

February 1992

The NLAS Recommends...



You will notice that this issue features, as Lum & Abner's "special guest stars," the great Laurel & Hardy. For those members who may wish to learn more about this classic American comedy team, the NLAS recommends its L&H equivalent, the "Sons Of The Desert." This organization is very similar to the NLAS in purpose and attitude, as their following official press release makes clear:

"SONS OF THE DESERT is the international organization dedicated and devoted to the loving study of the persons and the films of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, by showing their movies, exchanging information on 'the Boys,' and remembering that Laurel and Hardy were two of the warmest and funniest men of all time. We are not 'fans' (this word turns us off), and we are not one-subject fanatics. {EDITOR'S NOTE: These are but two of the many ways in which this organization and the NLAS are kindred souls!} Since the majority of our membership throughout the world is comprised of film buffs, it would be ridiculous to say that merely because of our love for these two men, we shut our eyes to other great personalities of the screen. Our minds are not so closed that we cannot show considerable interest in, and derive much enjoyment from, the works of all comedians of merit. Due to the makeup of the human being, the percentage of interest in performers varies with the individual and, although our feelings for many artists may differ individually, we are completely united in our admiration and love for Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. It is this factor which makes SONS OF THE DESERT the organization that it is. It is to these two gentlemen that we devote our time, efforts, and loyalty.

"SONS OF THE DESERT derives its name from the L&H movie of the same title. The organization was the brainchild of Professor John McCabe; early in the 1960's the idea was presented to Stan Laurel, who gave his blessing. The group got under way in New York City, and the founding members were Dr. McCabe, Stan Laurel, Al Kilgore (who designed the Sons' logo, reproduced above), Orson Bean, Chuck McCann, and John Municino. As the years passed the club's fame grew and new 'Tents' (each named for a Laurel & Hardy film) were organized throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Holland, Japan, Italy, and Australia. Membership has reached approximately 10,000, with new inquiries coming in all the time."

Anyone interested in joining SONS OF THE DESERT should contact Dwain W. Smith (yes, he's an NLAS member as well!), 684 Anderson Avenue, Franklin Square, NY 11010.

(From time to time, the NLAS recommends certain organizations of a like nature that we feel might be of interest to our members. In the past, we have spotlighted {and probably will again, in the future} such fine groups as The Andy Griffith Show Rerun Watchers' Club, the International Jack Benny Fan Club, the Friends of Vic and Sade, SPERDVAC, and the Official Popeye Fan Club. Anyone knowing of other groups deserving mention in future issues of the *Journal* should contact the NLAS Executive Secretary.)



The Jot 'Em Down Journal , Volume 8, Number 4 (Whole Number 46), February 1992. Published bi-monthly by The National Lum and Abner Society, a non-profit organization. Membership, including a subscription to the *Journal* , is \$8.00 per year. Send editorial and subscription correspondence to the Executive Secretary, Tim Hollis, Route 3, Box 110, Dora, AL 35062.

THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

February 1992

*The National
Lum and Abner Society*

ZEKATIF OSSIFERS

PRESIDENT
Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT
Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Tim Hollis

COVER: An historic meeting of three classic comedy teams at the Brown Derby Restaurant in Hollywood (left to right): Chet Lauck & Norris Goff (Lum and Abner), Freeman Gosden & Charles Correll (Amos 'n' Andy), and Stan Laurel & Oliver Hardy, circa 1946. Chet Lauck often stated that he was "very proud" of this picture. (Courtesy of Lum & Abner Museum)

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INNOCENTS ABROAD

This issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* has almost accidentally evolved into a "guest starring" vehicle for the great comedy team of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. Executive Secretary Tim Hollis recently received a letter from member Jason Edward Beard of Syracuse, New York, who posed questions concerning the probable similarities between the final motion picture efforts of Laurel and Hardy and of Lum and Abner. The timing of this correspondence was perfect, since Tim was already planning to use the historic cover photo of these two teams joined by Amos 'n' Andy, and the "Meet the Members" contribution from Dwain Smith, a member of the Sons of the Desert (see his article). This article, then, will compare and contrast two equally bizarre films, produced within a few years of each other, and being the final celloid performances of their starring teams.

