

June 1987

FROM THE
JOT 'EM DOWN STORE
IN PINE RIDGE...

A VISIT WITH LUM



TODAY
AND EACH WEEKDAY THIS WEEK ON THE
FOLLOWING STATIONS:

- KARK-TV—7:25 A.M.
- KTHV—5:25 P.M.
- KFSA-TV—7:25 A.M. and 5:55 P.M.
- KTVE—10:25 P.M.
- KSLA-TV—10:20 P.M.
- KTBS-TV—7:20 A.M.
- KNOE-TV—5:40 P.M.
- WMCT—12:55 P.M.

HEAR LUM ON RADIO, TOO . . .

Check local listings for time and station

Ad Paid for By Chester Lauck

ORIGINAL ADVERTISEMENT APPEARING IN THE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT, OCTOBER 30, 1962
(COURTESY OF UALR ARCHIVES)

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

JUNE 1987

In This Issue:

THE NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY

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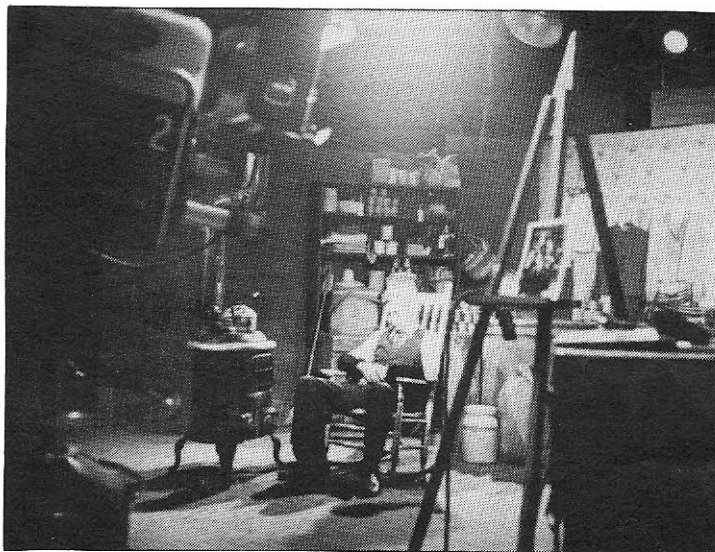
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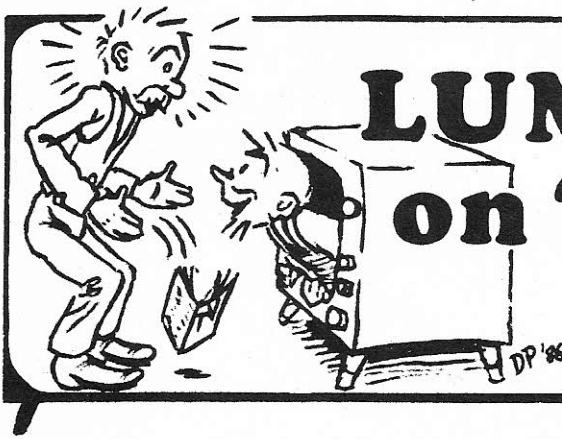
COVER: The RKO Palace Theatre
 in Cleveland, Ohio, during Lum
 and Abner's giant stage show
 there in 1936; see related story
 on page 6. (Photo courtesy of
 Joe Riddle)

LUM AND ABNER is a registered
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BEHIND THE SCENES ON THE SET OF "A VISIT
 WITH LUM" (COURTESY OF UALR ARCHIVES)



LUM and ABNER[®] on TELEVISION?

Part 4 of a Series

After the late 1950s' flurry of activity involving Chet Lauck promoting Conoco Oil (see our last issue) things began to slow down a bit. A letter from one Mr. Bill Lawrence, dated April 11, 1960, gives us the next clue in the progression of L&A on television.

