

Official Publication of the National Lum and Abner® Society



April 2004

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Those of you who have ordered the restored 1944 L&A episodes on CD already know what an amazing job our friends at the **FIRST GENERATION RADIO ARCHIVES** do with their work. Well, folks, you ain't heard nothin' yet.

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(Oh, an' by the way.. FGRA's original restored sets of 1944 L&A shows are also still available for \$50 for the first 10 CD's

and \$25 for the second five CD's, plus the same \$2.50 postage on each. See our last few issues of the *Journal* for further information. Don't forget to specify WHICH set of CD's you are ordering, as Cedric Weehunt opens all our mail and we want to make things as clear as possible for him.)



**This is Carlton Brickert,
Speaking for Lum and
Abner and Horlick's.**

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 LUM AND ABNER
 SOCIETY**

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Tim Hollis

Front Cover: Squire Skimp (Dick Elliott) literally "gets it in the end" from Miss Abigail (Florence Lake) and the other Pine Ridgers in GOIN'TO TOWN (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944)

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL April 2004

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Only 269 Shoppin' Days Til Christmas!



When you cut down the old pine tree and haul it away to your living room this Christmas, how about hanging a Pine Ridge ornament on one of the branches? The illustration above shows the front and back of a commemorative ornament being sold as a fundraiser for the Heritage House Museum in Mt. Idy, Arkansas. It is being offered in recognition of 2004 being the 100th anniversary of the construction of the McKinzie Store in Pine Ridge, which today serves as the Lum & Abner Museum. The artwork is by L&A Museum co-curator Kathy Stucker. You can order the ornament for \$10 + \$3.85 postage by sending a check (payable to "Lum & Abner Store") to General Delivery, Pine Ridge, AR 71966. Or, you can order with a credit card by calling (870) 326-4442. Do yer Christmas shoppin' early this year!

In Memory Of Eloise Plaster

One of our Mena correspondents, Prof. Harold Coogan of Rich Mountain Community College, informed us that Mrs. Eloise Plaster passed away on January 4, 2004, at the age of 96. Some of you will remember seeing Mrs. Plaster turn up in *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* occasionally, but for those who are not familiar with her, she and her late husband Oscar played a small but vitally important role in early *Lum and Abner* history. The Plasters were professional photographers, and their Mena Studio was responsible for the first visual images produced of L&A in character, beginning during their early success at station KTHS in Hot Springs during April/May 1931.

When the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) produced its documentary *Lum and Abner: Laughter Never Dies* in 1986, Mrs. Plaster was one of the subjects interviewed for the show. While her comments were brief and to the point, it is probably best to let her explain her experiences with Lauck and Goff in her own words:

AETN: *It has been said that Chet & Tuffy could almost read each other's minds in the way that one of them could start a routine and the other could finish it. Did you ever see any kind of evidence of this?*

PLASTER: *Oh, definitely. When they came down to have their pictures made, they were going on with each other and talking that lingo. We had a real good time that evening, making those pictures. They had made the appointment for 8:00 that night... we usually had to do this kind of thing at night, because everybody worked. So we went down and we waited and waited, and they didn't show up. Now, my husband was a man who liked to have things on time, and he said, "Well, let's go home." I looked out, and here they came. They had bundles of clothes under their arms, and all kinds of paraphernalia... you never saw anything like it. So they came in and went back to the dressing room, and started fixing all up. Well, I had to powder their hair, and their mustaches were made from rope... we just had a ball doing all that. And all the time they were going on with this lingo: "Now, Abner...", you know. And Abner would say, "Now Lum, I grannies..." so and so.*

AETN: *What was Mena like in those days?*

PLASTER: *Mena was a very small town... I would say around 3000 or 3500. It had been a railroad town, but it had sort of let up after the railroad division moved. People were just enjoying the beauty of it, and the friendliness.*



Mr. Lauck had a lumber company, and I think that at this time timber and cotton were the main businesses. It was just a lovely, lovely town.

