

AUGUST 1986



-Lurene Tuttle
1907-1986

The National Lum & Abner Society regrets the passing of famed radio actress Lurene Tuttle, who died at Encino Hospital on May 28. Miss Tuttle was well-known for her many radio roles; Roz Rogers remembers that on "Lum and Abner" she appeared as the homeless Ellie Connors, the sourpuss Nurse Lunsford, and that battleaxe supreme, Sgt. Hartford. She also had roles on most other radio series originating from Hollywood. At the time of her death, the NLAS was attempting to contact her to learn more about her appearances with L&A; we are very sorry that we were unable to do so in time.

- Information provided by SPERDVAC

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

AUGUST 1986

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THE NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY

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"I have the most peculiar job in
 radio...it isn't everyone who
 appears on a program by proxy."

- Dick Huddleston, in a
 letter dated Aug. 22,
 1935

COVER: The Huddleston Store as it
 appeared in 1938. (Photo courtesy
 of Ethel Ball.)

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ABOVE: The Arkansas Sesquicentennial Wagon
 Train arrives in Pine Ridge; see story,
 page 5 (Photo courtesy of Kathy Stucker)

The COUNTRY MERCHANT

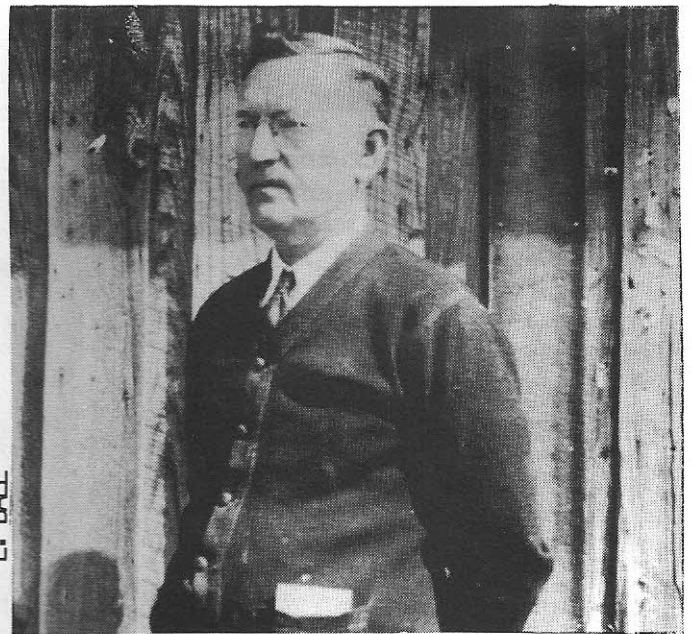
It is fairly common knowledge among students of Lum and Abner that most of their characters were loosely based on the citizens of Waters, Arkansas. However, out of all the character models, only one was referred to by his real name on the program: Mr. J.R. "Dick" Huddleston.

Dick Huddleston was born on June 28, 1883, and his family moved to Arkansas from his native Kentucky in the 1890's. Not much is known about his early life, but an important event occurred in 1909. At the age of 26, Huddleston went into partnerships with his brother-in-law, S.I. Wood (owner of a large dry goods store in Mena), and together the two men built a general merchandise store in the microscopic little community of Waters. There was only one other general store in Waters, the one owned by A.A. McKinzie, and because of the Wood & Huddleston store's larger size, it had soon become the main hub of activity in the community. "Dick's store was the Wal-Mart of its day," says Dick's daughter, now Mrs. Ethel Ball. "On Saturday, it was not unusual for 200 wagons to be gathered in the town."

Back in those days before paved roads, modern transportation and mass communication, a trip into



THE HUDDLESTON STORE IN 1932



E. BALL

"town" to the general store was a major social event. The farmers would come from miles around to sit in the store and talk, and it was hours of careful listening to these people & observation of their quaint ways that eventually became the inspiration for the Lum and Abner series. But more on that later.

In 1912, the Wood & Huddleston store burned to the ground, but Dick Huddleston, now as sole owner, rebuilt the building that same year. The new store was made to look exactly like its predecessor: a large front porch, and a roof that rose into a tall point. It didn't take long for the store to regain its former clientele, and soon Huddleston's General Merchandise was the primary area business again.

During the 1920's, Huddleston became involved in what would eventually develop into his main claim to fame (and livelihood). There were two prominent businessmen in Mena, a Mr. Lauck (bank executive and lumber company owner) and a Mr. Goff (owner of the wholesale grocery house). Their respective sons, Chester and Norris ("Tuffy" to his friends), often had to take care of family business interests in the surrounding countryside, but they often wound up spending most of their time in the Huddleston store in Waters, listening to the local dialect and absorbing the customs. Huddleston, almost 20 years their senior, had a great liking for these two young men.

Chet and Tuffy, amateur entertainers, eventually worked up a blackface act, in imitation of radio's newest and biggest stars, Amos 'n' Andy. They created quite a local reputation with their skits, and early in 1931 they were asked to perform at a Lions' Club banquet in Mena. Their old friend Dick Huddleston was present, as was a friend of his, the manager of radio station KTHS in Hot Springs. According to Ethel Ball, during the boys' act, Dick leaned over to the radio man and whispered, "You oughta get them boys; they're good." The station manager agreed, and since the station had an ongoing policy of having local talent come in and represent their own counties,



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DICK HUDDLESTON'S HOUSE IN PINE RIDGE, NOW THE RESIDENCE OF DOROTHY MC CLURE

he agreed to give Lauck and Goff and their blackface humor a chance.