Many of our members are Laurel and Hardy fans, but I will attempt to briefly review their film career for those who may not be as familiar. Stan Laurel (sometimes called "the skinny one"), born in England, and Oliver Hardy (logically, "the fat one"), born in Harlem, Georgia, were solo-performers in the silent comedy shorts of the teens and twenties (their paths had crossed in the 1917 film, *Lucky Dog*). Stan and Ollie were eventually paired in a handful of films produced by Hal Roach (also known for the *Our Gang* series, a.k.a. *The Little Rascals* when released for TV). As a comedic chemistry developed between the two, they found themselves being elevated to starring status as a full-fledged "team", appearing in their now-familiar suits and bowler hats in the 1927 silent two-reel comedy, *Do Detectives Think?*, released by Pathe. Other notable titles, released by MGM, were *The Battle of the Century* (1927; remembered for its pie-fight), *Two Tars* (1928; a hilarious war between sailors-on-leave L&H and other motorists), *Liberty* (1929; with L&H as escaped convicts) and *Big Business* (1929; L&H, as salesmen, wage war on a tough customer), just to name a few.

Laurel and Hardy were unique, in that they began in silent films, bridged the gap between silent and sound comedies, and remained in top form throughout the first decade or so of the "talkies". Their sound shorts were run on television when I was a "kid of a boy" in Memphis, Tennessee, and I found myself enjoying such films as *Brats* (1930; L&H portray their own children!), *Hog Wild* (1930; L&H attempt to install a radio aerial - perhaps they wanted to be ready for the debut of *Lum and Abner* the following year!), *Chickens Come Home* (1931; Ollie's marriage is threatened by a blackmailing "old flame" from his past), *The Music Box* (1932; winner of the Academy Award for best short subject), and the list goes on! Feature-length films of the 1930's include *Sons of the Desert* (1934; namesake for the Laurel and Hardy fan club), *Babes in Toyland* (1934; based on the Victor Herbert operetta, and remade by Walt Disney, who included L&H substitutes!), and, likewise, the list continues. I realize it is impossible to justly discuss the merits of the entire body of Laurel and Hardy work in an article this size!

Reading the above micro-descriptions might lead the unfamiliar reader to conclude that Laurel and Hardy were mere slapstick comedians, similar to The Three Stooges (another team I enjoy); February 1992 - Page 2

however, many fans of that trio find L&H too "slow" for their tastes. The style of L&H often relies on a carefully timed buildup of humorous tension and/or frustration before the climactic slapstick. Along the way, the viewer is treated to Stan Laurel's naive, simple-minded reactions and often broad comedy, and Oliver Hardy's fussy, meticulous mannerisms, and his exasperated looks into the camera, begging the audience's sympathy for the current "fine mess" Stan has gotten them into. Ollie appeared the "brains" on-camera (but even his character was none too bright), but Stan Laurel was, in reality, the genius behind-the-scenes who shaped the team's best comedic moments.

Sadly, when the team parted with Hal Roach Studios, they left behind their golden age. The Laurel and Hardy feature films of the 1940's represent the team's waning years. Laurel was not permitted the same creative control under his new contract, and a newer, more brash comedy team, Abbott and Costello, burst onto the screen to the delight of the World War II audiences. After a series of films released by MGM and 20th Century Fox, L&H temporarily concluded their film career with *The Bullfighters* (1945).

Laurel and Hardy were almost strangers to radio, while Lum and Abner were products of that medium. On the other hand, while the Lum and Abner films can never be ranked alongside the best Laurel and Hardy efforts, L&A were producing their best film efforts during the "downhill" L&H era. The two teams enjoyed a few bits of "crossover" trivia: both teams saw their film product released by RKO-Radio Pictures (one for L&H, six for L&A), both encountered Charles B. ("Ming the Merciless") Middleton on film (once for L&A, many times for L&H), both worked with comedienne Zasu Pitts, and both teams were directed by Malcolm St. Clair (twice for L&A, four times for L&H). Oliver Hardy enjoyed a passion for golf and horse-racing, as did Chet and Tuffy.

There are some similarities between the characterizations of the two teams. As in most comedy duos, there is a "straight man". In the case of both L&A and L&H (these initials get confusing, don't they?), the difference between "straight man" and "comic" is not as sharply defined as in the team of Abbott and Costello (with Bud Abbott the absolute "straight man"). While Lum, Abner, Stan and Ollie can each be described as a "man-child" - not being as intelligent or mature as a "real adult" - Lum and Ollie each rank as close as possible to being the "straight man" of his team, although each would not rank much higher on an I.Q. test than his partner. In addition, both have come across as being quite pompous at times, always due to receive a deserved letdown, usually generating audience sympathy. While L&H rely on visual nuances and slapstick (plus sound effects, of course), L&A, in their native medium of radio, must rely solely on audible communication; however, both teams have been described as "slow-paced" by many modern audiences weaned on the "instant comedy" of today.

