

Official Publication of the National Lum and Abner® Society



ABNER: EVER TIME I BUY A DEFENCE BOND I GET A RINGIN' IN MY EARS.
LUM: THATS THE OLD LIBERTY BELL YOU HEAR. AND THE MORE WE BUY THE LOUDER SHE RINGS.

February 1988



Opie Cates

1909-1987

Opie Taft Cates, a major part of the Lum and Abner series during its two half-hour seasons (1948-1950), passed away on November 6, 1987, after an extremely long and serious illness.

Cates gained his initial fame in show business as a clarinetist in the big band days of the early 1940s, eventually becoming leader of the CBS studio orchestra. According to Roswell Rogers, Cates and his orchestra were featured in a program of dance music; between numbers, Opie was required to deliver commercials and make spot announcements. Something about his unique speech pattern caused the studio audience to laugh, which gave network executives the idea that perhaps he could be promoted as a comedy band leader, along the lines of Phil Harris, Kay Kyser, and the rest.

The result of this line of thought was "The Opie Cates Show," a half-hour situation comedy airing on CBS in 1947, and written by L&A scribe Roz Rogers. Opie portrayed a slightly befuddled, naive young man whose philosophy of life was, "The doggonedest things happen to me..." Cates continued playing essentially the same character when he joined the Lum and Abner cast the following year; in this context, his personality came across somewhat as a substitute for both Mousey Gray and Cedric Weehunt. He would occasionally

be allowed to demonstrate his expertise with the clarinet, wildly at odds with his country bumpkin characterization. He also appeared in the 1949 Lum and Abner TV pilot, made in New York.

After the end of the second and final half-hour L&A season in the spring of 1950, Cates left Hollywood for good. He bought several thousand acres near Moffett, Oklahoma (just across the state line from Ft. Smith, Arkansas), and realized a longtime dream: to live out the rest of his life in complete privacy as a farmer...even the local citizens and his neighbors were unaware of his onetime national fame.

Perhaps the most lasting tribute to Cates went unnoticed at the time. When the components of "The Andy Griffith Show" were being assembled in 1960, a name was needed for Sheriff Andy's son on the program. Griffith himself remembered the comical musician from the old Lum and Abner series, and insisted that his fictional son be named "Opie."

Cates made a rare public appearance in 1979 at the dedication of the Lum and Abner memorial in Mena, but fell ill shortly thereafter. For the past several years he had been confined to his bed, but according to his wife he continued to enjoy each issue of The Jot 'Em Down Journal upon its arrival. This is very gratifying to the NLAS officers, and we deeply regret the passing of this very warm and funny man.

- Tim Hollis

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 1988

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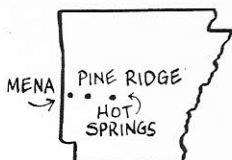
Rex Riffle

"Opie Cates is one of the finest
 clarinet players in America, and
 I'm not excluding Pete Fountain...
 when we rehearsed, the studio would
 be filled with musicians from other
 bands who'd come in just to listen
 to his mastery of the clarinet."

Chet Lauck, 1979

COVER: Lum and Abner war bonds
 poster, date and origin unknown.
 (Courtesy of Mrs. Harriet Lauck)

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 tion.



DAD BLAME IT DEPT.: In last issue's
 installment of "Mousey's Corner,"
 member Ms. Duane Wilkie of Michigan
 should have been credited as MR. Duane
 Wilkie. If that don't beat the bugs
 a-fightin'.

LUM and ABNER®

WORD SEARCH

See how many words relating to L&A and Pine Ridge you can find in this mixture of letters. Here is a testimonial from one member who attempted to work it:

"This was better'n the pinball machine and it only took me three months to find them all...see if you can beat me."