The story has been told a dozen times how Chet and Tuffy were on their way to make their first radio appearance on April 26, 1931, but at the last minute decided that there were already too many blackface acts around. On the spur of the moment, they changed their act to a couple of rural old gentlemen, and named them "Lum" and "Abner." Without telling anyone what they were going to do, they went on the air and ad-libbed about the goings-on in Dick Huddleston's store down in "Pine Ridge" (a fictitious locale).

That summer, they journeyed to Chicago, sold "Lum and Abner" to the Quaker Oats Company and NBC, and were on the network. They continued to mention Dick Huddleston often, as well as daughter Ethel, who was known on the air as "Dick's Gur'l." Huddleston had given them permission to use his name, with the stipulation that he never be portrayed in a less-than-complimentary light. (This was only fair and reasonable, but also made it hard to do anything funny with such a straight character.)

Huddleston, shrewd businessman that he was, saw the value of the publicity his store was reaping from its national network exposure, and soon a large sign (painted by Ethel) stretched across the front of the building's pointed roof: "DICK HUDDLESTON, MADE FAMOUS BY LUM AND ABNER." (At other times, the sign was worded differently, but the idea was always the same.) But something still bothered him. Radio listeners, several of whom were beginning to run across his store, knew that L&A and Dick Huddleston lived in a town called "Pine Ridge," and here he was stuck in a town called "Waters." Why couldn't the town's name be changed to Pine Ridge, so fiction could become fact?!

Such a move would involve changing the name of the community's post office (since the town had never officially been incorporated), and this required an act of Congress. By now, the Lum & Abner radio shows were going strong under the sponsorship of Horlick's Malted Milk, and Huddleston decided to go in cahoots with William Horlick himself. Together, they laid their plans for bringing Pine Ridge, Arkansas, into reality.

They met with initial resistance from the government, for the reason that several other states already had Pine Ridges. But Huddleston and Horlick petitioned the postmaster general, and after the usual red tape, managed to make the necessary arrangements. The date was set for April 26, 1936, the fifth anniversary of Lum & Abner's first appearance on the air.

On that date, Huddleston led a delegation from Waters/Pine Ridge to Little Rock, for a ceremony on the steps of the state capitol. Ethel Huddleston was present at the ceremony, and she recalls that the officials had originally prepared a script for her father to read, since the ceremony was going to be broadcast as a special by NBC. Upon being handed the script, Huddleston asked, "Well, now, do you want me to make a plumb mess of this?" He was assured they did not, so he replied, "Well then, you better just let me talk." While everyone else read from their scripts, Huddleston got up to the microphones and simply talked about Waters and Arkansas just the way he knew how. He was the smash of the bash.

Once word got out that there really was a Pine Ridge, Arkansas, the tourists began flocking to the Huddleston store in droves. This gave our friend another idea. Around 1939-40, he organized a group of talented local citizens into a vaudeville show he called "The Pine Ridge Follies." A poster advertis-



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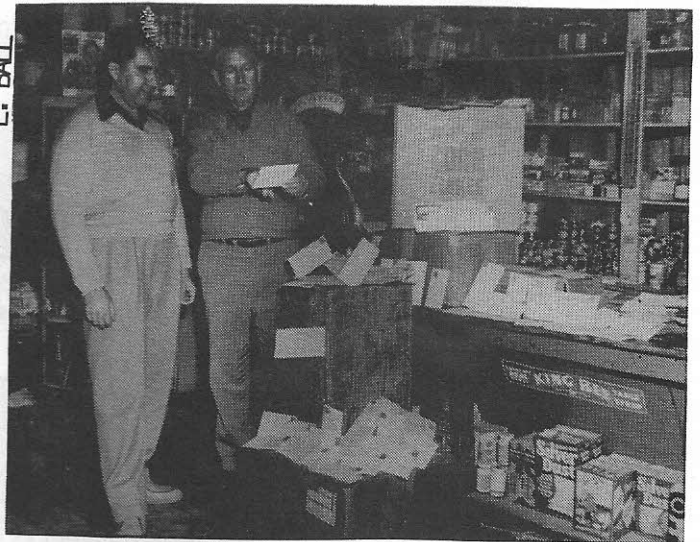
ing the act promises "1½ Hours of Magic, Cowboy Songs, Comedy, Dancing, and Hillbilly Music." (Admission was 15¢ and 25¢.) With Huddleston as master of ceremonies, the group toured the Midwest throughout the late 1930's and early 1940's. Using his new title of "Arkansas' Ambassador of Goodwill," Huddleston answered questions from the audience and described the merits of Arkansas and the Ouachita Mountains.

Through the 1940's and early 1950's, Pine Ridge continued to be a popular tourist stop, and each one of L&A's successive sponsors erected billboards along Highway 88 leading to the town; every one of them encouraged travelers to "Visit Dick Huddleston's Store in Pine Ridge, Made Famous by Lum and Abner." But by the mid-1950's, Pine Ridge was falling on hard times. Lum and Abner had left radio by that time, and the government was attempting to close all fourth-class post offices (those handling fewer than a specified number of pieces of mail). It was only through Dick Huddleston's concerned efforts that Pine Ridge's post office remained open, while neighboring post offices in such communities as Ink and Cherry Hill were put out of existence.