AETN: *How much did you keep up with Chet & Tuffy after the photographs were taken?*

PLASTER: *Oh, we tried to keep up with them pretty well all along, because they were part of Mena... they were part of our business! We sold thousands of those pictures, and the more pictures that got out, the more they liked it.*

AETN: *Do you think they had any idea what was going to happen after they went on the radio?*

PLASTER: *I do, in a way. I remember what Tuffy said as they left, the night we made those first pictures. We were all ready to go, and he said, "Well, I grannies, if we make a SUCK-sess of this, we'll give you some credit, Oscar." I never will forget that. I really believe there was something there that pushed them on and on. Because it wasn't easy to leave Mena and leave their homes.*

AETN: *Did anyone ever resent what they were doing, the way some people resented Bob Burns?*

PLASTER: *I'm not sure, but Mena didn't. I don't think that ever entered into it. There might have been people who didn't know them who thought they might be hurting Arkansas, but I don't know about that. Their humor was down home stuff... it had been part of every family. We could relate to them that way. They changed their personalities to something that we all understood.*

AETN: *Did you see much of them after their success?*

PLASTER: *They didn't come back to Mena very often after they became famous. When they did, it was to visit their families, and that was personal. Nobody bothered them, and they had their privacy.*

What Mrs. Plaster did not mention is that she and her husband worked on at least one other project with Chet & Tuffy in those early years. For the 1932 book *Lum and Abner & Their Friends From Pine Ridge*, Oscar Plaster and the two comics headed out into the countryside around Mena and Waters and photographed a succession of locals whom they felt could visually represent the characters of the radio episodes. Similar photos were taken over the next several years to be converted into postcards, which Dick Huddleston sold as souvenirs in his store. Mrs. Plaster carefully preserved all the original, highly flammable nitrate negatives from these photo sessions, and later gave



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them to Dick's daughter Ethel Huddleston Ball. With no way to have them printed, in 1985 Ethel donated them to the NLAS, where they are kept in a freezer in Texas to prevent any further deterioration of the nitrate. As for the original May 1931 photo session at the Plaster studio, Mrs. Plaster donated those negatives to Harold Coogan, and they too have been preserved for future generations.

Mrs. Plaster attended the NLAS convention in Mena in both 1988 and 1990. She was pleased to see the memory of L&A was being preserved, although she could be a bit testy when telling us that Abner was supposed to say "I grannies" instead of "I doggies." (As we haven't heard any recordings prior to 1933, who can say she was not correct about that?) When Mrs. Plaster left her longtime home for the care of medical facilities we lost track of her, but we appreciate Prof. Coogan for letting us know of her passing. The number of people who actually knew Chet & Tuffy in their Mena days is growing horrifically small, and the loss of Mrs. Plaster simply reduces that number even more.

- Tim Hollis

The Plaster studio manufactured these postcards from the earliest days of L&A's radio career; notice the significant local businesses who took out advertising on the reverse side! (Card courtesy of Prof. Harold Coogan)

70 YEARS OF LUM AND ABNER®

Now it's time to look in on our old friends from Pine Ridge (and Mena, and Chicago, and Dallas/Fort Worth, and Cleveland) and see what was happening in the world of Lum and Abner 70 years ago, during the first half of 1934.

Actually, the first news item from that year had no direct connection with L&A themselves, but it still related to them. On January 11, *The Mena Star* reported that local resident Haskell J. Gordon was gaining fame as a radio entertainer on station KGFF in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Teamed with KGFF staffer Paul W. Duncan, Gordon was co-starring in skits billed as *Ike and Eli*. Without knowing any more about this series, we cannot speculate too much, but when the *Star* commented that "the youngsters prepare their own script and are presenting a real original skit in *Ike and Eli*," we have to wonder if Mister Gordon hadn't figured that if those Lauck and Goff boys from Mena could do it, so could he. The fact that there is today no National Ike and Eli Society must say something about how popular that series became.

As for the real L&A, the year was not starting out too cheerfully. On Sunday, January 21, Norris Goff's father, Rome Goff, died after a lengthy illness. The Mena paper reported that the 57-year-old wholesale grocer had been living in Hot Springs for the past several months in an attempt to find a cure for his illness (which was not identified). The paper reported on his memorial

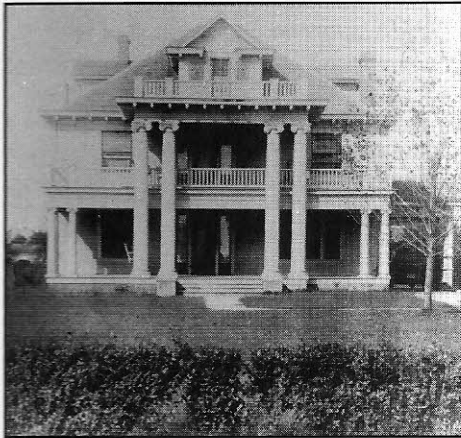
service:

High esteem in which the late R. Goff was held by those who knew him was evidenced Tuesday afternoon, when final tributes of respect were paid at his funeral. Funeral services were held at the Goff home on Reine street, the spacious living room being too small to accommodate the hundreds of friends and acquaintances who had assembled for the occasion. Floral offerings were so numerous and came in such variety, an extra vehicle was necessary to convey them from the home to the last resting place in Pine Crest Memorial park.