About the time the "Lum" Conoco commercials ended their run, Mr. Lawrence began considering using the Pine Ridge characters in commercials for other clients. Initially, he had trouble finding writers for the proposed spots, but according to his letter, "as soon as I pulled Roz Rogers into the picture, it began to jell." Roz prepared two sample scripts for imaginary products; since the idea was for these spots to be animated cartoons, he was able to let his imagination run rampant while writing them.

The first spot opens with L&A chugging along in their "ancient automobile." They are passed by Squire Skimp in his "new Ajax convertible." L&A can't understand what Squire sees in his new car, while theirs literally falls apart as they talk. (Think about it: had this commercial actually been produced, would any potential sponsor have WANTED their product associated with Squire Skimp?) Roz's script is full

of typical cartoon gags, such as Squire driving his car UNDERNEATH L&A's, the ancient auto running head-long into a cow and bouncing backwards, while the cow continues on undisturbed, and Lum & Abner finally being blown entirely out of their car by an explosion at the end of the commercial.

In the second spot, for "Zud Soap Powder" (Duz spelled backwards?), Lum & Abner refuse to let their checker game be interrupted by a phoned-in grocery order from Miz Seestrunk. It ends with Lum grabbing a Zud Soap Powder advertising card and holding it up to the telephone's mouthpiece for Miz Seestrunk to read.

Mr. Lawrence's letter indicates that he wanted Lauck and Goff to record their respective lines separately, and they would subsequently be edited together as a reference for the animators. Follow-up correspondence shows that Lauck did indeed record and mail Lum's lines, but there is no concrete evidence that Goff ever actually recorded his. At any rate, the idea for these animated commercials must have eventually been dropped; Mr. Lawrence stated that his cartoonists were already at work on the storyboards and model sheets, but we have never been able to find any of these.

Shortly thereafter, the idea resurfaced of casting a "Lum and Abner" TV series with new actors, as had been suggested back in 1957 after the success of the TV version of "Amos 'n' Andy." Betty Boyle recalls that about this time Buddy Ebsen was tested for the role of Lum, but apparently this project went nowhere. The actors that were finally selected were Arthur Hunnicutt (an actual Arkansas native) and Edgar Buchanan, whose "Petticoat Junction" years were still some time ahead. According to a 1968 Chet Lauck interview, Hunnicutt was Lum, while Buchanan essayed the role of Abner. The pilot film was produced by Four Star Television, a company whose best-remembered series was "The Big Valley" (which coincidentally starred Barbara Stanwyck, who in turn had made guest appearances on the Lum & Abner radio shows at least twice during the 1940s; will it never end?).

Unlike most of the other L&A TV projects, this one was supervised by Norris Goff instead of Lauck. In a typically humorous letter from Tuffy to Chet, dated February 20, 1962, Goff reports that the pilot



UALR ARCHIVES

SOMETIME IN THE LATE 1950S CHET LAUCK APPEARED ON THE AMES BROTHERS' SYNDICATED SERIES. NO FURTHER INFORMATION IS KNOWN.

film has been completed, but "before you look at the print I will tell you that you won't like it." Goff says, "I think I hammered on Hunnicutt and Buchanan so much trying to get them to give the portrayal of Lum & Abner as I saw them that they became ill at ease and too mechanical." He concludes, "I would appreciate any comments that you would like to make after viewing the picture. Please do not call me too many nasty names, as I am old and weak and do not like to be shouted at."

But what ever became of the completed pilot film? We have run into nothing but dead ends in trying to locate a print of it, if indeed one survives at all. Even phone calls to Four Star Television itself turned up nothing, as no one remains with the company who was there in 1962. So, the Hunnicutt/Buchanan "Lum and Abner" film remains one of those artifacts that probably lies rotting in some film vault somewhere (and according to Roz Rogers, who did NOT write the script for it, that's probably the fate it deserves).

At this point, plans to put Lum and Abner back together for the small screen faded to black, and Lauck and Goff went back to their individual projects, at least for the time being.