Since the NLAS Ossifers first viewed the final Lum and Abner film, *Lum and Abner Abroad*, in 1985 (thirty years after its abortive release date), we have noted the odd similarities between it and the final film of Laurel and Hardy, which has been variously titled *Atoll K* (its original), *Robinson Crusoe*land, and *Utopia*

(the title you might find on the video rack today). Both films were made abroad with international casts and crews, both endured illnesses and struggles, and both were tremendous disappointments, receiving little or no release.

Following the completion of their final U.S. film, Laurel and Hardy resumed personal appearances, which included a very successful tour of the British Isles. Regardless of the way the Hollywood studios mishandled their talents in the 1940's, Stan and "Babe" (Hardy's nickname) were positively adored in person, inspiring the two to continue entertaining their fans. Their European success led to the signing of contracts for a film with the working title of *Atoll*, which was to be financed by French and Italian interests, and shot abroad. Shooting began in France, near Cannes (ironically, the home of the famous Cannes Film Festival), in 1950. Imagine the confusion L&H dealt with in performing dialog: they spoke their lines in English, while the supporting cast members spoke in their native tongues! Stan Laurel was quoted as saying, "Nobody - and that includes the director and us - knew what... was going on!" Production time was protracted by a painful illness suffered by Stan. Due to a prostate problem, Stan was in a state of discomfort during early shooting, and was forced to withdraw for a lengthy time, enduring surgery in Paris. Still very ill, Stan returned to complete the film, appearing very thin and haggard, and looking even more frail next to Ollie, who was carrying much more weight than he had in the team's earlier films. The duo comes across as an aging self-caricature.



The plot of the film, finally completed in 1951, concerns L&H's attempt to locate an island they have inherited in the Pacific Ocean. Joined by a "stateless man" (who becomes their chef) and a stowaway, their ship is driven to an atoll that rises during a violent storm. Inspired by the book *Robinson Crusoe*, the misfits, aided by Mother Nature, make the atoll inhabitable. Soon, they are joined by an attractive nightclub singer (Cherie), who has come to the island after breaking off with her fiance. He, a military surveyor, is not far behind, having been assigned the task of surveying the new island. His discovery of valuable uranium on the atoll generates global publicity, raising a question as to which government should claim the island. The answer is none, since the first of the party to set foot on the property is the "stateless man". Hardy proposes a new government: "Crusoe-land", a paradise without laws or taxes! Soon, greedy invaders attempt to gain control of the new government, going so far as trying to lynch L&H and friends ("another fine mess!"). As fate would have it, the atoll is suddenly swallowed up by a violent eruption, but our friends are rescued by the survey ship, it having been radioed by Cherie (who reunites with her fiance). Eventually locating their rightful island, L&H find the taxes on their inheri-

tance leave them as penniless as when they began their adventure.

Meanwhile, let's see what's going on down in Pine Ridge... the *Lum and Abner* fifteen minute radio program was winding to an end on ABC in 1954, some three years after the completion of L&H's *Atoll K*. NLAS member Loren Cox Jr. recalls the final L&A program, in which the old fellows lock up the Jot 'Em Down Store one last time, with the intent of entering television. It is likely they were referring to the production of *Lum and Abner Abroad*. Lon and Kathy Stucker of the Lum and Abner Museum have made available to the NLAS a copy of the script for *Lum and Abner TV Episode # 3*, which corresponds with the last third of *L&A Abroad*.

In an appearance at the 1972 "Multicon", a nostalgia convention held in Oklahoma City, Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff were reunited for a series of memorable interviews. When asked about the then-unseen *L&A Abroad*, Chet explained, "We were assigned to do a picture in Hollywood for an independent studio (Editor's Note: Nassour Brothers, who had considered producing *L&A* with some form of puppetry at one time). They called us one day, and asked us how we'd like to do the picture in Europe. After we'd agreed to do it, they told us it was in Yugoslavia! Neither of us had ever been to Yugoslavia, so we still thought maybe it was a good idea." Chet went on to explain that the country was just entering their sound film era, and was building new studios in the city of Zagreb, and wanted an American film company to produce there, to enable their crews to learn the technical aspects of production. Tuffy Goff recalled the problems in recording the film's soundtrack: "They had never done any sound, but they had terrific camera men. They didn't have a boom to put the mike on, so they had a microphone tied onto the end of a long fishing pole, and this guy would try to hold it over the correct person at the right time. If the camera man saw a shadow of the mike, he'd move the mike, rather than change the lighting or the camera set-up. He'd sneak it out, and we'd tell him that he couldn't do that, but you can't watch the mike and do your lines and try to act at the same time. Well, he'd motion this fellow to back up (with the mike), so you had a fine picture and no voices."