The paper went on to mention the names of some of the attendees, revealing that one of the pallbearers was W. J. Lauck (Chet's father), and not unexpectedly, among the mourners was one of Goff Wholesale's longtime customers, Dick Huddleston.

So, how did this sad event affect the L&A broadcasts? To our knowledge, this was the first death of a close family member to occur since the program began. In the same issue of the paper was a small item answering that question:

Mr. and Mrs. Norris Goff arrived in Mena Monday night, after having driven continuously since Sunday afternoon, after receiving word of the death of the young man's father. The trip from Cleveland, Ohio to Mena totaled 1,077 miles. Their young son Gary was left at Cleveland. Mr. and Mrs. Goff will drive back to Ohio the last of the week, where "Abner" will rejoin "Lum" of



The luxurious Goff home in Mena, where Rome Goff's funeral was held in January 1934. The magnificent structure was demolished in the early 1970s.

the famed radio team and resume their broadcasting. For this week "Lum" is carrying on the programs without the aid of his partner.

Those would be some very interesting programs to hear. Of course, there are many recorded examples of L&A episodes in which one or the other of the team is absent, but when that situation extended for more than a day or two, they usually had supporting players to help fill the gap (Frank Graham, Frank Nelson, Phil Kramer, and of course Clarence Hartzell as Ben Withers are some examples who come to mind). At this point no other actors would have been available, however, so it is daunting to think of an entire week with no one but Lum, Cedric, and Grandpappy Spears to carry the storyline.

If things were depressing enough with the passing of Mr. Goff, the news wasn't about to get any better. As of January 31, 1934, the Ford Motor Company finally discontinued sponsorship of *Lum and Abner* and blended its commercials into Fred Waring's show, so the duo was "at liberty" once again. True to form, the *Star* reported nothing about Ford's cancellation, but apparently once the sponsor had run out of gas, Lauck & Goff returned to their former home base of Chicago. Two items appeared in the March 29 edition of the *Star*, the first of which was short and to the point:

Chester H. Lauck, "Lum" of the famed radio team of "Lum and Abner," arrived home Wednesday evening for a few days' stay. Norris Goff, "Abner" to the radio fans, was left in Chicago, where the pair have been making personal appearances. "Lum" was met at Hot Springs by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Lauck,

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and Lake Wood.

The other March 29 announcement was of more major importance, although at the time no one realized just how drastically it was going to affect the future of the L&A show. It read:

"Lum and Abner" to be On Air Again

Will Broadcast from Minneapolis, Over WCCO, Beginning April 2

Mena admirers of "Lum and Abner" will be pleased to learn that the famous pair of radio entertainers will start on a new contract April 2. Chester H. Lauck, "Lum" of the gifted pair, was in Mena visiting his parents and left Saturday to join "Abner," Norris Goff, in concluding personal appearances before starting the new contract.

The Mena boys will represent Horlick's Malted Milk in the forthcoming programs and will broadcast from WCCO, Minneapolis. They will be on the air at 10 p.m. each Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights during the 13 weeks the first program is to run. WCCO is a CBS station and can be reached at 810 cycles. "Lum & Abner" will give their regular "Pine Ridge" specialty at first and will likely arrange for the "soshabul" later.

So, now Horlick's Malted Milk had been brought into the picture, and as we know, it is the sponsor most associated with L&A in the public's mind to this day (although they would later be sponsored by Miles Laboratories for an even longer period). Just how did this come about? We have only oral histories to give us a clue, but it was Elizabeth Goff who gave us the most detailed account of what happened.

According to Liz, once it was known that Ford was putting the show back in the garage, L&A knew they couldn't waste time looking for a new sponsor. It was their good fortune that William Horlick, the company founder, had written them a fan letter earlier, and this was what gave them the courage to approach him and ask his company to sponsor their show. He readily agreed, and proved to be the most enthusiastic sponsor they would ever have in their entire radio careers.

At the time, Horlick's was an old and well-established product, but its radio presence was confined to a not-too-exciting-sounding series known as *Adventures in Health*. Even with its reputation, the company was unable to secure time on NBC or CBS, thus L&A's move to Minneapolis to appear (once again) on a single station. The fact that the Mena paper reported



William Horlick, founder of Horlick's Malted Milk and one of L&A's biggest fans.

where this station could be picked up on the dial indicates that, like Nashville powerhouse WSM, one did not necessarily have to live within a station's normal receiving distance in those days of less cluttered airwaves.

