

Winter 2007

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VOLUME 2***  
MARCH 13, 1935 - MAY 23, 1935

***LUM & ABNER: THE EARLY YEARS  
VOLUME 3***  
MAY 24, 1935 - JULY 18, 1935

***LUM & ABNER: THE EARLY YEARS  
VOLUME 4***  
JULY 19, 1935 - SEPTEMBER 12, 1935

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An' speakin' of modern tecknologiwockle advances ketchin' up with the fokes in Pine Ridge, notice in the ad above that our good buddy Chet Lauck Jr. has now made his copies of the L&A movin' pitchers available on DV an' D as well as good ol vidiot tape! Wonderful world!

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THE SEVEN

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*Front Cover: Chet "Lum" Lauck  
 and Norris "Abner" Goff during  
 one of their broadcasts from the  
 NBC studios in Hollywood, 1937.  
 In the background is their secre-  
 tary/office manager/right arm  
 Velma McCall. (Notice the string  
 tied to Chet's chair, which he used  
 to operate the door sound effect.)*

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# THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

*Winter 2007*

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*We were delighted to hear that one of our 2002 NLAS Convention guests, cartoon voice mainstay Ginny Tyler, was recently inducted as an official Disney Legend during the annual ceremony in October. Above you see "our gal Ginny" receiving her award from Roy E. Disney himself (Walt's nephew). More information about Ginny's long and varied career in radio, TV and cartoons can be found in the book **MOUSE TRACKS: THE STORY OF WALT DISNEY RECORDS** by Tim Hollis & Greg Ehrbar (University Press of Mississippi, May 2006). Corn-gradulations, Ginny!*



# 70 YEARS OF LUM AND ABNER<sup>®</sup>

You may recall from our previous installment that things were happening on two different fronts in the world of *Lum and Abner* as 1936 made ready to give way to 1937. In their home base of Chicago, Lauck and Goff were quietly preparing for a major move that would come to have a great effect on the show's future, while Dick Huddleston was finding a new career as an "out loud talker" by touring with the Pine Ridge Silver Cornet Band vaudeville act. For what might have been the one and only documented time, the two projects overlapped during the last week of November 1936. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Lauck and Goff, as L&A, would be appearing along with the Silver Cornet Band at a theater in Cincinnati. Unfortunately, no further documentation seems to exist on this one-of-a-kind blending of the real and fictional versions of Pine Ridge.

Just why this event would not be duplicated in the future was hinted at by the same paper just a few days later. On December 2, 1936, the Chicago paper reported: "The Hollywood fever has gripped the Pine Ridge rustics, Lum and Abner. About January 15, Norris Goff and Chet Lauck will pack up and move their families to the cinema capital for the winter. Announcer Carlton Brickert and organist Dean Fosler will remain here while the nightly 'Jot 'Em Down Store' episodes come from the west. It will be Lum and Abner's first trip west."

So, while the Lauck and Goff families prepared to head toward the setting sun (probably singing "Californy, Here We Come" like the characters in *I Love Lucy*), Dick Huddleston was continuing his personal appearance tour. On December 18, the *Mena Star* gave a report on his latest doin's:

## Dick Huddleston is Doing His Bit in Advertising Arkansas

*Dick Huddleston, who is traveling with the Pine Ridge Silver Cornet Band in Indiana and Ohio, writes to the Star that he is sure putting out the publicity in his brief sketches about Arkansas which are a part of each show.*

*On the night that the Polk County Possum Club banquet was being held in Mena, Dick told his audience about the unique organization and apparently had a hard time convincing some of them that he was really telling the truth. He stated in his letter that the theater manager at Anderson, Indiana, as well as the mayor of the city, were a bit skeptical and he asked that a copy of the Mena paper carrying the story of the banquet be sent to these two men.*

*His letter was written from Cincinnati, Ohio, where the band had been playing three days with Lum and Abner. He said the theater at which they were billed held 2,200 people and that they played five shows a day to capacity houses each time.*

(As an aside... in past issues we have explored the connection



between L&A and the Mena civic organization known as the Polk County Possum Club and its yearly Possum Club Banquet. We idly wonder whether future TV legend Paul Henning... who was, at this time, working at KMBC Radio in Kansas City, Missouri... had this function in mind years later when he devised the favorite holiday of his *Beverly Hillbillies*, "Possum Day" and its annual Possum Parade. We'll never know.)