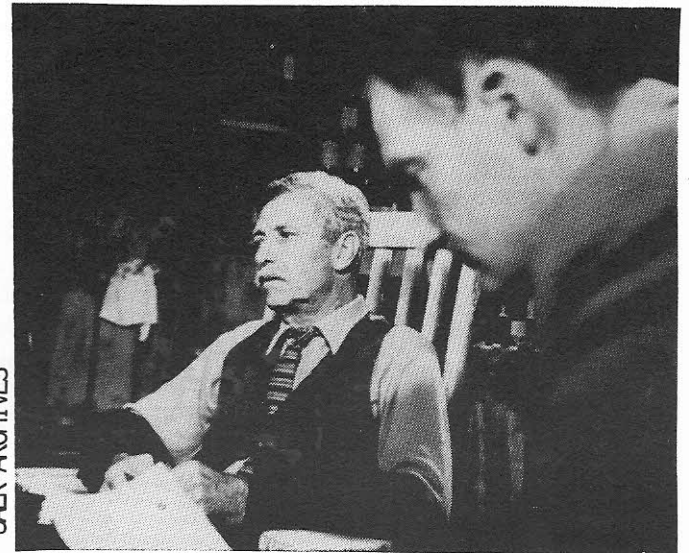
Chet Lauck brought Lum back to the airwaves to campaign for the November 6, 1962, re-election of U.S. Senator Bill Fulbright (D-Ark). Before I dive into a discussion of the political spots known as "A Visit With Lum," allow me to clarify the position of the NLAS by stating a few facts. First of all, it is no secret that Sen. Fulbright has been referred to in his time as "controversial." Secondly, it is therefore understandable that "Lum" faced some criticism for taking a stand for such a candidate (imagine a popular TV star of today campaigning in character on a candidate's behalf). Lastly, let us acknowledge that Mr. Lauck received no payment for his services, but rather appeared on behalf of a close personal friend and fraternity brother, Bill Fulbright (Chet was living in Texas at this time and therefore could not even vote for Fulbright). The position of the NLAS is to dwell on "Lum's" performance, not to recall political feelings of another era.

The spots appeared on both radio and television. Of the radio versions we know nothing at all, but there were five television spots, of which four kinescopes (filmed copies shot from a TV monitor) are known to exist. The quality of the kinescopes is rather "muddy," but luckily we have located some excellent photos taken behind the scenes on the TV studio set, and we are presenting them here for your enjoyment. We have been unable to identify the man wearing a suit and tie who appears with Lum in these photos, but he may have been the spots' director or producer.

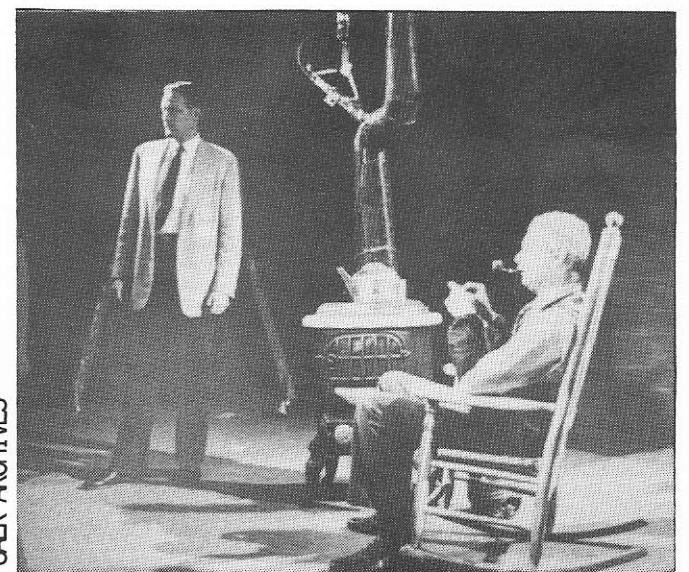
Among the Arkansas TV stations airing the spots: Channel 11 (Little Rock), Channel 6 (Texarkana), Channel 10 (El Dorado), Channel 5 (Ft. Smith), and Channel



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9 (Hot Springs); a few Louisiana channels, 3 and 12 (Shreveport); as well as Channel 5 (Memphis). The times varied greatly, but the programs aired October 30 through November 5, 1962. In addition, a November 5 ad promotes a program called "Election Eve With Lum," which is presumably a separate broadcast, since the ad also plugs the final "Visit With Lum" as an additional program. Unfortunately, we have no more information on "Election Eve With Lum," and do not know if this was a special live event or prerecorded.