Lauck & Goff's arrival in Minneapolis sparked an incident that could well have come straight out of one of their radio scripts. On April 26 (coincidentally, the show's third anniversary), the *Star* told this sordid tale of crime and punishment:

Laws Had "Tuffy" In A Tight Spot

Minneapolis Police, Looking For Dillinger, Raided His Room

It's going to be extra difficult for Mena friends to understand why Norris "Tuffy"

Goff, the "Abner" of Lum and Abner, could possibly be mistaken for the notorious outlaw John Dillinger, even though it makes good publicity for the radio entertainer. Yet such is the story that comes from Minneapolis, where Lum and Abner are now broadcasting on a Horlick contract from WCCO.

L. F. Rose, De Queen resident, has a clipping from a Minneapolis newspaper telling of the raid made by city police on "Tuffy" at his apartment. The Minneapolis cops acted under the belief, it is said, that they were about to get the famous wooden gun escapee.

The enterprising Minneapolis laws, according to the newspaper, had received a hot tip that a young Southerner very much resembling Dillinger in speech and appearance had registered at a certain apartment house in the city, in company with a red-headed woman. The cops staged an early morning raid on the apartment house, breaking into Tuffy's room and covering him and his pretty wife with machine guns. It required some 30 minutes, according to the story, for Tuffy to establish his identity and convince the police that he was not the much-wanted Dillinger, but just an honest radio broadcaster in the city for an engagement.

The paper did not specify whether John Dillinger habitually hung around apartment buildings and said "Huh?" and "Well, I do know," but at least the Goffs managed to get out of that fix.

An item of local interest that would have only long-term effect on the world of L&A was an announcement on May 17 that Mena Chamber of Commerce officials were beginning a movement to improve State Highway 88, the dirt road that ran east of Mena and passed through Waters (later Pine Ridge). Although getting tourists to Dick Huddleston's store was not one of the stated reasons for this push, the article did knowledge that "No. 88 is not only one of the heaviest traveled 'farm to market' routes in this section, but is also the most direct and shortest route between Mena and Little Rock." That statement holds true today, although thankfully for those who have attended the now-suspended NLAS conventions in Mena, the road is no longer a dirt path!

Meanwhile, L&A were still coasting along under their ini-



Horlick's Malted Milk had been a well-established product for decades before its association with L&A.

tial 13-week Horlick's Malted Milk contract. That contract did not specify that they had to remain in Minneapolis any longer than absolutely necessary, though, and on June 14 the Mena paper reported on another upcoming move for them:

June 18 "Lum & Abner" Start New Broadcast

Popular Radio Stars Will Open Engagement at Chicago for Summer Season

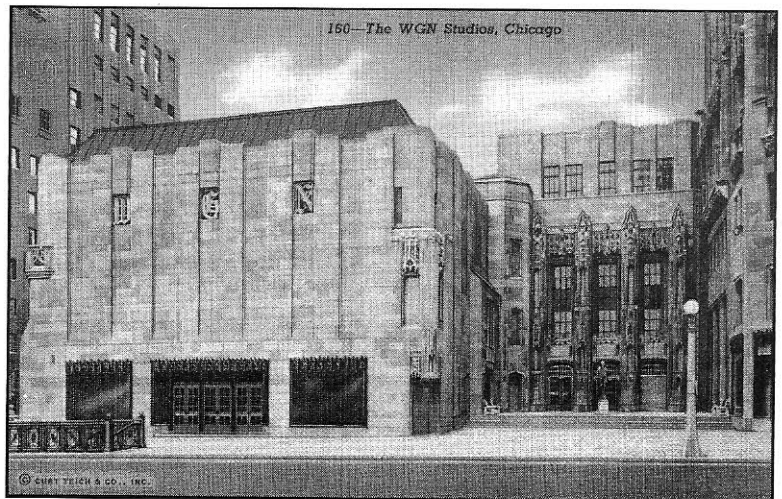
"Lum & Abner," who are to leave Minneapolis where they are at present broadcasting their enjoyable programs of Pine Ridge happenings, for a stay at Chicago, will not start in the World's Fair city until Monday, June 18, according to latest information received in the old home town. Their programs will be given at 9:15 p.m. "Lum & Abner" and their families were visited recently at Minneapolis by Miss Helen Frasier and brother Waldo Frasier, former Mena residents, who were on a motor tour through the North.