By the week after Christmas, Chet & Tuffy had returned to Chicago to continue packing, and Dick and the band were playing the Colonial Theater in Dayton, Ohio. Just as the paper had predicted, the Lauck & Goff entourage departed the Windy City for Sunny Californy on January 15. Their stated intention might have been to spend the winter there, but as we now know, Hollywood would become their permanent home and they never did return to their Midwestern roots until long after the radio series had ended. On January 19, 1937, the *Arkansas Democrat* of Little Rock gave a report on the big move:

## Lum and Abner Join Arkansas Colony in Hollywood

*With the arrival in Hollywood Monday afternoon of Lum and Abner, popular radio artists, Arkansas is to have representation in the film and radio center comparable to any other state. Bob Burns, Dick Powell and Lum and Abner were named as four of the ten most popular radio entertainers of 1936, and all of them call Arkansas home.*



**Longtime L&A associate Jerry Hausner made this photo of the Lauck & Goff entourage as they disembarked from the train upon their arrival in Hollywood, January 18, 1937. Jerry identified the participants as follows: BACK ROW - Harriet Lauck's mother, Mrs. Wood; unidentified man; the Goff governess; Mr. & Mrs. Stu Dawson; Chet Lauck; Norris Goff; Harriet Lauck; Velma McCall; Elizabeth Goff. FRONT ROW - Gary Goff (with a vintage Donald Duck doll!); Nancy Lauck; Shirley Lauck.**

Leaving Chicago by train immediately after their late broadcast Friday, Chester "Lum" Lauck and Norris "Abner" Goff were to arrive in Hollywood just in time to do their first broadcast tonight, having written their script en route. Lum is accompanied by his wife and their two daughters, Shirley May and Nancy, and Abner is accompanied by Mrs. Goff and their son, Gary.

Though they have made several extensive personal appearance tours throughout the east and midwest, this will be Lum and Abner's first trip to the coast. They will make some personal appearances while in the west.

Deep in preparation for their west coast journey, Lum and Abner have worked out their scripts this week in an office cluttered with packing cases containing their extensive collection of autographed pictures of famous folk, and the complete files of all their Lum and Abner scripts. The packing cases are being shipped along with the boys' cars in a special freight car.

Both ardent sportsmen, Lum and Abner are looking forward to hours of golf and swimming and are particularly interested in the prospect of their debut at deep sea fishing. Each of them had to purchase an extra trunk to accommodate his collection of fishing, golfing, and other sports paraphernalia.

Aside from the prospect of sunshine and sports, the two young old-timers claim the thing they're looking forward to most about

their California sojourn is the idea of not having to wear the heavy overcoats which, despite their several winters in Chicago, the two Arkansas lads still thoroughly dislike.

In all the hurried detail of departure, Lum and Abner created a new and decidedly unaccustomed character, that of Cupid. And not a fictional air character either -- but a real life role. It all started when Mrs. Lum's maid, a practically invaluable member of the Lauck household, decided she couldn't stand the idea of being hundreds of miles away from her boyfriend. Lum and Abner, after a few minutes' consultation, decided they could use a small car on the coast, promptly bought a small coupe, hired the maid's boyfriend as chauffeur, arranged for the maid and the new chauffeur to be married just before leaving and gave them the trip to California in the new coupe as a honeymoon trip.

When we return in our next installment, we shall see what sort of trouble Lauck and Goff can manage to get themselves into with the whole world of Hollywood to play around in, and also how Dick Huddleston and the Silver Cornet Band were making out now that they were left on their own in the Midwest. Join us then!

- Tim Hollis



# LUM and ABNER's®

## "DEAD SEA SCROLLS"

### Part Eight of a Series

Several issues ago, we explained that a previously-unknown collection of Lum and Abner scripts had turned up, and while the NLAS is unable to secure them for our own archives, one of our members was permitted access to them long enough to write a synopsis of each one. We now pick up with that member's summaries where we left off in our Fall issue:

#### December 7, 1933

Dan Davis comes in to talk about how excited he is about the new 1934 Ford that they'll have available for the public on Saturday. Abner is running for Sheriff against Butch Dolan. Show ends with Abner getting a letter:

*ABNER: I doggies fellers this is the end.. I'm through... This is a letter here from Butch Dolan and he says he's givin me my last warning. If I dont withdraw from the sheriff's race before tomorrow noon.. He'll put me outa the race in his own way... and I doggies I know what that is—*

#### December 12, 1933

Much of the script is devoted to Lum trying to balance Abner's campaign fund books. Abner put a thousand dollars in it, and Lum's been buying cigars, new hat for himself, calling cards that barely include Abner's name, etc. Tells Abner he needs to make hero of himself to get his name out. Show closes with news over the phone that the little girl of Banker Mullins in the county seat has been kidnapped.

#### December 13, 1933

Most of the script devoted to Lum talking about and reading a newspaper article he sent the county seat paper, announcing that he was managing Abner's campaigning. Of course it's all about Lum. The paper was supposed to show the picture of the two of them handcuffed together as a way of showing they had hooked up to win the campaign. Instead, they labeled it as Abner handcuffed to a desperate criminal he had captured.