But enough "prittle-prattle"...on to the performances of our old friend Lum! Each four-minute spot begins with a photo of Lum and Abner depicting Abner grinding coffee (actually an 8 x 10 still from PARTNERS IN TIME). An organ theme in the same vein as the L&A radio themes plays under an announcer, who says, "BACK IN THE EARLY THIRTIES, THERE EMERGED FROM THE HILLS OF ARKANSAS TWO LOVABLE OLD CHARACTERS WHO ENDEARED THEMSELVES TO ALL AMERICA ... LUM AND ABNER. THEIR FOLKSY HUMOR AND BACKWOODS PHILOSOPHY CAUGHT THE FANCY OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, AND 'LUM AND ABNER' BECAME A HOUSEHOLD WORD." At this point, we dissolve to a drawing of Pine Ridge from the 1936 Almanac, as the announcer continues: "PINE RIDGE, POPULATION 85, BECAME AS WELL-KNOWN AS ANY CITY IN OUR LAND. ONCE AGAIN, FEATURING CHET LAUCK, WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT 'A VISIT WITH LUM.'"

Lum appears in the Jot 'Em Down Store, smoking a pipe and rocking in his chair. It looks as though Chet Lauck is using very little makeup by this time, being the approximate age of the character Lum. Gone is the Lum wig of the RKO films, with its phoney receding hairline; it is replaced here by Chet's distinguished graying hair. He is well in character, with his voice a bit deeper, but showing only a hint of the waver he would develop in his later years.

The first spot is primarily the "politics" talk, which we will not delve into. Lum closes with this statement: "It's downright easy to criticize what the other feller's a-doin' in this ole troubled world of ours. The trouble is they's too many folks goin' around sayin' 'the trouble is.'" Each spot ends with a photo of Fulbright, with Lum's voice-over: "I granies, let's re-elect Bill Fulbright...agin!"

In the second existing spot, Lum discusses playing "fly" (a game in which the players put down one nickel each, the winner being the first person whose nickel is landed on by a fly); a slow game, since L&A have "modernized" the store by adding screen doors. This slow game gives Lum time to muse over improvements in the state of Arkansas, and he mentions that he and Abner now sell "light bulbs, televisions, and them new electric pop-up toasters," and that residents of Arkansas no longer have to eat "fast meat" or "Hoover chickens" (rabbits). Ezra Seestrunk is mentioned once. Lum ends this visit with, "I can't help but think about a feller I voted fer oncet...he shook my hand before the election, and my confidence after."

Spot #3 offers a jarring moment when Lum tells us

a story about Pine Ridge's local blacksmith, LUKE SPEARS (yes, that's what "Mr. Eddards" says! I guess Caleb Weehunt "re-tired" hisself)!!! Lum tells us that Luke had fashioned a red-hot horseshoe and put it aside. Cedric Weehunt (who may have wondered what Luke Spears was doing in his papa's business instead of running his lunchroom where Cedric's beloved pinball machine resides) approached the hot horseshoe, picked it up to inspect it, then threw it down quickly, stomping it and blowing his blistered fingers, amid the laughter of those standing by. Luke asked, "Kinda hot, ain't it, Cedric?" To which Cedric replied, "No mom, it just don't take me long to look at a horseshoe!" Interestingly, Lum shifts to his Cedric voice on-camera here. Another anecdote: Cedric asked the Widder Abernathy if she had ever seen Halley's Comet. She replied that she had, but only from a distance.