(Name withheld by request)

Pine Ridge, Arkansas



B C O S D A O R Y R T N U O C B T N S T
K R A L W O D A E M O E L B A R O M E M
O B T D L R O W L U F R E D N O W E T O
L R E T S E H C E R O T S Y R E C O R G
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N T C O A E F Q W A T E R B O T T L E S
A B R M X W S H O T S P R I N G S A B C



(A list of the 44 words hidden here appears in another part of the Journal)

From Rags To Riches



To Rags



(In One Easy Lifetime)

(Opie Cates was such an extremely modest man that he very rarely took any opportunity to reminisce about his past accomplishments. However, on one occasion during the 1960s, he wrote the following humorous account of his life for one of his daughters. With the gracious permission of his widow, Mrs. Willene Cates, we are proud to be able to publish it for the first time here.)

Our hero...we'll call him Bill for easy identification...was born in a little washed-out hole of a town in the middle of the Ozark Mountains, and listed on your road map as Clinton, in the great state of Arkansas...more recently known as "Faubas Land."

Being born in October of the year 1909 (too late for the log cabin era and too early for the Stucco period), our hero had to settle for the conventional-type dwelling of that time, called the "board and bat style." Now obviously, this dampened his prospects as presidential material, for as we know, all presidents of any importance were foaled in log cabins...so, as a consequence, Bill's and his parents' aspirations in this direction were practically nil at the very start. In story books, the farmer is always identified as "poor but honest," and Bill's father was no exception, 'cept maybe he was a little more poor than some of them. But he could do something that a lot of other farmers couldn't: he could play the fiddle like crazy. And he managed to fall in love with a sweet young 19-year-old that could play the "geetar" real well...so you can readily see that Bill had set himself up in a little "One Family Dance Band." He did this by choosing his parents very carefully; something we should all give serious thought to.

Now please remember that this was in the times before Carnation had invented the contented cow that put the milk in the cute little tin cans which Mother could warm up and feed to her little offspring while she could continue sipping contentedly on her "old fashioned;" this was pioneer days. Women did it the hard way...they nursed their young, and at two-hour

intervals at that. In history we have an A.D. and a B.C. We might call this period of Bill's life BBS: Before Baby Sitters. So, Bill, of a necessity must accompany the Mother, even though it took him to the Saturday night dance at which the One Family Band played. Thus Bill, even before he had ever cut his baby teeth, was in the dance business; not the dancing as we know it, but dancing nevertheless to the Irish jigs, Scottish reel, and Old English folk songs that later (in modern times) became known as "hill-billy music."

From this beginning it was inevitable that Bill should be taught the fiddle; the only joker in this deal was, Bill just didn't cotton to the fiddle. So, we'll just skip over a few years of the family's migration through the Southern states until we find our hero attending high school in Joplin, Missouri... where for the first time Bill discovers the clarinet: MAN, THIS IS IT!!! A few blues records are being released in 1927, enough to get a guy fired up on this clarinet playing. He plunges into the clarinet so devotedly that he almost drives his parents into insanity from his constant practicing. The result: in two years, Bill wins the state high school contest for clarinet playing. He represents the state of Missouri in the national contest at Joliet, Illinois, judged by the most famous musician of the day: John Phillip Sousa. He wins First Place, and is the town hero for a few days. This is the big year in the kid's life; this is the year he graduates from high school along with a couple of classmates that later gain much prominence: John Beal and Bob Cummings.

After graduation, he spends one year on Keith/Orpheum vaudeville with a jazz band act called the "Memphis Collegians," where for the first time he meets and hears in person the great "Satchmo," Louis Armstrong, playing the downtown "Loop" in Chicago. Then to Missouri University with his own band to work his way through school. A year on the road with Music Corporation of America, where on one of his



stands he met a cute little 100-pound blonde named Kay in the city of Cleveland ...MARRIAGE... the Great Depression really sets in!...