#### December 14, 1933

The kidnapper was driving a yellow sedan. Abner thinks he saw Butch Dolan in a yellow sedan. Dolan called him last night to threaten him again, and it's making him uneasy. Cedric has supposedly been putting up signs for Abner, but it turns out they were for Dolan. Cedric asks if he can borrow their old shotgun from the feed room to go squirrel hunting. Dolan comes in, runs Lum off with two shots, and is about to shoot Abner, but Cedric stops him with the shotgun. This is practically a repeat of the earlier episode from May 27, 1932.

#### December 18, 1933

Cedric had bluffed Dolan with an empty gun. Abner is more determined than ever to be sheriff because he thinks Dolan kidnapped the girl. Grandpap is sick, but Abner wants his picture (as

Abner's deputy) to use for publicity. They're going to his bedroom and take it there, using some gunpowder for the flash.

#### December 20, 1933

Abner and Cedric found the little girl in the barn at the old Medford place, where no one had lived for three years. Lum makes the call to the banker to tell him and takes most of the credit. Butch Dolan and Snake Hogan and another fellow were the ones Abner saw going to see the girl, and he found her that way.

This would have been the point at which the script that became Lum and Abner's annual Christmas show would have made its first appearance; however, apparently no script for it exists. Lauck and Goff often said that it was mostly ad-libbed that first year, and then for the repeat airing in 1934 they had to roughly remember what it was about so they could write it down!

#### December 27, 1933

They're trying to figure out their profits and losses from the first year of running the store.

*ABNER: Yea I put up a thousand dollars. And you never put up nuthin.*



*LUM: Yea but I paid you back five hunderd dollars outa the store though. Recollect the first five hunderd dollars profits went to you. I never got a nickle of it.*

#### January 2, 1934

Lum has resolved only to tell the truth, and it's hurting business. Abner has resolved not to smoke. Abner breaks first. In an allusion to previous episodes, Butch Dolan put a notice in the paper that the kidnapers would return to the old barn, because he knew Abner and Lum would go and he could try to pin the crime on them, but the D.A. has dropped the phony charges.

#### January 3, 1934

They're losing their customers to Dick Huddleston because of Lum's resolution. At the end of the episode he has to admit to Evalena that he gave her pearls that were fake that he got as part of buying candy for the store. Abner has been invited to address voters over the radio as part of his campaign.

#### January 8, 1934

Opens as follows:

*LUM: Yea thats goin to tract lots of attention. Hit'll git Abner a many a vote.*

*DICK: Well I seen that parade comin down the street this morning and I thought they was a circus in town.*

*LUM: Yea they went on over to Cherry Hill. They're going to parade ther. Then they aim to circle round by Milltown and Mountainburg and put on parades ther.*

*DICK: Well thats a purty good stunt. Who thought that up.*

*LUM: Oh that was one of my idys. I was the one that painted them signs on the elephant.*

*DICK: (L) Buttercup come in purty handy after all didn't he?*

*LUM: Yea I spect Abner is the first candidate for sheriff that ever made his campaign ridin on a elephant.*

*DICK: (L) If he didn't look a sight settin up ther on that elephants head. Looked like a turtle settin on a log. (L)*

*LUM: I grannies I thought I've never git started this mornin. Taken all the stove polish we had in the store to git Cedric blacked up like a slave.*

*DICK: Is that what Cedric was sposed to be—a slave?*

*LUM: Yea. Most pitchers you see of these fellers that rides elephants has got a slave walkin long by the side of the elephant to guide him, you know.*

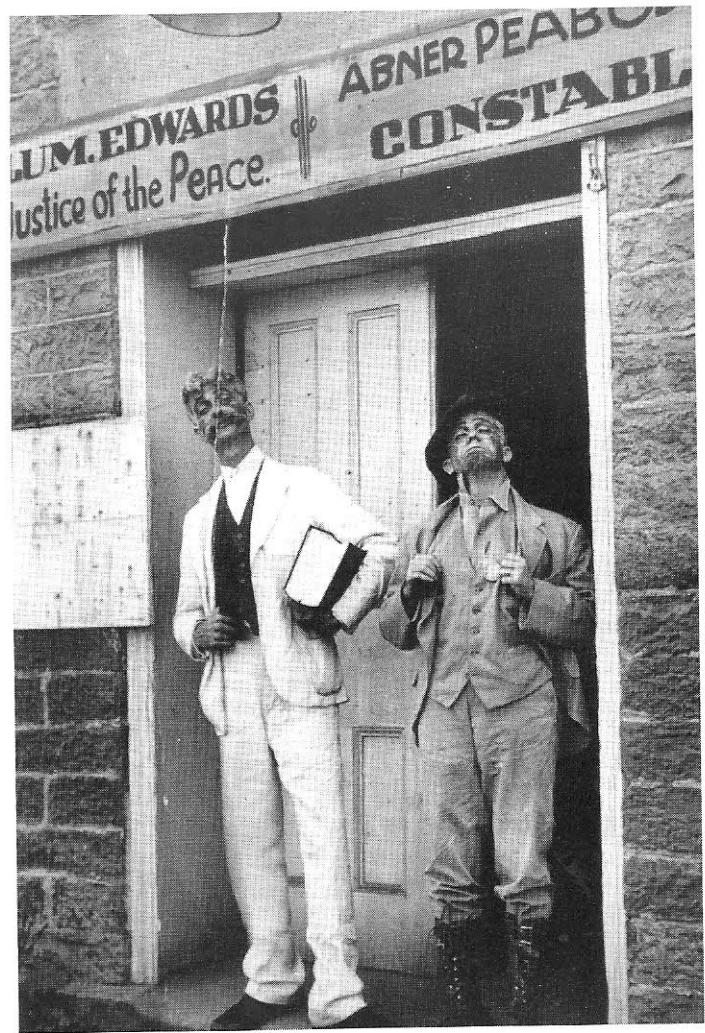
*DICK: Yea.. course it aint none of my business Lum. You're Abner's campaign manager and you're doing a good job of it but I'm jist wonderin how its goin to look to these democrats around here for Abner to be ridin on a elephant. Thats the republican emblem.*