Our final word from the radio pair for this time comes from the June 28 issue of the Mena paper, which buried the following information deep in its personals column: "Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Lauck with Mr. and Mrs. Dudley Lauck, left Wednesday for Chicago, where they will visit 'Lum and Abner' and also attend the world's fair. 'Lum and Abner' are now broadcasting from WGN for the Horlick company and give a nightly program save on Saturday."

In our next installment we will see how L&A's tenure at WGN led to the formation of a new radio network (since apparently none of the existing ones would have them!), and how Horlick's Malted Milk found itself up to its neck in cream because of the success of its L&A sponsorship. Tune in then and see what happens!

- Tim Hollis

(Incidentally, if you want to see what sort of programs L&A were putting on the air during this period, you can still order some of the few remaining copies of our reissue of *The Lum and Abner Scripts: 1934*, which was the first volume in our ongoing series of script reprint books. Quantities are definitely limited, so get your order in today! The books are \$10 each, and orders should be sent to the NLAS executive secretary, 81 Sharon Blvd, Dora, AL 35062.)



The WGN studios were L&A's new home base in Chicago.

They've got that Jitter-Glitter in their eyes!

LUM AND ABNER

in
Goin' To Town

Goin' to Town marked the third Lum & Abner movie in a row in which the plot centered on the Pine Ridge duo traveling to a large city and having misadventures while dealing with the decidedly non-rural culture. While this theme was a tried-and-true part of comedy history, Lauck & Goff hardly ever used it in their radio series, so it is somewhat surprising that it became the catalyst for half of the movies they made for RKO Radio Pictures. It is perhaps for this reason that many people find the L&A movies of such a different flavor than the radio episodes, but of course they are still a very vital part of the whole L&A story.

As we have done in recent years, we now want to take a look at the supporting cast of character actors from *Goin' to Town* and see just what sort of people were keepin' company with Lum & Abner at this point in their careers:

BARBARA HALE

(*Sally, the secretary*)

Although Barbara Hale no doubt had a more illustrious future ahead of her in show business than anyone else in the cast, at the time she filmed *Goin' to Town* she was just another starlet being groomed by RKO. She had appeared in at least seven prior movies, but always in uncredited roles. The Internet Movie Database lists *Goin' to Town* as her 11th picture, but only during the year of its release (1944) had she begun receiving screen credit. Interestingly, at the same time she was working with Lum & Abner, she was also appearing in another RKO film based on a radio series, *Heavenly Days*, starring Fibber McGee & Molly.

Ms. Hale has been an honorary member of the NLAS since 1986, but we have never received any communication from her. This is quite understandable, since her secretary role in *Goin' to Town* is hardly anything that would stand out in her mind. When interviewed by the Arkansas Educational TV Network (AETN) for the 1986 documentary *Lum & Abner: Laughter Never Dies*, Ms. Hale had to



Lum, Abner and Barbara Hale in a pose that does not even remotely appear in GOIN' TO TOWN.

be reminded of what she did with the two boys from Mena, and even then it all seemed rather vague to her. She did recall visiting Chet's ranch during production of the movie, and was vastly amused that her host took time away from his guests to "slop the hogs."

Ms. Hale's long-running role of Della Street in the *Perry Mason* TV series (and later TV movies) has deservedly eclipsed all of the work she did in her early days. By strange coincidence, in the first *Perry Mason* TV movie that was produced after the death of Raymond Burr, the judge in the usual courtroom scenes was played by another L&A veteran, Bobs Watson of *Dreaming Out Loud* (1940). Yes, it looks like all roads eventually lead to Lum & Abner...



Florence Lake as the ever-hopeful Miss Abigail.

FLORENCE LAKE
(*Miss Abigail*)

A vastly underrated film & TV comedian, Florence Lake is today remembered primarily as the sister of Arthur Lake, the bungling Dagwood Bumstead of movies, radio, and television. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1904, Florence began her movie career in 1929, and continued working steadily all the way through the 1950s. During the 1960s and 1970s she made guest appearances on an incredible number of TV series, both dramas and

sitcoms. Her role as Lum's sweetheart Miss Abigail was somewhat of a substitute for Widder Abernathy, who did not appear in this movie. Her performance is also slightly reminiscent of ZaSu Pitts, whom Lum courted in 1942's *The Bashful Bachelor*. Proving that her mousey (gray?) exterior could be deceiving, she provided the closing gag in *Goin' to Town* by delivering a well-deserved kick in the pants to Squire Skimp's large economy size rump.

Florence Lake was living at the Motion Picture Country Home in Woodland Hills when she passed away at age 75 on April 11, 1980, just two months after Chet "Lum" Lauck himself died.