Back to Missouri University for another year, this time with a wife. Then he gives up his own band and leaves school to work for dance bands from coast to coast. 1934: California, \$40 and no union card. Ben Pollock organizes a new band and auditions clarinet players...Bill joins the great Ben Pollock. Two years on the road and then we find Bill with Pollock at Sebastian's Cotton Club in Culver City, California. From there, the luck of the Irish really started to work: from Pollock he joins the NBC staff orchestra under the direction of Gordon Jenkins. Two years later he has his own band on a program called "The Kid With The Stick," sponsored by Rainer Beer, while also doing freelance work with other orchestras on the Dick Haymes show, Bob Burns, Abbott & Costello, Sinatra, Eddie Cantor, and many more of the great names of show business.

Probably the peak of his career was in the 1940's when he was conducting, playing clarinet, and writing the music for his own band, which was featured on four network shows weekly: the Lum and Abner show, Judy Canova, the Barry Fitzgerald show, and "Meet Me At Parky's," which starred Parkyakarkas (whose real name was Harry Einstein) and featured Sheldon Leonard. With a combined radio audience of 35 million each week, this required a considerable amount of work for Bill: 48 to 50 hours over the drawing board each week arranging the music, plus rehearsal time for each show...also rehearsal time with the cast, as he worked in the script in "Meet Me At Parky's" and "Lum and Abner." Needless to say, the pay was very good and the government allowed him to keep a small part of it for his very own...

Then television reared its ugly screen and we find our hero sadly contemplating the future. By this time, he's nearing the "life begins at 40" stage; that wavy hair is getting a touch of gray around the

edges...and on top she's slowly moving back. Pioneering television was just like starting all over again in radio, where you played for nothing just to get an audience of some sort: instead of \$500 to \$1000 per show, they slapped you with that union wage scale of \$27.50. Boy, this was for the birds. Also about this time, due to the pace he had been going for the past ten years, that great occupational disease, ulcers, was beginning to show around the edges. The family doctor had a little chat with him and said, "Bill, my boy, you're gonna hafta slow down a little or you're gonna be a pretty fair candidate for Forest Lawn one of these fine days." So Bill sat down and had a very serious talk with himself and came to the conclusion that he was gonna get out of that rat race while he was still free and clear...and that's exactly what he did.

He planed back to eastern Oklahoma near his native Arkansas, bought 7000 acres of ranch land and 500 acres of Arkansas River bottom land, and began the great exodus from Hollywood. The clarinet now hangs on the bedroom wall gathering dust while Bill is busy gathering dust from the seat of a tractor or from the heels of a herd of beef cattle...and to tell the truth, I think he's mighty happy doing all of this. Incidentally, I might add that Bill and that little blonde he met up with in Cleveland raised five children during this hullabaloo: Robert, and four girls named after songs from the deep South, Dixie, Dinah, Linda, and Little Liza Jane.

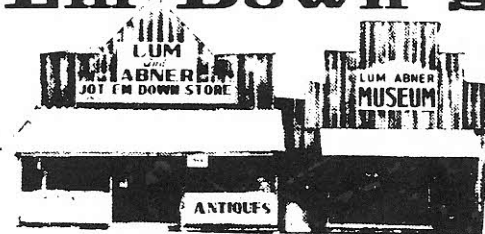
It may puzzle some of you as to why I know so much about Bill and his family. Well, to tell you the truth, I was foolin' you a little. His name wasn't really Bill...he is known as

- Opie Cates

-----Advertisement-----

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

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LUM and ABNER In the News

REPRINTS OF PAST LUM & ABNER ARTICLES

(From RADIO GUIDE, October 20, 1934)

"But We Ain't Got No Descriptions!"

As Recorded by Fred Champion



Chester Lauck, who is "Lum"



Norris Goff, the "Abner" of the team

Lum and Abner Are Two Stars of the Air Whose Lives and Habits and Even Physical Appearances Are Relatively Unknown. RADIO GUIDE Tried to Get the Information Necessary to Supply a Word Picture of the Pair—with the Following Result

(Lum and Abner are seated in their office—a room high up in a tall Chicago skyscraper. The place is furnished to reproduce an old Arkansas real-estate office. Several wooden chairs, a worn desk, and an ample cuspidor are to be seen. Abner is whittling on the right front leg of his chair. Lum has just opened a letter).