*LUM: Well yea but thats the reason I had Grandpappy Spears follerin along behind ther on that donkey. See thatway we git the democrats and the republicans.. Abner's runnin on the demopublican ticket you know.*

Dock Cook has a speaking role talking about Abner's chances in other parts of the county. Butch Dolan has put an article in the paper accusing Abner of mishandling money. Abner's campaign is out of money, but Lum has taken out a \$500 loan against his farm to print up big fliers denying Dolan's accusation.

#### January 11, 1934

The vote was held but there was stuffing of the ballot boxes. There has to be a re-vote on January 25. Butch Dolan knows about Lum's mortgage and comes to see Abner, offering to reimburse Abner's thousand dollars in campaign costs and pay Lum's \$500 note.



#### January 15, 1934

Abner has withdrawn from the race. He only took the \$500 from Butch to pay Lum's note. Lum angrily storms out.

#### January 16, 1934

Everybody is angry with Abner.

#### January 17, 1934

Snake Hogan has been agitating Lum and Abner, telling each of them that the other is threatening him. Now Lum and Abner are both carrying guns and on the lookout for the other. Snake hopes to buy their store at a reduced price. Dick tells Lum about Abner's motives, and Lum is immediately grateful and forgiving. But now they need to find Abner and let him know before he shoots Lum.

#### January 18, 1934

Cedric is asking Dick for a job because Lum's New Year's resolution has so devastated business that they don't need Cedric anymore. Abner has not yet been told that Lum knows, and that Snake was the agitator.

*LUM: Why, I aint skeerd.*

*DICK: Why me and Cedric was talkin bout the way you was actin comin up out ther awhile ago. You acted like a scared rabbit.*

*LUM: Not hits jist a sort of a narvous strain. You see, Dick, they's more to this than abody might think jist off hand...You*





know they's allus been bad blood between the Edardses and the Peabodys.

**DICK:** Yea I've heard stories bout the old feuds between the two families back in the early days fore I come to this country but I thought you and Abner had allus been good friends.

**LUM:** Oh we have. Best of friends. I'll say right now they aint a better man living nowhers than Abner Peabody. That is, when he's hisef. He's allus been plum docile but this little mixup has brung out the bad side of him.

**DICK:** You dont mean to say you think this little trouble you're havin now will revive that old feud do you?

**LUM:** Well I dont know. The trouble the Edardses and Peabody's had before started over nuthin you might say.

**DICK:** Oh well you and Abner understand one another too well for sompin like that. Why you've been clost friends ever since I've lived here.

**LUM:** Yea but you know the old saying, old friends make the worst kind of enemys.

**DICK:** Why you've been pardners in business and all. I'd like to see you hurry up and get things straightened out.

**LUM:** Well I'm tellin you the truth I dont bleave I can stand this suspence much longer. Abner's dangerous the way things is now.

**DICK:** Oh he'll be alright soon as I can see him and talk to him.

**LUM:** I caint understand him gittin so het up over nuthin you might say.

**DICK:** Why its that Snake Hogan thats stirrin up the trouble. He's got Abner to bleavin that you're goin to shoot him on sight. Abner thinks now his only chance is to beat you to the draw.

**LUM:** Yea and he'll do it now, me not even havin no gun on me.

**DICK:** Oh I wouldn't worry bout him. I dont bleave he could hit you even if he took a shot at you.

**LUM:** Yea Dick they's a lot of my anchesters over ther in the graveyard now that thought the same thing about some of Abner's kin.