Huddleston's wife Nancy died in 1959, and this loss sent him into deep depression. Customers, except for an occasional curious tourist, were almost non-existent, but he continued to open his store every day out of force of habit. Ethel Ball remembers that he would often spend the whole day alone in the old store, reading or writing until closing time. He became even more depressed after his good friend Roy Garrett (father of Chester Norris Garrett; see the December 1985 Jot 'Em Down Journal) was killed in a tractor accident in early 1963.

During the summer of 1963, Huddleston began complaining of stomach pains. The doctors at first diagnosed his problem as being gall bladder trouble, but when he was operated upon, they found cancer instead. Huddleston's condition deteriorated, and he died on July 9, 1963, at the age of 80.

(Some newspapers, following their usual tradition of getting the facts wrong in their obituaries, re-



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ported that "Dick Huddleston, who portrayed Abner on the radio series of Lum and Abner, has died." Apparently, they had heard that Tuffy (Abner) Goff played Huddleston on the air, so they turned it around to mean that Huddleston was Abner. YOU figure it out.)

As has been reported in past issues of the Journal, that was almost the end of the story of the Huddleston store and Pine Ridge. Ethel didn't keep the store open full-time because of lack of customers, and she really didn't want to be burdened down with the obsolete old building anyway. So when Ralph and Dorothy McClure offered to take it and the old Huddleston house off her hands, she readily sold the properties, and the store's second life began.

It would have been very easy for Dick Huddleston to begin "puttin' on airs" or try to be something he wasn't, but he never did. To the end, he preferred to be known as the simple "Country Merchant" who loved his state and little town of Pine Ridge. No doubt, he would have been pleased with the town as it is now, for it continues the same principles he set in motion.

- Tim Hollis



E. BALL



Pine Ridge, Arkansas, celebrated its 50th Anniversary on Saturday, April 26, 1986. It was on April 26, 1936 that a delegation from Pine Ridge, led by Dick Huddleston, went to Little Rock to take part in the ceremonies that changed the name of the community's post office from "Waters" to "Pine Ridge." Those ceremonies took place on the steps of the Capitol Building. In 1986, the ceremony took place on the steps of the Jot 'Em Down Store and Museum in Pine Ridge. In 1936 Chester "Lum" Lauck, Norris "Abner" Goff and their families, the post office department, the Centennial Committee, the state government, and the townspeople were all a part of the ceremony, and they were also represented in 1986. Present on this recent occasion were Betty Redman, niece of Norris Goff; Stacy Dooling, granddaughter of Norris Goff; Tracy Bissell and Suzanne Redman, nieces of Norris Goff; Mr. & Mrs. Ode Maddox, Arkansas State Legislature; Mr. & Mrs. Paul Griffith, Montgomery County Sesquicentennial Committee & Chamber of Commerce; Clara Goss and Mr. & Mrs. J. C. Vaught, post office; Ethel Huddleston Ball and her husband Charlie Ball; Dorothy McClure, owner of the store and museum; and townspeople Willie Garrett, Nancy Chambers, Bethel and Clifford Hicks, Jeanne Allen, Zackery and Nathan Bates, Leslie, Dusty, Rex, and Ricky Dollar, Bill, Annette, Quincy, and Gretchin Hayes, and Lon and Kathy Stucker. Friends of Pine Ridge attending were Mr. & Mrs. Fred Hooper and Nelson Hoover.

Kathy Stucker, manager of the store and museum, briefly told the history of Pine Ridge, whose post office is 100 years old, and introduced those present. Ode Maddox presented to Dorothy McClure the documents declaring April 26, 1986, to be PINE RIDGE DAY in the state of Arkansas. It was also Dorothy's birthday, and she was presented with a gift of Pine Ridge stationery. Paul Griffith related how Lum and Abner radio programs often provided the only relief during a long, hard day when he was young, working in the cotton fields of northeast Arkansas. Ethel Huddleston Ball told about her father's role in the 1936 ceremony, and the excitement caused when Lum and Abner appeared with the "Pine Ridge Follies," which Dick Huddleston hosted. Stacy Dooling said that the pictures of her grandfather, plus those of her grandmother, mother, and uncle in the museum brought tears to her eyes. Before and after the ceremony, those

present toured the museum and enjoyed the birthday cake and punch while they visited.

All visitors to the museum and store that day received as a gift a sheet of the new Pine Ridge stationery, sheets of which were also sent to immediate members of the Lauck and Goff family who were unable to attend. The Zekatif Ossifers of the National Lum and Abner Society also received stationery, as did some special friends of Pine Ridge. A special anniversary edition of "Lum and Abner's 1936 Family Almanac" contains a page dedicating it to the memory of Chester Lauck and Norris Goff, and an anniversary page describing the 150th, 100th, and 50th anniversaries being celebrated in 1986.

Pine Ridge hosted Arkansas' Sesquicentennial Wagon Train at an ice cream social on Friday, May 16. The wagons arrived at 4:30 p.m. and were greeted by a group of local residents who helped set up camp.

By 6:30 over 250 wagon train members and Pine Ridge area residents, plus many from surrounding communities had gathered to visit and share the celebration. At 7 p.m., Marilyn Allen Bates and Mike Smith were married in Indian style by Chief Lone Elk of the Lumbee Indian Nation.