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The final available spot begins with Lum stacking canned goods, reflecting on "labels" and making an analogy to political "labels"! Lum relates an occasion when Widder Abernathy discovered cat food in a can labeled "pork & beans," proving Lum's point: don't trust a label ... "the proof of the puddin's in the eatin'." (Sister Simpson is also mentioned briefly.) Lum challenges the voters to study the candidates: "Rip off the label an' look into the can."

It seems worth noting that these spots and their immediate ancestors, the "Lum" TV commercials for Conoco, present the outcome of many years' evolution of Lum's character. During the "golden age" of the L&A radio series, Lum was presented as no more intelligent than Abner...only he thought he was, and this caused them to get into countless humorous predicaments. By the time of the half-hour L&A series, Lum was constantly cracking inside jokes that in the old days he would not even have understood. ABNER (playing checkers): "I doggies, it took me some doin', but I finally got me a king." LUM: "Yeah, now you know how Princess Elizabeth feels." AUDIENCE: "Ha ha ha."

The 1953-54 L&A radio shows reinstated Lum's former characterization, but then again they were large-

ly using re-written 1930s & 40s scripts. In the Conoco ads and the "Visit With Lum" spots, Lum Edwards has emerged as almost a clone of Will Rogers: warmly humorous, making profound statements in his homespun way ... all in all, actually closer to Chet Lauck's true personality. It is difficult to imagine the general public listening to the original "Lum" character for advice on what petroleum products to use in their cars, or what political candidates to vote for. But Lum's new personality certainly did not damage the character ... in fact, it gave him a new lease on life in these TV appearances!

Seeing Chet Lauck in such fine form as Lum causes me to imagine a 1960s television series reuniting Lauck & Goff as Lum and Abner. Handled properly, it could have been a classic, especially considering the overwhelming success of that period's rural programs such as "The Andy Griffith Show," "The Beverly Hillbillies," "Petticoat Junction," "Green Acres," "Gomer Pyle," etc., most of which bear interesting similarities to Lum and Abner (see the October 1984 Jot'Em Down Journal for a discussion). In fact, the next step our two old friends took toward TV was directly connected to some of these "corncoms," as TV historians refer to them, but that story will have to wait until our next issue!

- D. Pitchford



L AND A MUSEUM

THE SUIT LAUCK WORE IN "A VISIT WITH LUM" IS NOW ON DISPLAY IN THE L&A MUSEUM

S.O.S. for N.L.A.S.

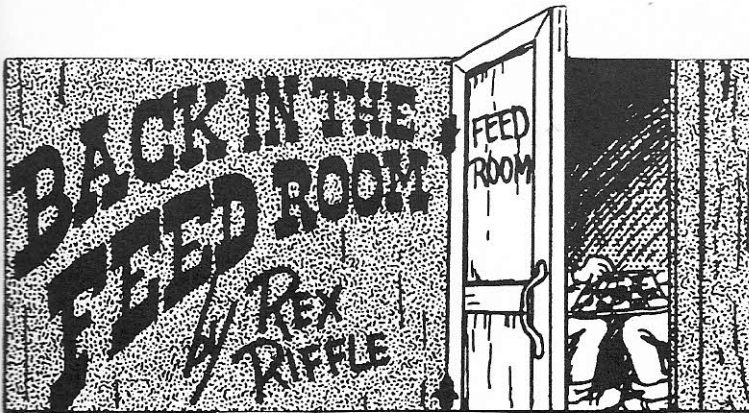
The NIAS has had quite a few expenses of late, and to help ease some of the financial strain we are again making available some of our exclusive NIAS merchandise, for those of you who missed it the first time around.

First, our two 60-minute cassettes, which are \$3.00 each: The Official NIAS Cassette features excerpts from the best L&A shows, introduced by the Zekatif Ossifers. The NIAS Tribute To Clarence Hartzell traces the career of "Doc Withers," with some of his present-day recollections of his years with Lum & Abner.

Our NIAS Pins are still available in two styles: ivory with the NIAS logo in black, and the other with a black-and-white photo of L&A examining their cash register. These pins sell for \$1.50 each.