**DICK:** Yea but that was years ago. What ever started that old feud in the first place you reckon?

**LUM:** Why the Edardses claimed they caught some of the Peabodys robbin their steel traps and the Peabodys claimed they caught the Edardses butcherin some of their hogs.

**DICK:** You reckon they did shore nuff Lum?

**LUM:** Well I dont know. I've heard my own grandpap say that the mark branded on a hog never had nuthin to do with the way

it tasted.

**DICK:** Oh well back in them days all the stock run loose a feller could make a honest mistake ever once in awhile.

**LUM:** Oh yeah. But thats what started the feud they say. Me and Abner was the first ones of them two families that ever got along at tall.

**DICK:** Well I declare.

**LUM:** Yea I recollect when me and Abner first went in pardners runnin the grist mill. My old grandpap was still livin at the time. He wouldn't let Abner come on the place and told me I'd have my reegrets some day gittin mixed up with the Peabodys.

Lum walks out of Dick's store, and they hear a shot. Lum has been shot.

#### January 22, 1934

Lum is getting better, no one knows where Abner is, and Snake Hogan is trying to get a posse together to find and lynch Abner.

#### January 23, 1934

A Mr. Gibson is also looking for Abner, but he won't tell Lum why he wants to see him. Snake Hogan has located Abner's lair but Grandpap and Cedric head out to get there first.

#### January 24, 1934

They found Abner and got out before Snake Hogan's lynch mob got there. Dick has since reasoned with the people who were after Abner. Abner remains on the run, though, and Gibson is still looking for him. Evalena comes to see "Lummy," as she calls him, so he's happy. She has a speaking role. Show closes with Gibson visiting the two of them to tell them that he was looking for Abner to see if he was the proper Peabody to receive "A PORTION OF THE PEABODY WILL IN SALEM MASSITUETS."

#### January 25, 1934

Snake Hogan was the one who shot Lum. His wife turned him in. Now they're still looking for Abner. Lum has been getting boiled custard from all the women in town:

**LUM:** I know what they mean by Custard's last stand now.

Lum and Evalena had Gibson wait one more day. Abner calls at the close of the show and they urge him to hurry over to see Gibson before he leaves.

#### January 29, 1934

Abner visits Lum. They talk about their income tax. Gibson believes Abner is the heir he's looking for and offers to handle the estate for him for 10 percent.

#### January 30, 1934

Gibson wants a thousand dollars from Abner before he'll give him the supposed estate of ten thousand in cash and property. The script doesn't have an ending, and scrawled in large letters in pencil on the back of the first page is: "Wade [that would be Warren Wade, the show's producer at WTAM in Cleveland, and later a big wig with NBC-TV] says— Tomorrow night is last show. You can make plea for letters, having them sent to local branch."

And so, once again Lauck and Goff found themselves without a sponsor, without a network, and without a show. Our next installment will pick up when they finally got all three back... and how!





# Mary Lee Robb Cline

## 1926 - 2006

We were saddened to learn of the recent passing of yet another of our past NLAS Convention guests, Mary Lee Robb, at age 80. For those who came in late, we wanted to go back to the August 1997 issue of the *Journal* and present for you an updated version of Mary Lee's biography we published at that time.

Mary Lee was born in Streator, Illinois. Her father, Alex Robb, was an executive with NBC in Chicago, and he also served for a time as manager of Amos 'n' Andy. When Mary Lee was 11 years old, the whole family moved to Los Angeles, where papa Alex continued his radio career with NBC.

After graduating from high school, Mary Lee entered UCLA. She also attended the Geller Workshop, a Hollywood little theater and drama school. During her sophomore year, she decided to drop out of college and concentrate on a professional career in radio.

It was her father's old pals from Chicago, Chester (Lum) Lauck and Norris (Abner) Goff, who gave the aspiring actress her first radio role. The little community of Pine Ridge was all astir over the news that nurse Pearl Peabody, daughter of Mr. Abner Peabody of the Jot 'Em Down Store, was getting married to a boy she had met while overseas. While Pearl had never been known to speak on the show before, it was going to be necessary for her to appear in the wedding episode; the lucky winner of the audition was 21-year-old Mary Lee Robb.