Two members of the wagon train who had met during the two months' trek held a mock wedding, and will be married in July. Music for the gathering was provided by Ruel Bain's band, with Don Thompson of Pine Ridge. The Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department wishes to thank the Sesquicentennial Wagon Train, the people who provided homemade ice cream and desserts, and those who donated nearly \$300 to the fund to pay for a new pump for the fire truck.

- Kathy Stucker



ODE MADDOX, KATHY STUCKER, AND DOROTHY MC CLURE AT PINE RIDGE'S FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Memories of LUM and ABNER®

HOWDY, EVERYBODY: This is Dick's Gurl, Ethel, coming in to set a spell and tell you how things are down here in Pine Ridge, Arkansas.

From the time the Lum and Abner program started until it went off the air 23 years later, I was "Dick's Gurl" and my mother was referred to as Dick's "little womern." Lum and Abner and all their lovable characters are gone now, so I guess I'm just about the tail end, although I never really had any part of the program. We lost Mose Moots (Ora Garrett) two years ago. He was the barber and the postmaster here for over thirty years. "Mose" was a character who fit right into the program.

We have many new people who have settled in our beautiful hills, but very few of the old settlers are left. I was away for many years, but I always knew I would be coming back, as this is where my roots are.

Some things here in the little village have not changed. A couple of the older houses are left. The tiny post office still stands, although it is no longer used. Dick's old store looks the same on the outside, as does the little church next to the old

cemetary; and my house on the hilltop, with a view of Grape Vine Mountain, looks down on an old barn that has been here for as long as I can remember. We still don't feel that we have to lock our doors every time we step outside.

(Of course, when I was growing up around here, we didn't have locks and never thought of locking a door when we went away for the day or night!)

My father Dick Huddleston, as most of you know, was the country merchant here from 1909 until his death in 1963. It was the only store in a radius of ten miles. This area was thickly populated during that era; everyone had large families. Being an only child, I longed for brothers and sisters. Some of these people were sharecroppers; others, like my father, owned land along the Ouachita River or in the valleys of the hills.

The one little church, the two-room schoolhouse, and Dick's store were the hub of the community. This was the setting for the Lum and Abner program. The memories I have would fill a book.

That is why the Lum and Abner program is loved even to this day. Most of us had pioneer ancestors who settled in these hills, and it was these people whom Lum and Abner portrayed. Their characters had that wonderful sense of humor, their bickerings, everyday problems, their wit and the funny original way of expressing themselves. I have been in the old store and jotted down some of their one-line expressions and sent them to Lum and Abner. To this day, I use some of them myself. They come natural.

What pleases me more than I can express in words is the way these young men like Donnie Pitchford, Tim Hollis, Rex Riffle, and Sam Brown are working to preserve these bygone days before their time. If I have contributed anything worthwhile to The Jot'Em Down Journal, it fills my heart with happiness.

I have tried to give you the time, the place, the way it was before anyone had a radio, so you can picture why Lum & Abner would choose this small village, the Dick Huddleston store, the pioneer people of these hills for their program and the fictitious "Jot 'Em Down Store."

Well, I've shore set a spell and I've rambled on, and it's exactly how I talk. I would like to write more about my father, also my mother, as I remember them and the memories they left with me. They were "Aunt Nan" and "Uncle Dick" to all the younguns, even though they were not related.

I think I'd better hang up now, and don't forget we'll all look forward to seeing you all down here in Pine Ridge next year!



E. BALL

- Ethel Huddleston Ball,
"Dick's Gurl"

LUM and ABNER In the News

REPRINTS OF PAST LUM & ABNER ARTICLES

(The following article, a walking tour of Pine Ridge, was syndicated in 1943.)

LUM and ABNER

AS THE HOME FOLKS KNOW THEM

A RAMBLING REPORTER GOES SIGHTSEEING IN

Pine Ridge, Arkansas, Where Most of the Original Characters Used in Lum and Abner Radio Programs Still Live Much as They Do in the Pine Ridge of the Air

LUM AND ABNER NOW IN THE MOVIES

By G. C. KONKLER

PINE RIDGE, Ark.—“Howdy, Everybody;” well, here we are, just as millions of radio listeners throughout America have heard the announcer say: “Down in Pine Ridge for another visit with L-U-M a-n-d A-B-N-E-R.”

But inquiry of a man, sauntering down the street, as to the whereabouts of Lum Edwards and Abner Peabody brought a stare of astonishment as the fellow replied: “Gosh, hain’t you hear-ed bout them? They left these parts years ago to go way off sommers to prattle bout the rest of us over one of them thar radio contraptions. You better go over to the store and talk to Dick. He’s the ‘ficial greeter ‘round here since so many folks bin comin pesterin.”

So to the famed Dick Huddleston, even as Lum and Abner, for ad-vice on Pine Ridge affairs. We learn that Pine Ridge is one of the new towns in Arkansas, despite the fact that it has been firmly established in radioland for several years.

Meet Dick Huddleston.

“The pioneer trading post here was named Waters after the man on whose farm the first post office was located.” And so Dick explains why the name of the century-old village was changed to Pine Ridge.

“Of course, after the boys (Lum and Abner) gave us so much publicity we received many letters asking if there really was a Pine Ridge. Then I thought it might be a good idea to change the name of our town to Pine Ridge. It would be treating the boys right since they had brought this section to public notice.”