Whereas Laurel and Hardy's international crew spoke their own languages, Lum and Abner's Yugoslavian troupe spoke some form of English. According to Chet, "We realized that they were speaking English, but with such an accent that nobody could understand them." Tuffy added, "The actors didn't speak English, so we started a school. After we cast the picture with English-speaking people, we tried to teach them to act. Well, we decided it was easier to teach the actors to speak English, than it was to teach the others to act. (The Yugoslav actors) memorized the lines in English, with no conception of what they were saying." Chet summed up the language barrier problem with, "It was a horrible mistake. We had to dub voices in after we got the picture back to the United States."

Briefly summarizing the plot, *Lum and Abner Abroad* follows our friends through Yugoslavia, France and Monte Carlo, although principal photography was done in Yugoslavia. Lum and Abner have inexplicably become "Good Will Ambassadors" from the United States, and are known internationally. In the course of their travels, they reunite a ballerina with her long-lost American sweetheart, Tommy Ellis, become entangled with underworld characters who are attempting to steal a valuable statuette (a "national treasure"), and break the bank at Monte Carlo, to be greeted by an I.R.S. man named Thomas Ellis, played by the same actor

as above, but strangely, not recognized by L&A (in the original TV script, he is named "Fred M. Barry"; perhaps the editors of the feature figured the audience would recognize the actor, whereas a TV audience would have had two weeks to forget). For a more detailed synopsis, see the June, 1986 *Jot 'Em Down Journal*.

The middle segment, concerning the stolen statuette, is particularly bizarre. Shot in an ancient Yugoslavian castle, it resembles a bad dream. In fact, I literally fell asleep viewing the videotape in 1985, semi-dreaming during these scenes, awakening later, thinking I had viewed *Lum and Abner Meet Frankenstein and Dracula*, the truth being just about as strange (L&A are, in reality, menaced by a giant beast named "Frankenshplnin")! Fittingly, the events surrounding this segment triggered the decision to bring the almost-quarter-century of Lum and Abner to a close, as Tuffy Goff explained, "We had written a moat scene, in which the villains chase Lum and Abner; just as they reach this point, the drawbridge lets down and they cross." Unfortunately for the cast and crew, it did not go as written, as Tuffy continued, "This bridge hadn't been up in 300 years; so, they got it up, and then, couldn't let it down. All the equipment was carried by army trucks; a truck went into the moat, everything happened! This was November, and it was cold. The moisture on the inside of the castle walls is frozen, it's ice, and we're laying around there all night, with no fire, no heat, waiting for them to get this drawbridge fixed. It's about 2:00 in the morning, and we're freezing to death, and I went around to Chet and said, 'Why don't we quit this silly racket?' and Chet said, 'Let me think about it'. Now, it's daylight, and Chet said, 'Now, shake hands on it', and we shook hands. That was when we quit *Lum and Abner*." Like Stan Laurel, Tuffy was not in peak health during the making of this film, having suffered a serious cancer operation in 1948, coupled with a heart condition.



Both films suffered difficulty in attempted release. *Atoll K* was released in France in November, 1951, by Les Films Sirius. Retitled *Escapade*, it was issued by Equity in 1952 in the United Kingdom. Franco-London titled it *Robinson Crusoe Land* for a U.S. release (with voice-actor Paul Frees added as narrator). It and the final U.S. reissue (titled *Utopia* by Exploitation Productions) of 1954 (some sources say 1955) were cut by about two reels.

Lum and Abner Abroad, filmed as three TV episodes, was edited for American theatrical release by Howco Productions, with posters and lobby cards being printed, but no distributor grabbed it for release. Chet Lauck's personal print was transferred to videotape and issued by Chet Lauck Jr.'s Lum and Abner Associates in 1985, and was premiered at the first NLAS Convention.