For those who like to do their Christmas shopping early, we have Uncle Donnie's signed and numbered prints of his painting FOLLER THE EAST STAR, which originally appeared as the cover of the December 1984 Jot'Em Down Journal. These are \$3.00.

More NIAS merchandise is in the planning stages, and should be offered later this year. Send orders to the Executive Secretary, Route 3, Box 110, Dora, AL 35062.



The following interesting anecdote was reported in the Racine (Wisconsin) Journal-Times on May 24, 1937:

"Proud as a peacock, Lum, partner of Abner, strutted into the NBC Hollywood studios wearing a brand new cracked linen tennis outfit, with shirt and trousers and even belt matching. 'Isn't that stunning,' cooed pretty Velma McCall, actress-secretary. 'That's the kind of material we used to make towels out of at school!' Lum probably never will wear the suit again."

(Contributed by Jerry Hausner)



Memories of **LUM and ABNER®**

(In this issue's installment of "Memories of Lum and Abner," we present a double feature, representing a difference of approximately 10 years in the story of L&A. First, Jerry Hausner tells about his stage appearance with the boys in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1936.)

About my appearance with Lum and Abner at the Palace Theatre ... I really don't remember much about it, except that Keith's Palace was a real show place: satin brocade walls, crystal chandeliers in the lobby, which also featured a very large oval rug, woven in Belgium ... Brussels, I think. The lobby walls were decorated with a number of large original paintings by the famous artist Corot (1796-1895); all museum pieces, in ornate gold handcarved frames. It was truly a Palace! There were only four or five theatres in the country of that quality: one was in Brooklyn, New York, one in Rochester, New York, and the Memorial Theatre in Boston. I believe they no longer exist, but the Cleveland Palace has recently been restored.

I don't know if the backstage still retains its special atmosphere of those days, when a doorman in full uniform greeted the performers and took their luggage into the Green Room, which was furnished in French furniture. The dressing rooms were two-room suites with private showers, full-length mirrors, etc. There was a fully-equipped stainless steel

kitchen, and a nursery for performers who traveled with their families.

Our act was a simple affair. Lum and Abner had a set painted to represent the Jot 'Em Down Store, and they did fifteen minutes of their choice material, after which I came out and killed ten minutes with a routine of stand-up jokes, which gave them time to take off their makeup and change clothes. When I finally said to the audience, "Now, how would you like to see those two old fellers as they really are?" there was a burst of applause, and when those two handsome young men walked out in front of the curtain, people gave them a standing ovation! That was spontaneous, and NOT encouraged by applause signs such as those used in the TV studios today, or the canned laughter dubbed in to TV shows.

Yes, Lum and Abner were loved by their audiences in theatres and county and state fairs, as well as on the radio!

- JERRY HAUSNER

(Next, Mrs. Elsie Mae Emerson relates how she and her late husband, Ralph...Lum and Abner's organist from 1945-48...came to write what became the permanent L&A theme song, "Down On The Old Party Line." But first a little background: from 1941 to 1945, L&A's original theme, "Eleanor," was replaced by a new tune, "Evalena," written by their current organist, the late Sybil Chism Bock. When she left the show, "Eleanor" was resumed as the theme. Mrs. Emerson's story picks up at this point:)

ASCAP was having a fight with the radio industry at that time, which covered the original theme used on the show, "Eleanor." So Ralph and I had to come up with a theme that could be used on the air, but would be similar to "Eleanor."

We stayed up all night and wrote the new theme. We tried to write a melody that would sound similar, so the listeners would not be aware of a change. It was copyrighted under the title "Today and Forever" before we wrote the lyrics to it. We sold the music to Lum and Abner at the time it was copyrighted...it was then protected and could not be used other than as the theme for their show.