Changed to Pine Ridge.

“We sent a petition to our Congressman, signed by all characters used in the Lum and Abner programs and fifty others around here, asking the Post Office Department to change our town’s name to Pine Ridge; telling them to inform Mr. Farley that if our request was refused he would be e-rupted by Grandpappy Spears for neglect of duty and that Lum, our justice of the peace, would sure ‘pour it on him’ in court.” That evidently had its effect for the change of name was granted.”

Dick Huddleston is 57 years old, good looking, big and strong, clean shaven, carries himself well and is an interesting talker. His voice sounds much like you hear it over your radio. In fact, when we assure you that Lum and Abner portray him to a “T” there isn’t much more to be said.

Dick Huddleston, Old Friend.

Standing around the old box stove in Dick’s store, just as Lum and Abner have pictured it to their countless listeners, we asked the genial country

storekeeper why they chose his store for their programs. “Abner’s father had been like a Daddy to me. He was in the wholesale grocery business up at Mena when I first started in business here years ago; and he always carried me through the hard times.

“Lum’s father was superintendent of a big lumber mill near here before the days of high powered cars and good roads, and boarded with us. Chet Lauck (Lum) used to come out with his father to the mill, and Tuffy Goff (Abner) called on me for some time representing his father’s wholesale house. All of us naturally got pretty well acquainted. When the boys went on the air a country store was needed so of course we were glad to help out.

To Mountains for Ideas.

“After securing their first contract on a general hookup they came out here and spent days at a time visiting among the pioneer folks. The old timers are against any progressive move so I would introduce the boys as Government agents checking up local sentiment for and against good roads. That would bring on hot arguments and helped Lum and Abner get a line on the queer sayings of these people.”

“Dick’s Gurl,” Ethel, often mentioned on the early programs, Huddleston recalled: “would write to the boys once a week relating the happenings around the store that might help.

“If an unusually striking remark was made at a dance, party, pie supper or here at the store, someone would say, ‘that’s a good one,’ and when the neighbors crowded around our radio a few evenings later they would have the unique experience of hearing that same expression come to them over the air.”

Huddleston says that business comes to a standstill in Pine Ridge every evening while the Lum and Abner program is on. The mountain folks enjoy the Lum and Abner programs because they speak a language they can understand.

Lum and Abner have a following all over the country because they speak the universal dialect of rural people and their dialogue and expressions are not extremely overdone. The dialogue and psychology is essentially the same in all hill sections of the United States; thus their act has hosts of fans in the metropolitan areas because many of the people there have come from the country districts.

Dick said that as there wasn’t anybody much around the store he would lock up and show the reporter the sights so we were soon off for a day among Lum and Abner’s friends and neighbors around Pine Ridge.

Meeting Real Characters.

“Howdy, Dick, Come in,” greeted Grandpappy Spears as we approached; and glancing around his typical mountain cabin, talked on, “I’m pretty well to do though lots of people don’t know it.” Asked by Huddleston where he got what he had to eat, he replied, “that’s an unfair question. No I never get very far from home. Go up to Mena pretty seldom; kinda jump the place—got some notes up thar at the bank.”

Tall, thin and bent, the old fellow sports a scraggly mustache, talks in a high, cracked voice and always has an old black pipe in his mouth. When he speaks his eyes sparkle, and one readily sees why he was chosen as a leading character in the famous back-mountain program.

Mose Moots’ barber shop is catty-cornered across from Dick Huddleston’s store like you saw it pictured in Lum and Abner’s Almanac. The Pine Ridge barber said he had run a barber shop and grocery here for forty years, and was still holding his own. Said he started with \$65 and still had about that much. Mose didn’t charge for his shaving by the head like most barbers—he shaves by the hour. Some time ago he began buying cream from the farmers; so needing more room for cream testing apparatus and cans, he moved his barber chair over to the front porch of his home, where he now does barbering.

Ezra Seestrunk has nine children and no telling how many grandchildren. Says he, “I’d have to take a day or two off to count ‘em. And, Dick, don’t forget to tell the man that my brother was postmaster here for 28 years before you took it over.” “Do you still cling to the old ways of doing things, Uncle Ezra?” Huddleston inquired. “Some, Dick, we make our own soap; the old woman quilts, knits stockings and socks and does a little spinning.”

Cedric Draws Crowds.

Cedric Wehunt is a big good natured boy who until the outbreak of the war lived with his mother in a little house by the side of a dusty road. Tourists often visit the home so they can afterwards boast to their friends that they met Cedric Wehunt in person. Cedric

is in the army now and is in reality taking orders from his "Uncle Sam" instead of from Lum and Abner.

Cedric has made personal appearances at fairs, theatres and other amusement spots in thirty-two states from coast to coast to satisfy the curiosity of those

who wanted a glimpse of the Jot 'em Down Store delivery boy.

Dick Runs Fishing Lodge Too.

The famous cross-roads merchant prince stopped at his store frequently during the day, making sure he wasn't losing any sales. We must see his fishing and boating lodge down the river, right at the mouth of Hole-in-the-Ground Creek and a short way off Highway 88 to make it nice and seclussy.

And on the way out there, passed the "Pine Bark Lumber Company's" dinky sawmill, run by Snake Hogan.