DICK ELLIOTT
(*Squire Skimp*)

The character of Squire Skimp had a rocky road in the L&A movies, especially when compared to his regular appearances in the radio plots. Irish actor Oscar O'Shea had initially been cast as Squire in *The Bashful Bachelor* (1942), and had reprised the role... but with only one line of dialogue... in *Two Weeks to Live* (1943). Squire was absent from *So This is Washington* (1943), but when he returned to the screen with *Goin' to Town*, he was played by a new actor, Dick Elliott. Actually, "new actor" is not exactly the correct term, because Elliott had been kicking around Hollywood since 1933. He was one of those versatile character actors who could handle any sort of part, but specialized in stuffed shirts. It has often been speculated that

Squire Skimp was the inspiration for Al Capp's character of Marryin' Sam in the *Li'l Abner* comic strip, and in fact, when the first *Li'l Abner* movie was made by RKO in 1940, Dick Elliott was cast in that role. Foreshadowing of things to come?

Elliott would reprise Squire in 1946's *Partners in Time*, but these two L&A ventures are only two of his 258 movies listed by the IMDB. He moved seamlessly into television during the 1950s; sitcom fans will recognize him as one of the tourists frightened by Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz, costumed as Martians, during a memorable *I Love Lucy* episode. Elliott's most familiar TV work was his continuing role as blustery Mayor Pike of Mayberry during the first season and a half of *The Andy Griffith Show*. Elliott was occupied with this job when he died unexpectedly at age 75 on December 22, 1961. Mayberry's new politico, Mayor Stoner, was played by another of L&A's former associates, Parley Baer.

GRADY SUTTON
(*Cedric Weehunt*)

We have discussed Grady Sutton's performance as Cedric earlier, as he first played that character in *The Bashful Bachelor* (1942). Cedric had been off the silver scen in the two L&A movies produced since that time, but he returned for *Goin' to Town* in the same unfortunately semi-retarded style he had used a couple of years before. Much of the blame for this cannot necessarily be laid at Sutton's feet, as he was simply performing what the script required. The problem seems to be that whereas the radio

Cedric was always intended as a naive boy in his late teens or early 20s, Grady Sutton was 38 years old when *Goin' to Town* was filmed, so his halfwit antics take on a somewhat different connotation at that age. At any rate, in his later years Sutton preferred not to discuss his Cedric work with the NLAS, and he passed away at age 89 on September 17, 1995.

In this movie, Cedric works not for his papa, Caleb Weehunt, at the blacksmith shop but instead at the gas station/automotive garage run by Tom Foster. The actor who plays Tom is uncredited, as is the lady who appears as Sister Simpson in several scenes.



L to R: Lum, Doc Crane (Sam Flint), Cedric Weehunt (Grady Sutton), Abner, and Squire Skimp (Dick Elliott).

HERBERT RAWLINSON
(*Mr. Wentworth*)

In our discussion of *Two Weeks to Live* a few issues ago, we mentioned that Herbert Rawlinson was apparently one of Lauck & Goff's favorite co-workers. Not only did he



Jimmy Benton (Dick Baldwin) and his boss Wentworth (Herbert Rawlinson) meet up with L&A.

appear as their lawyer in that earlier movie, but he was given a much more substantial role in *Goin' to Town*; and then, during 1948-49, he would be heard with them again in various roles during the half-hour version of the L&A radio series. They were obviously impressed with this ex-Britisher's style. As has been well documented by now, 67-year-old Rawlinson was in the middle of filming the movie *Jail Bait* for the infamous director Ed Wood when he died of lung cancer on July 12, 1953.

DICK BALDWIN

(Jimmy Benton)

Just who WAS this guy whose go-getting chicanery put several of Chicago's biggest oil tycoons into a bidding war for L&A's useless Pine Ridge property? For once, the IMDB is not much help! It gives no year of birth or year of death for Baldwin, and lists only nine movies to his credit... *Goin' to Town* being the final one. The only other notation is that Baldwin and his wife, actress Cecilia Parker, later operated a real estate agency in Ventura, California. Has any NLAS member in Ventura recently purchased a house from a slick, fast-talking agent? Baldwin may still be out there somewhere, so how about helping us locate him?