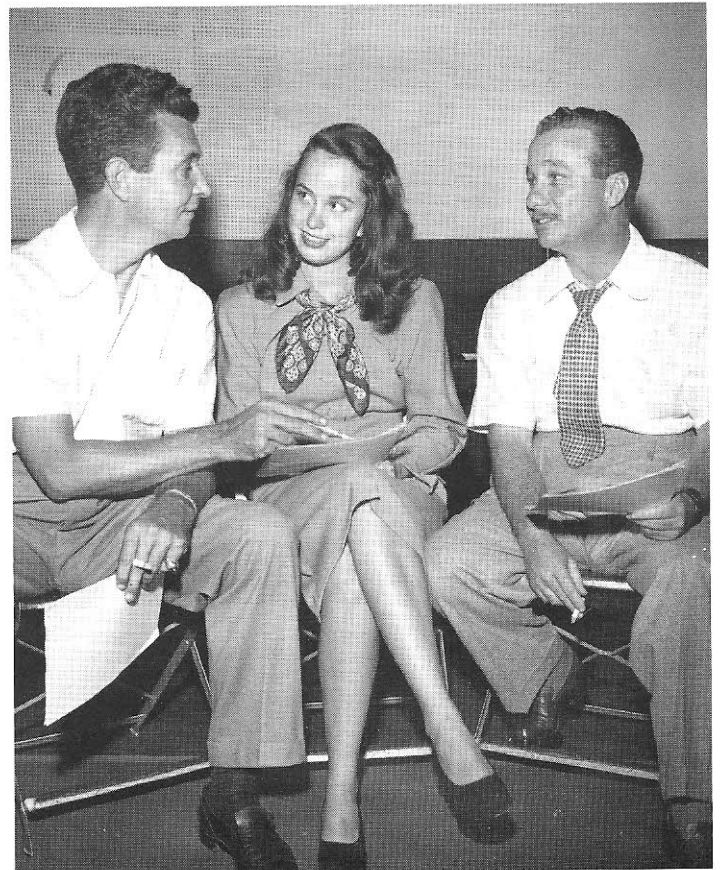
Little Pearl's hitchin' came off without a hitch in September 1947. Mary Lee often related that her only two lines in the whole episode were "I do" and "Don't cry, Papa." However, when we eventually located a recording of the show among the NLAS's transcription disks, it turned out that she did have at least another couple of lines besides those (such as "Here, take my handkerchief" to Abner, who was all puddled up). No matter how many or how few lines she delivered, the job was her entry into professional radio. She explained that an actor could not get a job in radio unless he or she possessed a union card, and they could not obtain a union card until they had landed a job in radio! It looked like a vicious circle, and it got even more vicious when Mary Lee discovered that the \$45 she got for dramatizing Pearl's wedding was not going to go very far toward the required \$75 union dues and the \$25 dress she bought for her grand debut.

After the wedding, the former Pearl Peabody went back to being an offstage character on *Lum and Abner*, and Mary Lee Robb went on to other things. She fell into providing baby cries for various soap operas and comedy shows, including Baby Snooks' infant brother Robespierre. (Most baby cries on radio were done by women; Chet & Tuffy's old associate Jerry Hausner was a notable exception to the rule.) When her first baby voice netted \$100, Mary Lee decided she might be in the right business after all.

One of her next calls was to audition for a "girl-next-door" role

on *The Burns & Allen Show*. It was that audition which proved to Mary Lee that while radio was not a visual medium, that fact could not be depended upon when it came to producers and their staffs. Showing up at the audition in a sweater and skirt, she discovered a number of other hopeful actresses all decked out in their smartest and most glamorous attire. She was certain that she had no chance against all the competing raving beauties, but was surprised to learn that she got the part after all. Gracie Allen later told her that it was her fresh, schoolgirl appearance, as well as her voice, that had swayed the producers' decision in her favor.

In 1948, Mary Lee was hired to provide background babble for the highly successful series *The Great Gildersleeve*, starring Harold Peary. "Background babble?" Yes, Mary Lee and other actors were paid \$18 per show to stand around and make crowd noises behind the dialogue of the principal cast members, which besides Peary included Walter Tetley as Leroy, Lillian Randolph



Mary Lee Robb goes over her lines with Chet Lauck & Tuffy Goff before her appearance as Little Pearl, September 1947.



Mary Lee with "original Gildersleeve" Harold Peary.

as Birdie the maid, and Louise Erickson as Gildy's niece Marjorie.

One day, fate took a hand. For reasons unknown, Louise Erickson failed to show up for an important rehearsal, and Mary Lee was picked to be her understudy. Louise made it in time for the actual broadcast, so Mary Lee went back to her background babble. At the end of that broadcast season, though, Erickson decid-

ed to leave the show to pursue a career in New York, and in a scene that might have come out of any Hollywood musical of the 1930s, understudy Mary Lee Robb was handed the role of Marjorie beginning in September 1948.

At that time, Marjorie was still played as a typical bobby socks teenager, giggling and swooning over her myriad boyfriends. With Mary Lee in the role, the character underwent a transformation rare in radio, where people generally remained the same age for years. On the broadcast of May 10, 1950, Marjorie actually married her boyfriend Bronco Thompson, played by *Our Miss Brooks* veteran Dick Crenna. To publicize the event, the producers rented a church and dressed the members of the cast in appropriate wedding attire for a series of publicity shots that appeared in *LIFE* magazine. Going even further, Mary Lee wore her wedding dress to the broadcast for the benefit of the studio audience. "I felt like I really was getting married," she recalled. "When the show was over, I actually had tears in my eyes!"