At the foot of the hill where we turned off the main highway, according to spry, witty and eighty-six-year-old Uncle Dow Wilhite, "Thar used to be a bear waller and deer crossing thar in the early days. One time we had a bear fighting the dogs acomin and agoin. I said, 'make them dogs git back and I'll ride him home, and punch him with a stick to make him go.' But when the time come I had to back out somehow, so I said, 'why anybody could ride him that wants to, but who the hell wants to.' Wolves, panther and wild hogs were plentiful in those days.

"Hot Springs was just a hole in the ground with water bilin' out first time I saw hit. I says to the boys, 'Let's git out of here quick; hell's less than half a mile down the road.'"

Leaving Uncle Dow and his bear waller we tramped up hill and down over the first road cut through the county, in the days when it was twelve miles from one neighbor's house to another. Pointing across an open space, Dick said: "right there's where old man Sims lived. Legend has it that he would leave home after building the morning fire and would be back in time for breakfast with ore from which he melted lead for his rifle bullets."

"I believed that story strong enough to hunt fir hit," remarked Uncle Dow. "Some folks around here mighty nigh lost their crops lookin' fir old man Sims' lead mine."

Down the trail, edging steep embankments along the river, around briar patches and vine-matted wilderness; little gorges and waterfalls in the river below; all very picturesque and beautiful.

A broad, mile long eddy, up and down the river, free from rushing waters, offers boating and fishing. And the romantic-minded will delight in telling the folks back home that they idled along the Ouachita river near Pine Ridge in a boat named Lum and Abner, Squire Skimp, Cedric Weehunt or Grandpappy Spears.

Back to the business center of Pine Ridge where we meet Dick's Gurl, in overalls and jumper jacket, painting road signs for guiding tourists to the fishing lodge.

Seeing Dick's Store.

And now for a look inside Dick Huddleston's store. He sells about everything from lamp wicks and wash kettles to ladies' suits, mule jewelry and plow points.

In a dusty showcase back by the big box stove one sees a large photo of Lum and Abner in make-up as they looked when they first broadcasted from Hot Springs, early in their radio career, autographed: "To Our Good Friend, Dick. Sincerely yours, Lum and Abner." Tubs of eggs blockaded the aisles. A scrawny cat wanders in at the open door and Dick reaches into the cheese case for scraps for his kitty.

Across the front of the store a more modern glass display case, three feet high, is filled with Lum and Abner souvenirs—cob pipes, calendars, pottery, more photographs of the famous radio team, pictures of Dick Huddleston's store and other Pine Ridge views.

Pine Ridge Modernizes.

But the old Pine Ridge portrayed by Lum and Abner is slowly passing. Fill-

ing stations replace hitchcracks, new white buildings crowd out weather-beaten old stores and homes. The visitors' register at Dick's store shows a weekly average of 300 Lum and Abner fans from all over the nation visit Pine Ridge. Modern concrete bridges are out-dating the footlog, the swinging bridge and the winding creek bed crossings. Even the speech and the quaint ways of the settlers will change with the coming of those of the world beyond the mountains.

The land of Lum and Abner centers around Pine Ridge where these two country storekeepers are supposed to run the Jot 'em Down General Store in neighborly competition with their good friend and advisor, Dick Huddleston, who actually conducts a crossroads store in the real Pine Ridge. The surrounding country, including Cherry Hill, Oden, Norman, Mt. Ida and Mena, referred to as the "County Seat," get frequent mention. Grandpappy Spears, Squire Skimp, Cedric Weehunt, Evilener and other characters on the Lum and Abner programs are just plain mountain folks whom Lum and Abner have introduced to the world at large.



-----Advertisement-----

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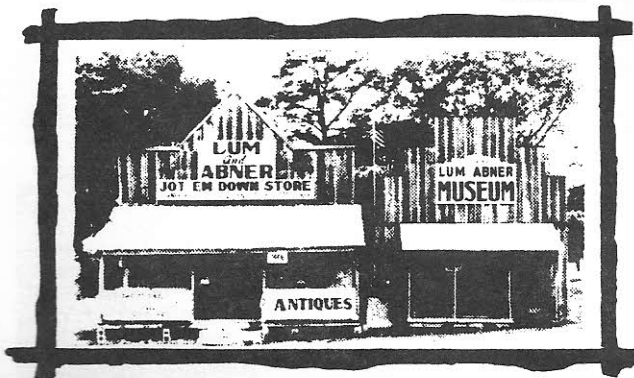
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DICK HUDDLESTON

On The Air



An accepted fact is that the fictional Dick Huddleston was a part of the Lum and Abner broadcasts from the earliest days on. At one time, Chet Lauck stated that Huddleston was the first character other than L&A themselves to be added to the cast; however, at another time, he cited Grandpappy Spears as having that distinction. At any rate, it seems fairly certain that Huddleston was the first character other than Abner to be played by Tuffy Goff.

To perform the role called for no great vocal tricks on Goff's part: in character as Dick Huddleston, he simply spoke in his natural voice. According to Ethel Huddleston Ball, Goff's performance was almost indistinguishable from her father's actual vocal qualities. Unfortunately, we have been unable to locate any recordings of the real-life Dick Huddleston.