One of the probable reasons *Atoll K* was passed over was that its co-director, John Berry, was under suspicion of being an "unfriendly" Communist (this was the McCarthy era!). L&A
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head writer Roz Rogers did not work on *L&A Abroad*, but his one-time assistant, Carl Herzinger, wrote the screenplay. Yugoslavia being behind the Iron Curtain, Roz was asked in 1985 if the "red" factor may have jinxed *L&A Abroad*'s chances of release as well, but he discounted this theory, stating, "the studio just felt like they didn't have a winner on their hands". This likely applies to *Atoll K* as well.



Both films are of interest only to students of the two comedy teams, and only if they are "completists", as they clearly do not showcase the best talents of either team. Each film suffers from awkward dialogue: *Atoll K* features foreign language lip-movements with English overdubbing, while *L&A Abroad* requires one to decipher the thick accents through frequent acoustic echo, caused by the distant fish-pole mike Tuffy spoke of. Occasionally, a harsh-sounding overdubbed line is inserted, punctuating the crude audio. *Atoll K* displays much higher production values than *L&A Abroad*, which suffers visually from dark photography, especially in the middle segment. While Stan Laurel's illness is painfully obvious, severely marring some promising comedy scenes (I found myself more concerned with Stan's pain!), Lum and Abner look quite healthy, the only difference being their bleached hair substituting for their old-age wigs, and Tuffy's decision to grow a mustache rather than wear a phony beard.

In defense of both films, it must be said that both teams stayed in character quite well, under the circumstances. Both displayed quite a bit of gumption in these separate, but surprisingly similar attempts to forge ahead. In both cases, however, the partner who suffered illness expressed regret over having completed his respective project: Stan Laurel wished he had never returned from surgery to complete *Atoll K*, while Tuffy responded to the question, "Was *L&A Abroad* your last picture?" with the remark, "That would be anybody's last picture!" L&A returned to the U.S. to finish a few small commitments in 1955 before retiring, but Laurel and Hardy actually continued (following Stan's recovery) with a successful tour of British music halls, performing until 1954, and returning to Hollywood. They were featured on Ralph Edwards' *This is Your Life*, and were in the planning stages for a new color TV series, *Laurel and Hardy's Fabulous Fables*, when each partner suffered a stroke. Stan's was minor, but Babe's was devastating, and he never recovered, passing away in 1957. Stan Laurel lived until 1965, and continued to create new Laurel and Hardy sketches, in honor of his beloved partner. One aspect of the two teams shines through: each partner held tremendous respect for the talents of the other, and often referred to their relationships as being like that experienced by brothers. Regardless of the quality of their final films, both teams gave, and continue to give, well-needed entertainment to the world.

- Uncle Donnie Pitchford

LUM AND ABNER®

GO TO WAR

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES



Welcome to the second chapter of this series, designed to chronicle the parallel histories of the *Lum and Abner* radio program and the World War of a half-century ago.

New Year's Day, 1942 was proclaimed a National Day of Prayer. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt led the nation by "asking God's help in the days to come." Single men between the ages of 18 and 35, and married men 18 to 26 were eligible for military draft. Many patriotic young men needed no prodding; they rushed quickly to enlist. Pearl Harbor was an open sore.

1942 began for *Lum and Abner* with the concluding episodes of the "Mousey Gray versus Iron Ike" fiasco. Lum's obsession with his self-appointed position as Mousey's "box-fighting" manager has led to another parting of the ways with Abner. In early January, Lum signs over his ownership of the Jot 'Em Down Store and Pine Ridge Bakery to Abner, in a successful attempt to convince Mousey to give up his job as night watchman for Walt Bates' mill, so that both manager and fighter can devote full time to training. This proves disastrous, as Iron Ike is the victor in his final confrontation with "Killer Dinnamite Gray". To add insult to injury, Abner enforces Lum's signed agreement, and claims sole ownership of the store and bakery.

For the remainder of January, Lum, consumed with self-pity, tries every trick in his book to convince Abner to return him to the fold, concluding with an attempt to sneak the ownership contract out of the store at night (based on some bad advice from Squire Skimp!). Lum ends up in jail, and later, as Justice of the Peace, prevails over his own trial, before a change-of-venue moves the proceedings to the County Seat. It isn't long before the entire foolish case is dismissed by the judge, and our friends are reconciled partners once more.