L: Abner, listen to this, it's a letter we got just now. "Dear Lum and Abner: Several of our readers have asked us what you two gentlemen look like. Would you please be good enough to give us a detailed description of yourselves so that we may pass this information on to your fans? Very truly yours, RADIO GUIDE."

A: What's it they're wantin'?

L: A description.

A: Well, they'll have to see Doc Miller fer one of them.

L: A "description," Abner. Not a "prescription."

A: Well, I ain't got one of them neither.

L: Why of course you have . . . everybody's got a description.

A: Well, I'm glad they wrote the letter then, fer that's the first time I ever knowed I had one.

L: Oh yes . . . it won't be no trouble givin' 'em that . . . jist describe ourselves . . . sorter like that application I filled out when I wrote to the Happy Home Matrimonial Bureau.

A: Well . . . you can send one in if you want to, but they're jist wastin' their time on me . . . I've got a wife and darter now.

L: Oh, this ain't fer no matrimonial purposes. They jist want to know what we look like.

A: Well then, why not send 'em one of our fotygrafs?

L: No, that won't do. Wait . . . I've got a idy. Whereabouts is the weekly paper at?

A: I donno. I reckon it's around here summers, lessen somebody's cleaned a lamp chimney with it.

L: Ah . . . here it is . . . wrapped 'round this curry comb.

A: Now, Lum, don't git started readin' that thing.

L: Didn't 'tend to. I'm jist lookin' at the lost and found column . . . they allus give descriptions of different things in here.

A: They don't never advertise for no lost humains, do they?

L: Not frequent. But we can sorter change things up, though. Like here . . . yea, this ort to work . . . Here's somebody advertisin' fer a hound dog that's lost . . . strayed or stolen, one hound dog. Four years old. Black with brown nose and left ear chewed . . .

A: Well, that ain't goin' to work. They's two of us, and they's jist one of that dog.

L: Yea. Maybe I can find two of sompin' another here . . . let's see . . . Here's a pocketbook with two dollars in it . . . That won't work, I reckon . . . Wait a minute, Here's the thing . . . jist what we're lookin' fer. Lost, strayed or stolen . . . Team of Horses.

A: Yea. That sounds good. Maybe we can get an idy from that.

L: One white horse . . . answers to the name of Jim . . . Look, Abner, we can fix that up . . . jist change the first un here to a description of you . . . git a pencil



Lum and Abner in their office, as they looked just a few minutes before the letter from RADIO GUIDE arrived

and paper and set it down as I call it out.

A: Here's a piece of wrappin' paper. I'll write on it.

L: Abner . . . weight about 40 stone . . . 15 hands high.

A: Gaits . . . What gaits you got, Abner?

L: Front gate and back gate.

A: No . . . no! Can ye walk, run, single-foot er what?

L: Oh . . . I walk. And then I run some. It's sorter like walkin' ony you jump up and down a little bit in between.

A: All right. Put her down, Abner walks and he runs some. Lum he goes in for all of 'em . . . walk, run, single-foot, trot, rack and gallop.

L: What's next?

A: Let's see. How do you work—single or double?

L: Double, 'cose. Ain't I said I got a wife?

A: That's so. And I'm contrarwise. Next is how're you shod? Reckon that bunion of yours orter class you as lame in left hind foot. And I've had a split hoof on acounter that axe hit me in the toe fourteen year ago come Thanksgivin'. That's what you get fer workin' on hollerdays.

A: What I'm goin' ter put down here fer shooin'? All that's about natterful defects. Not countin' those new mail-order boots, we both got lots of worn shoes, and I got one left shoe with caulks. I'll put that down.