ERNIE ADAMS

(Zeke)

On the radio series, Squire Skimp usually did not need any accomplices, as he was perfectly capable of swindling

the townspeople of Pine Ridge by himself. However, in *Goin' to Town* he was paired with Ernie Adams as Zeke, a shambling caricature of a hillbilly who made Lum & Abner themselves look like Herbert Rawlinson. Proving they weren't as dumb as Squire thought they looked, however, Mssrs. Edwards and Peabody managed to trap Zeke in a phone booth by the judicious use of Abner's belt, and thus defeated their adversary. (And not incidentally, set up a gag for Abner to drop his pants, one of the oldest ploys in the Comedian Instruction Manual.)

Like most character actors, Adams appeared in more movies during his career than most "stars" make in three lifetimes. The IMDB documents at least 384 screen roles beginning in 1919, but *Goin' to Town* was almost at the end of that list. Adams died at age 62 on November 26, 1947.

JACK RICE

(Clark)

Yes, this is the same Jack Rice who forever seemed to be cast as hotel clerks, and in fact had played two of those identical roles in L&A's *Two Weeks to Live* and *So This is Washington*. At least for *Goin' to Town*, Rice got to come out from behind his hotel desk and play another type of character for a change. As one of the Chicago oil men, Rice had definitely come up in the world, but his fate... to be nonplussed by L&A's antics... remained the same, no matter what his profession may have been. As we mentioned a few issues ago, Rice passed away in 1968.

SAM FLINT

(Doc Crane)

Hmm, does no one in Pine Ridge seem to miss Doc Miller? Has he gone on to his "preserved seat in th' better world"? Who knows, but in *Goin' to Town*, Doc Crane is the town pill pusher who invests in L&A's "oil derelict."

Actor Sam Flint must have been something of a doctor himself, or at least he knew something about longevity.

Born in Georgia in 1882, Flint died at the Motion Picture Country Home on October 17, 1980, or just two days before his 98th birthday. During those 98 years he appeared in 241 movie roles and in approximately 70 TV guest spots, usually in Westerns. As with his *Goin' to Town* experience, he was usually cast as a doctor, a judge, or some other dignified figure.

ANDREW TOMBES

(Parker)

This is the guy who starts all the trouble for L&A just because he is bored with



Lum & Abner with Zeke (Ernie Adams), the hayseed's hayseed.

being stuck in their small burg. Just for diversion, he uses a fake divining rod to pretend he has located oil under the Jot 'Em Down Store. As with all city slickers in such plots, though, you can bet your brogans that he gets his comeuppance before the final fadeout. Andrew Tombes was reportedly a vaudeville comedian before beginning his movie career in 1933. His work seems to have faded out in the late 1950s, and he was living in New York City when he passed away at the age of 90 on March 17, 1976.

GEORGE CHANDLER

(*Jameson*)

Jameson serves the same purpose with his practical joking partner Parker that Boo Boo served with Yogi Bear; to be his friend's conscience, even though said friend refuses to listen to his admonitions. George Chandler certainly had a distinguished career for a character actor. Besides his 350 movies, he served as president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) from 1960-63. His final role was as an elderly man in the Disney studio's *The Apple Dumpling Gang Rides Again* (1979). He lived to be even more elderly, however, as he died on June 10, 1985, at age 87.

RUTH LEE

(*Mrs. Wentworth*)

Little information seems to be available on Ms. Lee, whose main function in *Goin' to Town* is to misinterpret husband Herbert Rawlinson's reasons for being in a nightclub with a stage full of skimpily (Squirely?) clad dancers. Her 83 movie roles listed on IMDB all sound much the same, from the first in 1932 to her final one in 1961. Ruth Lee died on August 3, 1975, at age 80.

DANNY DUNCAN

(*Grandpappy Spears*)

There isn't much to add to what we have already said about Danny Duncan, who was obviously one of L&A's favorites. As you know, he appeared as Uncle Henry Lunsford on the radio series during most of the 1940s, and played the same role on-screen in *The Bashful Bachelor* (1942). He was Pine Ridge's mail carrier in *Two Weeks to Live* (1943), and with *So This is Washington* (1943) he became the screen version of Grandpappy Spears. In both that movie and *Goin' to Town* he had rather small roles, but Grandpap would be elevated to co-star status a couple of years later, in *Partners in Time* (1946). Again, we do not know Duncan's dates of birth or death.

MARIETTA CANTY

(*Camellia*)

Miss Abigail's maid, Camellia, has the dubious distinction of being only the second African-American character to be depicted as living in Pine Ridge. (We wonder if Washington, Bobs Watson's playmate in *Dreaming Out Loud*, was Camellia's son.) Who knows how Marietta Canty felt about her movie career? Her 35 roles between 1942 and 1955 consisted mainly of playing maids or housekeepers. Perhaps she agreed with Hattie McDaniel, who was quoted as saying that during those days she had two choices: playing a maid in the movies or being a maid in real life. Canty is one of the few performers to begin and end their life in the same town; she was born in Hartford, Connecticut, and was living there again when she died at age 81 on July 9, 1986.