(The Emersons' melody was used on the program from sometime in 1946 on...after Ralph Emerson's untimely death in April 1948, Mrs. Emerson took over as organist until the half-hour version of the show began that fall. From 1948 to 1950, the tune was played each week by the orchestra, and when L&A began a new series of 15-minute shows in 1953, Mrs. Emerson returned to the keyboard to record the theme once



UCLR ARCHIVES



E.M. EMERSON

more, and it was used for the remainder of that transcribed series. The lyrics are rarely, if ever, heard, but through the courtesy of Mrs. Emerson, here they are:)

"DOWN ON THE OLD PARTY LINE"

(Introduction:)

When you hear the music of the song that is to follow,

Then you'll know you've found the place, our favorite sleepy hollow....

(Melody:)

A town that is known by three rings on the phone,
It's our friends on the Old Party Line;
Lum and Abner greet you,
Always there to meet you,
You're sure to have a good time...

(SPOKEN: I bound you/Fine/I doggies)

So tune in your phone to some real folks at home,
Mark the time so you'll sure listen in;
Build yourself a dream bridge,
Listen in to Pine Ridge,
Down on the Old Party Line.

- ELSIE MAE EMERSON



MOUSEY'S CORNER

(The following poem was written especially for the 1986 National Lum and Abner Society Convention. This is its first appearance in print.)

"ODE TO PINE RIDGE"

We salute thee, Pine Ridge,
A gem of a town.
You grew up from nought
To a town of renown.
We salute all your people
Who work hard each day,
Who plow the green fields
And earn their just pay.
You encourage your young
To read and to write,
But yet you find time
To go fly your kite.
On Sundays you send
All your kids to church
To make sure they won't stray,
Or slip, slide, or lurch.
You keep up on all
The hot gossip and news
On the old party line
Whenever you choose.
You lend your help free
To any in need,
With cheering-up words
And good-hearted deeds.
Who are these fine folk
Who built this fine place?
Well, I'll name you some names
Just to make a strong case.
There's Grandpappy Spears
And Huddleston (Dick);
There's Marshal Ben Withers
And friendly Cedric.
There's sly Squire Skimp
And Pomeroy (Earl)
And Abner's good womern
And their little Pearl.
There's Luke Spears and Mose Moots,
And a lot of others...
Including the musical
MacMillan Brothers.
There's Ezra Seestrunk
And Ulysses too,
And Sister Simpson
To name just a few.
And of course there is Lum,
Not to mention Abner.
Now don't those fond names
Just reach out and grabyer?
And so, faithful friends,
Who've all gathered here,
We thank you for coming...
Come back next year.



- ROSWELL ROGERS



THE NATIONAL
LUM & ABNER
 SOCIETY



Convention



The days are clicking off toward the annual National Lum and Abner Society Convention, which is to be held on June 20 & 21 this year. There have been some changes in our traditional way of doing things, which we will get into in just a minute.

We have a very special guest scheduled for this year. He is Mr. JERRY HAUSNER, a well-known Hollywood character actor, whose face and voice will be familiar to you even if his name is not. He has one of the longest associations with Lum & Abner of any living person, beginning his work with them in 1933. He played more different parts on their show than any other actor outside of Chet & Tuffy themselves; among his memorable L&A roles are Prince Ali Kush, the phoney Hindu miracle man; J.W. Tiffin; the baby who was left with Lum & Abner, and later, the baby's father, Mr. Finley; Jimmy Diamond, Bob Hope's fictional manager; and others. During the 1930's he played the part of a local Pine Ridge crook, Spud Gandel, and a highlight of the Convention will be when he helps recreate an original Spud Gandel script that has not been heard since it was originally performed on June 14, 1937. In addition, he was the ghost writer on the 1936 Lum and Abner Almanac and the Jot 'Em Down Store Catalogue, Calendar, and Party Book (1939). His late wife Velma was Lum & Abner's secretary and office manager from 1936-46. (Also see his article in this issue's "Memories of L&A.")