L: Yea . . . what else here? You ain't got no spavin, but I guess that fits my limp, lessen you might refer to it as spring halt. Put her down . . . Abner, no other defects in shanks . . . Lum has a mite of spring halt, because of the weather. Now about colorin' . . . yore sort of piebald, and a leetle mite skimpy in the mane. Me, I guess I'd be described as sorrel, goin' to white . . . Nothin' here about them horses havin' mustaches, so put her down separate. Abner . . . hey, Abner!

(Abner, who has been whittling, suddenly falls on the floor as the chair leg gives way)

A: There . . . I done it again. That's the second chair this week. Guess that building manager man won't like that any.

L: What's ailin' you lately? Shoulda thought when that porch fell on you after you whittled through that column, 'twould have taught you a lesson.

A: Oh, I dunno. Seems like I'm always nervous. Gotta whittle on somethin' since I stuck up that "No Whittling" sign they stuck up in here . . . what's next?

L: Well . . . don't neither of us wear a head-stall, 'cept maybe we got a toothache. How're your pasterns?

A: Right fine shape. 'cept I ain't got no fetlocks.

L: Yea . . . and neither of us got hocks, lessen you class loan tickets. How about this, though? One of these horses got a harness gall, and the other feller's got a scar in his withers. Do that fit us?

A: I dunno, Lum. I got a pendicites scar. Corse that's in a different place, but they might wanter know 'bout hit.

L: Yea . . . an' I guess you might call that itch in the middle of my back a harness gall . . . leastwise I figger it's my galluses that's doin' hit. Put her down . . . Abner, scar on belly. Lum, harness gall from galluses.

A: I heerd tell, "belly" ain't polite.

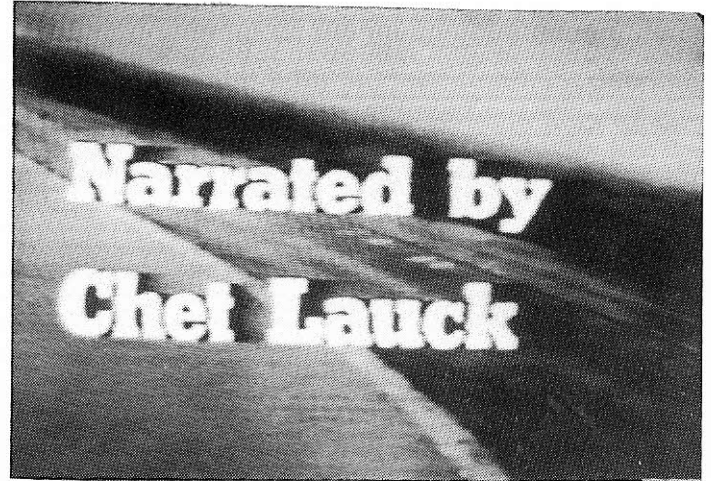
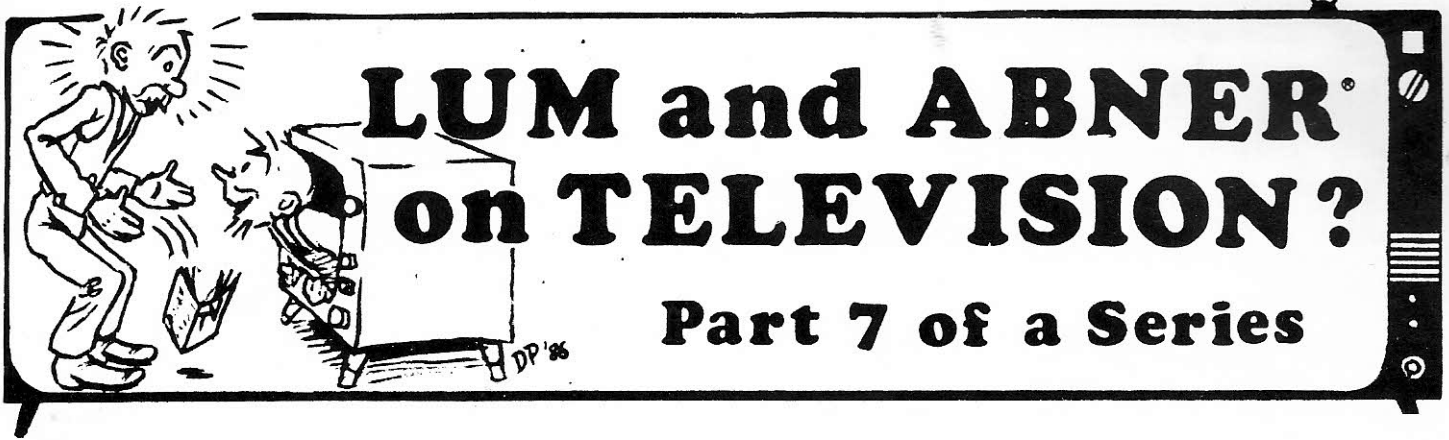
L: That's so . . . make it stomach . . . Now about breedin' . . . jedgin' by the laigs, I guess maybe I got some A-rab in me, and you look kinda Percheron yourself. Besides that yore more peacable like. Now, let's see . . . this next is kinda personal. It says this Jim horse has a brand on his . . . Abner! Hey, Abner!