There was another cause for tears when, at the end of that 1949-50 season, Harold Peary announced that he would not be returning to the Gildersleeve role that fall. Mary Lee figured her days as a water commissioner's niece were over, but during the summer, she and Walter Tetley were called in to read with the one man everyone thought might have a chance at filling Peary's gilded sleeves. It was, of course, Willard Waterman, whose voice was so identical to Peary's that most people never noticed the change. (Regardless, Waterman's first episode contained inside jokes, such as when he walked in from his summer vacation and announced, "I'm a new man now!")

On that first show with Waterman as Gildersleeve in September 1950, niece Marjorie (now Mrs. Bronco Thompson) dropped the news that she was going to have a baby. The baby turned out to be twins, and once again Mary Lee found the line between reality and radio fantasy blurring. With at least two radio weddings on her resumé, Mary Lee was still single in real life, and some of her listeners were quite disturbed by thinking she really was having twins!

Mary Lee left the Gildersleeve series in 1954, when it became a daily 15-minute show. By then, she had indeed gotten married and started having children of her own, and gradually she dropped out of radio to become a homemaker. An unusual non-radio role for her came when Walt Disney purchased a European movie serial



Mary Lee continued playing Marjorie even after Willard Waterman replaced Hal Peary as Gildersleeve in 1950.

to use on his popular *Mickey Mouse Club* TV show. All of the dialogue had to be dubbed into English, and Mary Lee was one of the actors chosen to make the lips mach in the film, which was shown under the title "Boys of the Western Sea." (Also in the voice cast was 1995 NLAS Convention guest Parley Baer.)

Mary Lee deserved recognition above and beyond the call of duty for her appearance with the NLAS in Mena in June 1997. The scheduled guest for that year was Lewis Arquette, son of L&A veteran Cliff "Charley Weaver" Arquette and father of the many Arquettes of today's entertainment world: David, Patricia and Rosanna. One week before he was to depart home, Lewis received word that he was going to have to be appearing in a movie being filmed in Atlanta the same weekend as the convention. With only a week to prepare, Mary Lee agreed to be the fill-in guest, especially since that year marked the 50th anniversary of Pearl's wedding. (This meant that none of the NLAS members and none of the Arkansas media were aware that she was going to be there until they arrived in Mena and found that the planned guest was a no-show!) Uncle Donnie Pitchford hastily prepared a script that no one in the cast got to read until the night before the performance, but Mary Lee rose to the occasion like the professional she was, and for the first time played both Marjorie AND Pearl in the same story. She was presented with the Lum & Abner Memorial Award in recognition of her many fine performances on the air.

In the nine years since then, our contact with Mary Lee was mostly confined to Christmas cards and phone calls. She was delighted to finally be able to hear her radio debut when we located the L&A episode about Pearl's wedding, and we also kept her supplied with the First Generation Radio Archives' recent releases of fully restored *Great Gildersleeve* shows. Mary Lee died on August 28, 2006, but like so many other radio greats, her voice will live on as long as there are recordings of her shows and new generations to discover them.

- Tim Hollis



# In Memory Of Ted Theodore

The NLAS offers condolences to the family and friends of **Ted Theodore**, who passed away recently. Mr. Theodore was a longtime member of both the NLAS and SPERDVAC (and possibly other OTR organizations). He attended his first NLAS Convention around 15 years ago, and before long began bringing along his guitar, relieving "Uncle Donnie" with a much better accompaniment for the performance of the traditional closing song, "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree." A talented instrumentalist, Mr. Theodore played professionally in his home state of California, and with a group of musicians known as the East County Entertainers, released recordings of various polkas, marches, waltzes, two-steps, tangos and mazurkas.

In 1995, Mr. Theodore added the classic "feud" song, "The Martins and the Coys" (based on the actual feuding families, the Hatfields and the McCoys), to the proceedings, much to the delight of the NLAS audience. He also assisted in registering the attendees, signing up new members and renewing others. He



repeated "The Martins and the Coys," plus performed other classics, when the NLAS offered a "Lum and Abner Stage Show" in 1998 at the historic Lyric Theater in Mena. After the show concluded, Mr. Theodore could be seen "jamming" with various local musicians.

Ted Theodore's last appearance at an NLAS Convention was in 2003. Sadly, he had experienced health problems prior to this visit, and the trip was a tremendous strain on him, but he forged ahead, and with his dear friend Opal McCracken, performed "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree" and an additional song before announcing that it would be their final attendance.

The NLAS officers and members are thankful for the contributions of Ted Theodore and will fondly remember him. Thankfully, we have a number of appearances on videotape to remind us of his talent.

