of Paul Newman.. and even he only looks good when the cameras are rolling. He's a good-looking man but all of a sudden his eyes turn crystal blue when they say "Roll 'em" and he becomes a different guy! But those guys were who they were.. Cooper was who he was. They weren't so much larger than life, but an exaggeration of life. By the same token, they were that way offscreen. You don't find personas like that in our profession any more. Today's actors can do almost anything, but I don't see that charismatic personality they used to base the business on.

AETN: Did you ever see any of the Lum & Abner movies, or listen to them on the radio?

STACK: Oh, I listened to their radio show... *Lum and Abner* I loved! I even listen to it now, since they have tapes of all the old shows. I was down on location in Yucatan, in the middle of nowhere, and the crew had *Amos 'n' Andy* and some *Lum and Abners*.. that's the part of the young, creative people I like so much. Like Spielberg, when I was doing *1941* with him, told me "Now do this like Hardy." I said, "Like who? Laurel and Hardy?" He said, "Yeah!" And I said to myself, "He's in his 20s, what does Steven Spielberg know about Laurel and Hardy?" But he knew about Harry Langdon, of course he knew about Chaplin.. same thing is true of Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff, *Amos 'n' Andy*, all those things.. people who are students of a profession know all about those things. I'm on the National Council for the Arts, and so we deal with radio and funding, and it's a very, very important medium. It's sort of forgotten, and even our government recognizes that and provides grants for radio, because it's a medium that is still very important. So *Lum and Abner* is still a very important show, and played today by the kids who are really interested in our profession.

AETN: What was your impression, then, having listened to their program, when you met them?

STACK: Oh, of course it was a big shock, because they didn't look at all the way I thought they were going to look! I frankly didn't pay much attention to show people in those days, because all I cared about was athletics, but they sure didn't fit the kid's idea of what they looked like. That was the wonderful part about radio, you used your own imagination and could create the figures and the faces and the clothes.. they were wonderful, and it was a real art. People who don't know radio don't realize what a talent it takes to do that. Howard Duff as Sam Spade, and Bill Conrad as Matt Dillon.. Jimmy Arness is a very fine actor, but the original *Gunsmoke* with Bill Conrad was just great, with the clopping of the horses' hooves and such.. radio gave you that, which you don't have much anymore. Chet and Tuffy were giants in what I consider a very viable and exciting medium.

The NLAS first made contact with Robert Stack in 1996, through the help of his former tennis partner Cathy Lee Crosby. Stack was happy to learn of the NLAS's existence, although he had little to add other than what had been covered in his interview. He emphasized that he did not know Lauck & Goff as peers, but simply as older guys he hung out with because they were all sportsmen. He declined to visit the NLAS convention because, as he put it, he was at the age where he didn't do any unnecessary traveling, and taping his short segments for "Unsolved Mysteries" was about all he wanted to handle. As indicated from the AETN interview above, one of the most surprising things about Stack was how much he was unlike the solemn characters he usually played. His conversation was very quick and animated, punctuated by a very loud and hearty laugh. He did continue to receive THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL right up until the time of his death. The NLAS, and show business in general, will certainly miss his humor and frankness about the entertainment industry.

LUM and ABNER® meet... LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE?

In the mid to late 1960s cousins Kurt Jensen and Bruce Graff of rural southern Illinois had discovered *Lum and Abner*, heard weekly on WHO Radio in Des Moines, Iowa. Kurt and Bruce would enjoy L&A on Bruce's floor model Philco radio, and they went on to portray Lum & Abner in a high school presentation. Kurt even corresponded with Chet Lauck by phone and mail, and later would portray Abner in conjunction with WGGH and Mac's Superfoods in Marion, Illinois, in the 1980s.

One of the series of shows from 1943 involved a little girl named Ellie Connors (played by versatile radio actor Lurene Tuttle), who escapes from a reformatory and winds up charming the hearts of Lum & Abner. Little did Kurt and Bruce know that two miles up the road from them was a woman who in real life had charmed the hearts of Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff... and she had the photograph to prove it!

Delight Easton is the wife of Gary Easton, from whom Kurt would later buy Massey Harris tractors. One day, while Gary was at Kurt's house, he noticed Kurt's collection of Lum & Abner memorabilia and stated, "My wife was on *Lum and Abner*." That invited further investigation.

Delight, or Dee as she is known, was born in Los Angeles and in late 1940 or early 1941 her mother passed away from tuberculosis. Dee was staying at her step-grandmother's house when two men came to the school and announced that her mother was dead, and that she was to go with them to an orphanage. For many years Dee did not believe her mother was dead, but that she just couldn't afford to take care of her. The mother worked two jobs, and little Dee was left alone all night, which worried her mom.

Time has erased the memories of that young child. She no longer remembers the name of the orphanage or where in Los Angeles it was located. But what she does remember is that most of the children could go home with movie stars for the weekends! Actress Mary Pickford took Delight several times, and another couple was responsible for her appearance with Chet and Tuffy.

The other children in the orphanage had appeared on radio



This torn corner of Delight Easton's photo renders it impossible to identify the couple responsible for her meeting with Chet Lauck & Norris Goff (left).

with other stars, and now Dee was given her chance, although she was not too thrilled to be going on with two old men. That changed when she met Lum and Abner! She was so amazed that they were young men, and that they did all the voices.

As for her radio appearance, one is led to believe it was a local broadcast, perhaps a charity affair. Dee recalls that Chet and Tuffy marveled at her ability to recite the 48 states and capitals and the multiplication table, which she did "on air." She blushingly says she "fell in love with Lum. He was so tall and handsome." Judging by the photo, Dee won both their hearts, and she remains today a delightful person to know.

Delight was soon to head to Illinois with her aunt, who forbade her to ask questions about the orphanage and her past. But one thing which remained was the memory of being on radio with Lum and Abner... and the photograph. "Mary Pickford made sure I had my photo taken with Lum and Abner," Dee recalls, and thanks to Delight Easton we can enjoy a magic moment with a beautiful little girl and the familiar faces of Chet and Tuffy as they beam with admiration.

A few years later, Lum and Abner would run the storyline of the little orphan girl named Ellie Connors. Kurt today wonders if it might have been Delight Fisher who inspired that series. He looks at Chet and Tuffy's faces in that photo, and sees a paternal love for an unfortunate girl much like Ellie (or "Mary Edwards"), and feels there may be a connection somewhere in the mix.