(Abner, who has been whittling the floor, suddenly disappears through it. Lum rushes over and looks down to discover that Abner has fallen through into the lap of the building manager, who is about to have an apoplectic fit).

Manager: You . . . you . . . you . . . !

A: I'm awful sorry, Mister, but I hain't been out to pasture lately and I jist chewed right through my stall.

Lum and Abner may be heard any evening from Monday to Friday, inclusive, over the Mutual Broadcasting System, from Station WLW at 7:15 EST, from Station WGN at 8:30 CST, from Station WOR at 9:30 EST, and from Station WXYZ at 9:30 EST—in a program sponsored by the makers of Horlick's Malted Milk.



Chet Lauck's retirement from Continental Oil Co. came about in 1968, and found him making his home in Arkansas once again, after some thirty-five years spent in various "big cities." Lum had come home! Lauck, as many of you know, opened a public relations and advertising agency and spent his remaining years working in this field and entertaining as an after-dinner speaker.

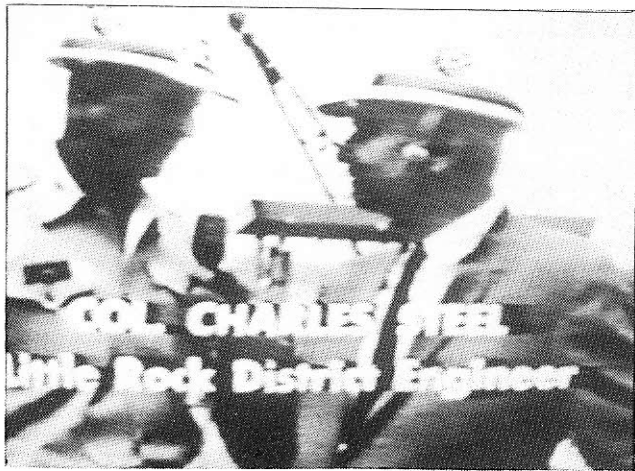
Chet Lauck was called upon to narrate and host a filmed, local television production of KATV Channel 7, Little Rock, Arkansas, entitled "The Arkansas River." This program was aired on October 9, 1968, and filled a 90-minute time slot. Unfortunately, the version extant for our viewing purposes is a cut-down, 20-minute segment, but since this is not really an appearance of the Lum character, it gives us a fair representation of the complete work. The film was shot in color, and features both voice-over and on-camera appearances by Lauck.