In the early days of the show, Dick was used in the scripts much as he existed in real life. Memorabilia from this period indicates that many episodes took place in his store, where Lum, Abner, and the other Pine Ridge citizens would sit around and discuss current events. Around 1933, when L&A opened their own Jot 'Em Down Store, Dick began to be used more as a visitor to them, rather than the other way around. In one of the only two 1933 episodes that are known to exist on tape, Dick comes over to visit L&A at the Pine Ridge Motor Company (apparently the Jot 'Em Down Store has not yet opened), and he good-naturedly kids Lum about the old fellows' current predicament, catching an escaped circus lion (NOT Ervin; that came later).

As the 1930's progressed, Dick's character was used less frequently. According to some interviews with Lauck and Goff, they found it difficult to write him into the scripts because of his superior intelligence. As Lauck explained, if Huddleston had been present, many of their most comical misadventures would never have taken place; Dick would have explained to L&A that what they were trying to do was illegal (such as opening their own bank or post office) or impossible (building a rocket ship to Mars). Therefore, Chet and Tuffy kept him out of the stories until they were in so deep that there was no other hope. At these times, it was often Dick who would contact the proper authorities and save L&A's skins.

Because Dick Huddleston was an actual, living person, Lauck and Goff had to be very particular about how he was portrayed on the show. He could not have any peculiar or derogatory characteristics, such as Lum's obsession with becoming a big shot, or Abner's sometimes astonishing denseness. Dick was at all times wise, understanding, good-natured, and friendly to an extreme, which made him very likeable, but not very funny.

By 1941, when Roz Rogers began writing the L&A scripts instead of Chet & Tuffy, the Huddleston character was almost non-existent. He was referred to often, as in "Miz Pomeroy, why don't ye git all these groceries over at Dick Huddleston's store? He keeps good stuff", but he rarely appeared in person. In fact, between 1941 and 1950, he only had a major role in three L&A stories, and one of those was even a re-written version of an earlier tale.

In February 1945, Lum & Abner investigated an abandoned silver mine on Old Piney Mountain, and were promptly trapped by a cave-in. Dick Huddleston led the search party that eventually rescued them. According to the 1937 Lum and Abner Almanac, this story



DICK HUDDLESTON AS HE WAS DRAWN FOR
THE 1936 LUM AND ABNER ALMANAC

had been performed once before, in October 1936. The other two stories in which Huddleston was involved concerned Abner running against Ezra Seestrunk for mayor (Autumn 1945) and L&A operating the Mountain View Hotel and becoming involved with jewel thieves (Summer 1946). The formats of these two stories lead us to believe that they may have also been remakes of 1930's scripts.

Of course, the half-hour L&A shows in 1948-50 largely ignored Huddleston, just as they ignored most of the characterizations that had been so carefully built up since 1931. When the 15 - minute episodes resumed in February 1953, the proper characterizations were reinstated, as was Dick Huddleston. However, Dick was now playing a totally new role: as program host, much like the narrator in "Our Town." At the beginning of each episode, he brought the listeners up to date on the continuing storyline, with appropriate comments ("Well, that's Abner for you"). He never appeared in the stories themselves, remaining more like an omnipotent observer of the action.

And so ends the on-the-air career of Dick Huddleston as played by Norris Goff. Because it is the shows from the 1940's, when he was being used less frequently, that were recorded and are heard the most often, many people do not realize the major role in Lum & Abner history that this real-life character played, but perhaps this article has set the record straight. As Dick himself might say, "By jacks, that's fine."

- Tim Hollis



"TURN ON THE RADIO"

Life begins each Monday night
 When seven-thirty heaves in sight.
 Snap the switch on...spin the dial
 Cast your cares off, start to smile.
 Bar the doorways, grab a chair
 LUM AND ABNER'S ON THE AIR.