N.T.G. AND HIS HOLLYWOOD BEAUTIES

(*Themselves*)

The publicity for *Goin' to Town* made much of the lovely young things who were seen in posters and stills giving L&A come hither glances and displaying their not-inconsiderable charms. However, panting males who were lured into the theater were probably disappointed that these attractive showgirls appeared in only one scene, and did not have much to do even then. Just who WAS this N.T.G. guy, and who were the "Hollywood Beauties"?

First of all, N.T.G. stood for Nils T. Granlund, a native of Sweden who made it big in the U.S. during the 1920s as owner of the Hollywood Restaurant in New York City. That was the source for the name of his girl troupe, which at one time included up-and-coming actress Alice Faye. Granlund is also said to have pioneered another aspect of show business; in 1927, he carried on a comedic radio "feud" with an entertainer named Harry Richman, which has been cited as the ancestor of the more durable Jack Benny/Fred Allen and Bob Hope/Bing Crosby insult-fests.

He died in an automobile accident... was he driving with one of his Hollywood Beauties on his lap?... near Las Vegas on April 21, 1957, the same year he published

his memoirs, *Blondes, Brunettes and Bullets*. If we ever locate a copy of that long-forgotten volume, we may learn more about this even longer-forgotten entertainment impresario.

- Tim Hollis



One of the newspaper ads that played up GOIN' TO TOWN's nonexistent risqué angle.

THE ANNUAL NLAS CONVENTION: WHA' HAPPON'??

In our February issue, some of you might have been surprised.. while some may not have even noticed.. to see the announcement that there is going to be NO NLAS Convention held this year. For those who care, we thought you deserve some explanation for this drastic decision.

It had been our intention for quite some time to make the 2004 convention (which would have been #20, by the way) our final one. Let's face it, the conventions are basically the work of three people, none of whom are getting any younger. Nineteen years of it had "wore us down to a nub," as Abner might put it. We knew the end was going to have to come sometime, if for no other reason than the fact that the pool of talent we draw upon for our guests is shrinking rapidly. Our attendance has also declined over the past several years, and we did not seem to be attracting any new faces. We have sent out an unbelievable amount of publicity to the Arkansas media for the last few conventions, but nothing seemed to succeed in getting more people to make the trek to Mena to see what we had going on there.

So, why did we decide to discontinue the conventions before completing #20? This year had an overwhelming number of conflicts, and putting a 20th anniversary convention together under such trying circumstances just might have pushed the three of us over the brink. Both Uncle Donnie Pitchford and Singin' Sam Brown had family conflicts, and executive secretary Tim Hollis is busier than ever with his books and other writing activities.

(Readers of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* should realize that it gets assembled simultaneously with all of his other activities, wherever it can be squeezed in.) There was also the potential problem that the convention weekend was the same as that for the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS) convention in Seattle (see below), and since all the radio stars who are still able to do so attend that big bash, that would have further diminished our list of potential guests. Backing the date of the convention up was not an option, as we have found it ill-advised to try to compete with Father's Day, and we could not advance it a weekend because of the Fourth of July holiday (and besides, Mena is hot enough in June without trying to broast ourselves in the July heat!).

So, now what about the future? We do have hopes that the NLAS Convention will return in 2005, but if it does, it will probably be in a different form and maybe even in a completely different location. There are many things to be decided on and worked out before that can happen, and perhaps this year-long respite will enable us to get some things accomplished. Watch the upcoming issues of the *Journal* to find out what happens, and we will even be asking for YOUR input. Meanwhile, we want to extend our appreciation to those hardy souls who have faithfully made the trip to Mena during any of our past 19 meetings. The next one will be the 20th, no matter what year it takes place, and we hope to see all of you again there.

An' Since You Won't Be in Mena...

For those who can't stand the thought of NOT attending a convention on the weekend of June 24-27, may we suggest that you consider attending the **Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound (REPS)** convention in Seattle on those dates? Coincidentally, their theme for this year is a salute to the Mutual Network, and a *Lum and Abner* tribute is scheduled to be part of their program. In addition, their guest list includes such past NLAS luminaries as **Dick Beals, Barbara Fuller, Sam Edwards, Ginny Tyler**, and others, so you'll feel right at home! For more info, consult their web site at

www.repsonline.org