Mr. Lauck opens the program with voice-over, as the viewer is carried airborne across the Arkansas River: "Four hundred and twenty-seven years have passed since that June morning when a ragged, tattered Spanish army crossed the Mississippi River on four great barges to become the first Europeans to stand in Arkansas. Tomorrow morning, we will dedicate a group of concrete and steel monuments to the past, and in doing so will open a vista to the future no man could have dreamed those four centuries ago. Those Spaniards came searching for treasure in this

land, and tomorrow, treasure, the American kind, will become a reality. So, as we look to the future made possible by this formerly muddy, temperamental stream, we must in our hearts salute the past: the heritage through which this river flows."

The titles are superimposed as Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra" (known also as the theme from the motion picture "2001: A Space Odyssey," and as the thundering music that preceded Elvis Presley's stage entrance in his concerts of later years) plays:

KATV - 7 Presents
 THE ARKANSAS RIVER
 Narrated by Chet Lauck
 WITH: Will Rogers, Jr.
 Senator John L. McClellan
 Senator J. William Fulbright
 Governor Winthrop Rockefeller
 Congressman Wilbur Mills
 General John McConnell
 Arthur Hunnicut
 J.N. Heiskell
 Dr. John L. Ferguson
 W.W. Keeler
 and
 Mayor Martin Borchert
 Mayor Austin Franks
 Col. Charles Steel
 Margaret Ross
 Jim Ficke
 Joe Chapman



...and a host of others whose names do not ring familiar, at least to me. JEDJ readers will recall the names of Senator Fulbright from Chet "Lum" Lauck's political spots of 1962. Arthur Hunnicut portrayed Lum in an illfated pilot film also in 1962.

As the documentary proceeds, Chet Lauck effectively guides us along a tour of the great Arkansas River, from the Continental Divide to Little Rock. The early scenes in the film could easily double for a Disney travel film, or one of those geography films we used to see in school. Chet's voice is warm and friendly, and displays a talent for serious "out loud talkin'" that we have not previously heard. A bit of humor is injected as Lauck relates, "Below Wichita, the river passes through a town called Arkansas [Editor's note: pronounced the way it is spelled, instead of "Arkan-saw"] City. They even call our river the 'Ar-Kansas.' Well, it's the 'Arkan-saw' down at its mouth; I'm not concerned about what they call it where it wags its tail."

In Oklahoma, Chet encounters Will Rogers Jr., for an on-camera chat at the base of the statue of Will Rogers Sr. Will Jr. discusses his own Arkansas roots (his mother was born there), and notes that the Arkansas River project has caused his father's old ranch to be almost completely covered in water! Will Jr. and Chet try to imagine Will Sr.'s reaction to the current condition of the old ranch, and Chet adds that the great American humorist would probably make a humorous comment about the situation.

We are given a brief tour of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and told of how important this city will be as a port by 1970. We are told of the great financial rewards of the project. Chet, in a business suit and a construction hardhat, interviews Col. Steel of the Army Corps of Engineers, who is the Little Rock District Engineer. The colonel details the construction specifics of the project, and is followed by Congressman Wilbur Mills, who assures the taxpayers that they will be getting a great return on their dollars.

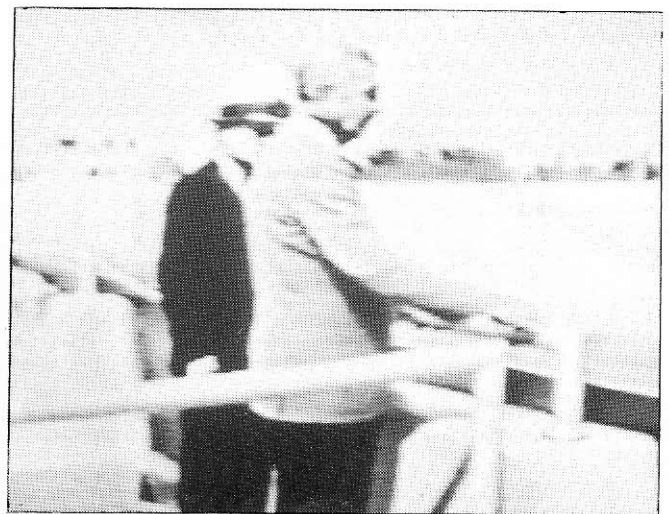
Senator McClellan is interviewed by Chet, and points out how the Arkansas River project will benefit the nation. Chet's voice-over wrapup points out that "a lazy river has been put to work."