- Uncle Donnie Pitchford

## *They're Still Out There... Somewheres!*

It's a far different story from when the *Lum and Abner* episodes were at the peak of their syndication success in the late 1970s and early 1980s... at that time, hundreds of radio stations across the country were playing the shows via the now-outmoded medium of reel-to-reel tape. The syndication package is currently offered by the **Otteneheimer Library Archives and Special Collections** department of the **University of Arkansas at Little Rock**, and speaking of outmoded technology, they have now managed to upgrade the reel-to-reel format to cassettes. A step in the right direction!

NLAS Veep Singin' Sam Brown recently contacted **Jillian Barnett** of UALR for an update on things, and as of October 10 these were the stations that were carrying *Lum and Abner*:

**KBRX - O'Neill, Nebraska**  
**KCAM - Glenallen, Alaska**  
**KMIL - Cameron, Texas**  
**KOFC - Fayetteville, Arkansas**  
**KRSA - Petersburg, Alaska**  
**WGGC - Bowling Green, Kentucky**  
**WLDS - Jacksonville, Illinois**  
**WMTC - Vancleve, Kentucky**  
**WULF - Elizabethtown, Kentucky**  
**WVOW - Logan, West Virginia**

Did you notice that apparently Kentucky is the largest L&A market right now, with three different stations? Coming in second

is Alaska, with two stations.

If you have a station in your area that is interested in carrying the *Lum and Abner* recordings... and if they have anyone working for them who is old enough to remember how to operate a cassette tape deck... they can contact UALR's Jillian Barnett at phone (501) 569-8820. Do your part to help keep L&A on the airwaves where they belong!



*"I grannies, Abner, I bleave I'm pickin' up our show!"*

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: It has been quite a while since we have presented an installment in this series, but recently our member Bob Bowman of Lufkin, Texas, sent this article to us and it was too important to pass up. We hope everyone will enjoy this little-known story behind the even more little-known community of Jot 'Em Down, Texas....*

Anyone who listened to the radio in the 1930s and 1940s remembers Lum and Abner, the mythical storekeepers invented by Chet Lauck and Norris Goff. From their Jot 'Em Down Store in Pine Ridge, Arkansas, Lum and Abner evolved into one of the nation's most popular radio series.

But if you ask old timers in Delta County, Texas, they'll tell you with pride that they remember when the Jot 'Em Down Store was in East Texas. Also known as Mohegan, Muddig Prairie and Bagley, Jot 'Em Down was on the James H. Larabee Survey, which was occupied by 1885 when the Bagley school opened.

In 1937, when Lela McDonnold, the wife of pioneer farmer Pleasant T. McDonnold, had a heart attack, the doctor said it was the result of doing the laundry by hand for her eight children down through the years. One of her sons, blind Dion McDonnold, decided that he would build a washateria and a country store on his property to make it easier for women in the community to do the laundry and, hopefully, extend their lives.

Dion and a brother, Doug, who lived in nearby Pecan Gap, called a meeting of the people in the community to see if they would support a washateria. The prospect of no longer having to fill a wash pot in the yard, boil out clothes, rinse them in several tubs of fresh water, and then wring them out by hand was understandably greeted with enthusiasm.

When Doug and Dion asked for suggestions for the store's name, someone suggested "the Jot 'Em Down store," which was the name of Lum and Abner's radio establishment. "And there," said a kibitzer, pointing to Doug and Dion, "are our Lum and Abner."

The McDonnolds had a large pond built to hold water for the washateria, terraced the land so it would funnel rainwater to the pond, and started construction of a combination store and laundry. Unfortunately, Lela died before its completion.

The Jot 'Em Down Store was an immediate success. Customers

came from early in the morning until late at night. Dion had to set up a lunch counter to accommodate customers. When the Texas Highway Department started looking for the town's name to put on maps, officials used Jot 'Em Down, and the name stuck.

When Jot 'Em Down's farmers started talking about a cotton gin since the pond built by the McDonnolds could furnish sufficient water for the gin's needs, the Jot 'Em Down Cooperative Gin Association was born.

During World War II, Jot 'Em Down began to change with other East Texas communities. Most of the community's men marched off to war and its women moved to towns like Dallas and Fort Worth to find jobs in defense industries.

And when rural electrification came along and home washing machines and dryers became readily available, there was no longer a need for the Jot 'Em Down Washateria. The store also found it could not compete with larger grocery stores in towns like Cooper, and farmers carried their cotton to larger towns to be ginned.

Today, there is little left of old Jot 'Em Down on the wide-open blackland prairies in far western Delta County. The town's highway signs are stolen as quickly as they are placed on the roadside.

- Bob Bowman



*By the time this road map of Delta County, Texas, was printed in the 1950s, apparently the community of Jot 'Em Down had already disappeared.*