- Published in The Pine Ridge News, Spring 1936



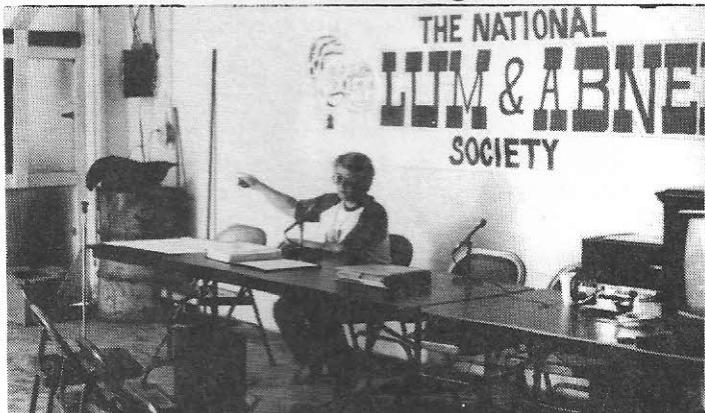
E. BALL

FISHING BOATS ON THE OUACHITA RIVER NEAR DICK HUDDLESTON'S FISHING LODGE, CIRCA 1936



THE NATIONAL
LUM & ABNER
SOCIETY
Convention

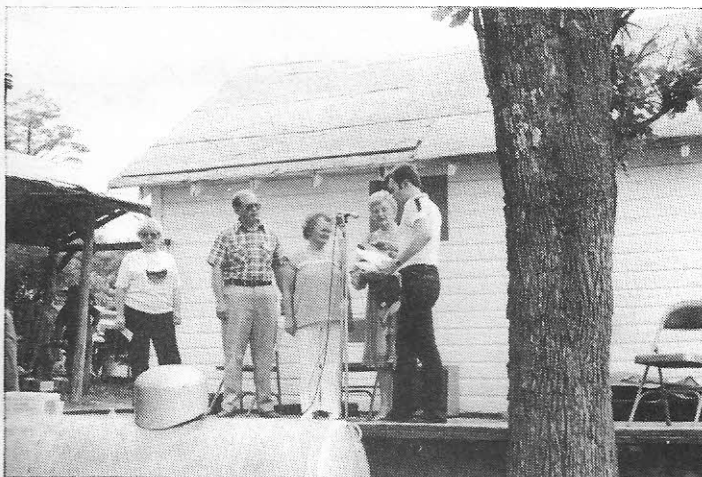
1986



KATHY STUCKER POINTS OUT SOME OF HER PINE RIDGE HISTORY DISCOVERIES



ETHEL HUDDLESTON BALL KEEPS THE AUDIENCE SPELLBOUND WITH HER ANECDOTES



L TO R: KATHY STUCKER, SAM BROWN, DOROTHY MC CLURE, ETHEL BALL, AND DONNIE PITCHFORD (PRESENTING THE LUM AND ABNER MEMORIAL AWARDS)

Once again, the Zekatif Ossifers and members of the NLAS gathered in Pine Ridge on June 14 & 15 for the Second Annual Convention. People came from all points to be present, and (on Sunday, especially) filled the tiny community to overflowing.

Activities got off to a great start on Saturday when Kathy Stucker gave a talk on her findings regarding Pine Ridge's history, and illustrated her lecture with a map showing the town as it was in the early days as compared with its current appearance. It was quite an experience seeing the difference between the two.

Then came a very special event. Shortly before his recent hospitalization, Roz Rogers wrote a special Lum & Abner script commemorating Pine Ridge's 50th Anniversary. It had its premiere performance at the Convention, as the first NEW Lum & Abner material since 1955. The cast included our multivoiced Prez, Uncle Donnie, as both Lum and Abner, Zec Sec Tim Hollis as Cedric (yes mom), and our old friend Clarence Hartzell (via tape, as he was unable to be present) as Ben Withers. In the skit, Ben managed to thoroughly irritate Lum (as usual) by tying up the party line while Mr. Edwards was waiting on an "importance call" from the convention committee.

After the skit, everyone headed for the picnic tables for some good ole country cookin', courtesy of the ladies of Pine Ridge and the Rural Volunteer Fire Department. During the afternoon, there was a special presentation: in 1983, L&A were elected to the National Association of Broadcasters' Radio Hall Of Fame, but for three years the plaque has remained in a Little Rock radio station. At long last, the Zekatif Ossifers presented it to Chet Lauck Jr. in memory of his famous father. (The plaque will be returned to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where it will hang in their broadcasting studio.) A Lum & Abner video tape was awarded to Russell Stiffler of Anamosa, Iowa, for being the member who came the longest distance to be present.

On Sunday, things started rolling with Ruel Bain's band providing appropriate music. Then came a speech from Ethel Huddleston Ball, who dedicated the day to her father Dick and told a little about his efforts in getting the town of Waters changed to Pine Ridge. Afterwards, Prez Pitchford presented the Second Annual Lum & Abner Memorial Awards: this year, the recipients were Mrs. Ball and Dorothy McClure (who accepted on behalf of the staff of the L&A Museum). Later, there was a talk by Malvin Mourton, a member of a quartet that once performed all over Arkansas, and for whom that classic song was written, "I Pine For The Pines In Old Pine Ridge." Then, it was time for everyone to say "so long" and head for home; but start making plans now to be in Pine Ridge again on June 20 & 21, 1987!!

The Secretary's Desk

(During the month of June, our good friend Roz Rogers (Lum and Abner's writer from 1941 on) underwent heart bypass surgery at University Hospital in San Diego. During the convention, everyone present signed a get-well card for Mr. Rogers. He is now home and recovering nicely. While still in the hospital, he sent the following message to the members of the NLAS.)

Deer Fokes and Gentle Friends:

You ain't got no idys how much cheer you give this ol man on his recent get sickedness. Sorry I missed the convention, but gettin that get-well card with all them warm, smiling faces and siganatures almost made it might nigh worth it.

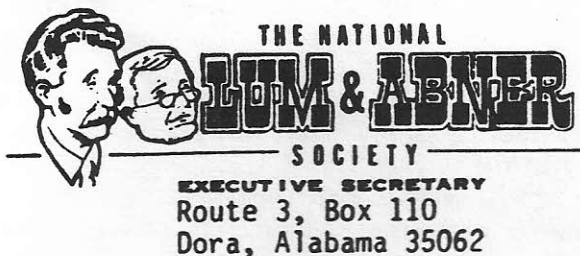
Seems like when a feller is given so much luv and frenship he orter give somethin back in return. Now I reckon the thing I have most of ter giv is good advice an ole sayins, so I'm goin to whomp one fer you now...an the most talked about subjeck 'pears to be sickness, so get set fokes, here it comes... "The best thing a body can do about sickness is to not get it!"

You all stick to that advice and I'll garantee you'll all have a long happy life...which is zackly what I wish fer every one of you.

My very best to you all.

Old Roz Rogers

(For Mr. Rogers, the members and Zekatif Ossifers of the NLAS wish a very speedy recovery!)



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