"The Arkansas River" as it exists in this form comes to a sudden halt, with no end credits. It is most unfortunate that we are denied the appearance of Arthur Hunnicut, as it would be interesting to see the meeting of the "real" Lum with a "would be" Lum. Another omission is that of Chet Lauck's fraternity brother, Senator Fulbright. These various interviews were edited out for this abbreviated version, but thankfully the Chet Lauck appearances mentioned above were included, to give us a glimpse of "Lum" as he entered the final phase of his career in the public eye. It seems fitting that this film project, done in tribute to this important Arkansas-based event, brings Chet "home" to his home state.

Chet Lauck looks and sounds distinguished in this film, and his speaking voice is clear and effective, with hints of his age and his Arkansas accent peeping through. He is the ideal spokesperson for the documentary. Other than his appearance, this film has no other direct connection with Lum and Abner.

It is possible that there could have been some reference to Lum & Abner during the parts of the show that we do not have, but it is unlikely. By this time, Lauck was trying hard (and succeeding) at breaking his typecasting as Lum Edwards, preferring to make Mr. Edwards & Mr. Peabody a part of the distant, nostalgic past. But, once the nostalgic past turned into a nostalgia-conscious present in the early 1970's, both he and Tuffy found themselves more and more reverting to "Lum and Abner" as their fame in life, and apparently weren't ashamed of it. This sets the stage for our next installment, in our next issue. See you then!

- Uncle Donnie Pitchford



The photos accompanying this article were shot directly from a TV screen. This, plus the weak quality of the videotape copy used, resulted in inferior photos. Being the only ones available, however, we present them for historical reasons.



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The cooks in Pine Ridge (both in reality and on the L&A radio shows) have always had a reputation for their delicious dishes, and now the Lum & Abner Museum in Pine Ridge is pleased to be able to offer Lum & Abner's Pine Ridge Vittals Cookbook.

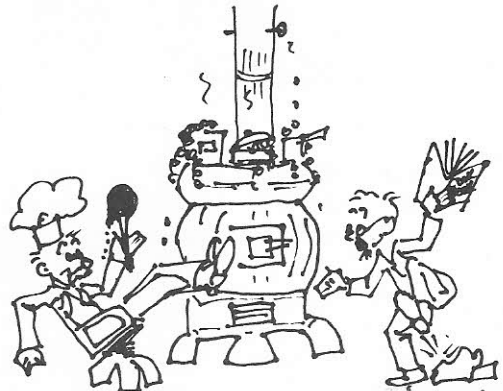
The recipies in the cookbook were actually collected by Kathy Stucker, Pine Ridge historian, from the families who actually live in the little community today. In the book, each L&A character has a particular dish assigned to him or her; among those included are "Lum's Favorite Prune Bread," "Abner's Fried Apple Dish," "Mousey's Half-Moon Pies," "Luke Spears' Blue-Plate Special," and eleven others, all illustrated with Dick Huddleston's postcard views of the community and its citizens from the 1930's.

The price for the cookbook is \$2.00 per copy (add 50¢ for postage and handling). All proceeds from the book go to the Pine Ridge Extension Homemakers Club and to the Jot'Em Down Store and Lum & Abner Museum. Orders should be sent to LUM & ABNER COOKBOOK, c/o the Lum & Abner Museum, P.O. Box 38, Pine Ridge, Arkansas 71966. And happy eatin'!

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