Mr. Hausner's non-Lum & Abner credits are just as impressive. He has appeared in more radio shows and motion pictures than anyone can count (including himself), but among them are the "Big Town" and "Sam Spade" radio series, as well as movies with Bob Hope, Martin & Lewis, and many others. On television, he appeared on "I Love Lucy" for 2½ years as Ricky Ricardo's agent, and made guest appearances on numerous other series (he had a semi-regular role as the milkman on "The Dick Van Dyke Show"). He was one of the creators of cartoon character Mr. Magoo, and provided the voice of Magoo's lunkheaded nephew Waldo. Mr. Hausner was most recently seen in 1985, in the highly dramatic Kirk Douglas TV-movie "Amos."

**** SPECIAL GUEST ****

**JERRY
 HAUSNER**



Spud Gandel

As always, the Convention activities will begin in Pine Ridge on Saturday morning, although plans are not yet definite about just what will be going on at that time. Lunch, courtesy of the ladies of Pine Ridge, will be served to benefit the Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department.

The main event of the weekend will be Saturday night. Beginning at 5:00 p.m., the NLAS will meet at the Holland House Restaurant in Mena, located on Highway 71, just south of town. This is where Mr. Hausner's part of the program will begin with an audio and video retrospective of his long career. Also featured will be recorded messages from several of our Honorary Members who are unable to be present: already such distinguished personages as Bobs Watson (of DREAMING OUT LOUD) and Grandpa Jones have provided us with tapes. (Honorary Members: if you have not yet sent in your tape, please do so soon!)

Dinner at the restaurant will be buffet style, with the price per person ranging from \$6.00 to \$10.00 (depending on what you select), for all you can eat; a very good bargain in light of similar meals at other organizations' conventions. The NLAS program at the restaurant will last until approximately 9:00 p.m.

On Sunday, the Lum & Abner Day festivities will commence back in Pine Ridge, at which the NLAS always lends moral support. The food and music are always great, and this year there will be repeated showings of the AEIN documentary, "Lum & Abner: The Laughter Never Dies." There will also be some surprising news concerning one of L&A's most famous radio storylines which has actually become a reality (no, not their classic Christmas show; that's another story).

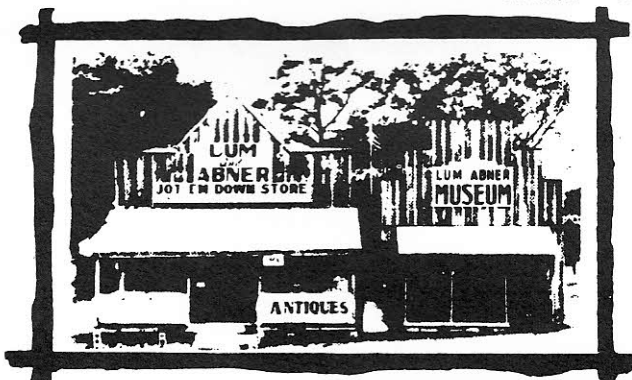
This year we are encouraging all of our members to stay at the LIME TREE INN in mena. This motel is part of the Best Western chain, and is very nice. The number to call for reservations is (501) 394-6350.

We hope members will turn out in record numbers this year. Because of our agreement with the Holland House Restaurant, we need to have a rough idea of how many of you are planning to attend. If you think you will be joining us, please drop a note or postcard to the Executive Secretary, Tim Hollis, Route 3, Box 110, Dora, AL 35062, and let us know. It is very important that you do so; we need to know by the first week of June.

Our esteemed Publicity Director, Rex Riffle, suggested that the slogan for this year should be "LUM AND ABNER HEAVEN IS PINE RIDGE IN '87," and he just may be right. Don't miss a moment of it!!!

-----Advertisement-----

Visit **The Lum and Abner® Museum
and Jot 'Em Down Store**



OPEN MARCH THROUGH NOVEMBER

9 A.M. - 5 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday

11 A.M. - 5 P.M. Sunday, and by
appointment

LOCATED ON LUM & ABNER HIGHWAY 88

Lon & Kathy Stucker
Ph. 501-326-4442

P.O. Box 38
Pine Ridge, Ark. 71966

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