The federal income tax reached a peak in the early 1940's, and helped raise additional funds for defense, thanks to two revenue acts passed by Congress in 1940 and 1941. Filing deadline was March 15, until the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 changed the date to April 15. On Monday, February 2, 1942, Lum and Abner stumble through their income tax form, discovering that, by their calculations, the "givermint" owes them a refund of \$89.12:

LUM: We orten ta take it, Abner... the givermint's awful busy these days, and they're carryin' a turrible big burden with defense work and all that. We'll jist write 'em a letter 'n' tell 'em ta fergit about it this year!

Abner agrees, and Lum suggests sending the "givermint" the \$37.00 from the cash drawer:

LUM: Puttin' money inta th' givermint's th' best 'vest-mint you, er me, er enny citizen o' this country could make right now.

ABNER: Oh, yeah... now, how we gonna put that down here on the books, Lum?

LUM: Oh, I reckon we'll jist put down, "invest-mint in freedom, \$37.00".

On February 3, a mysterious stranger preaching honesty makes his first appearance in Pine Ridge. This character will become one of the most memorable "temporary" figures in the history of *Lum and Abner*, Diogenes Smith! His slogan, "Wonderful World", will soon be adopted by all the citizens of Pine Ridge, and will be echoed by Cedric Weehunt a few more years after Diogenes leaves the program. Diogenes Smith, patterning himself after the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes (412?-323 B.C.), begins walking the streets of Pine Ridge, carrying a lantern and looking for an "honest man", as did his namesake. In addition, the 1942 Diogenes hands out buttons reading "Honesty Brings Everything", and pamphlets bearing "golden words of honesty" to all who desire them. Lum is the first to discuss the curious newcomer, whom he describes as "a little tetch'd". Thursday, February 5, marks the first "live" appearance of Diogenes Smith, gloriously portrayed by the rich, lilting voice of radio actor / announcer Frank Graham (with whom *L&A* writer Roswell Rogers had worked before; see the August, 1985 *Jot 'Em Down Journal*). Diogenes informs *L&A* that he will award \$10,000 to the Pine Ridge man, woman or child judged the most honest, within a three month period. Assisting him in his task will be five totally secret deputies, appointed from the local ranks.



The "real" Diogenes, looking for an honest man.

Immediately, Pine Ridgeans begin spouting "wonderful world", and behaving as honestly as possible, all hoping to win the cash: Lum helps Abner wash windows, Lum becomes truthful to customers about the quality of store goods, Snake Hogan apologizes to a poor soul he has just roughed up, Sister Simpson admits her true age, and Squire Skimp pays his delinquent store bill! Even Cedric gets into the act, imitating Diogenes by walk-

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ing Pine Ridge with his own lamp. Soon, Diogenes moves into the Jot 'Em Down Store feed room with his printing press and ink (green ink), to begin printing his "golden" pamphlets in the wee dark hours, while Lum, Abner and friends try to determine who the secret "deputies" are (and everyone is a suspect!).

Scriptwriter Roz Rogers employs excellent foreshadowing with his "hint-dropping" in Diogenes' actions: the green printing ink, the padlock for his workshop (feed room) door, Lum's secretive deliveries of packaged "pamphlets" to other cities, etc. The listener's curiosity and suspicion of Diogenes is masterfully woven with each episode.

In 1942, the Big Ben Clock Company introduced the slogan, "Victory won't wait for the nation that's late". Pine Ridge discovered War Savings Time late, on Tuesday, February 17. (The concept was to utilize more daylight, and to conserve electricity, which the real Pine Ridge did not receive until 1945!) Abner is out, and Lum enters the store to ask Grandpappy Spears to instruct Abner to set the clock ahead one hour. Grandpap, seemingly lost in the Almanac, apparently does not hear these instructions, so Lum changes the clock himself, then leaves to deliver more pamphlets for Diogenes. Soon Abner arrives, and receives Lum's original instructions from Grandpap, setting the clock ahead not one, but two hours (an extra one for tomorrow!). Rushing off to the post office, Abner leaves the store in the care of Grandpap, who thinks he has to set the clock ahead one hour before leaving! By the time Lum and Abner return, the clock reads past 7:00 P.M., prompting Abner to call Lizabeth, thinking he is late for supper! Lizabeth, who informs Abner supertime is two hours away, gets a tongue-lashing from her "time-traveling" husband, who accuses her of being late! The Peabody domestic situation was not discussed on the next program.

During his "Circulation Manager" trips for Diogenes to Mena and Fort Smith, Lum picks up the idea to install Victory Boxes in the Jot 'Em Down Store (Monday, February 23). Citizens are encouraged to recycle old newspapers, hot water bottles, empty toothpaste and shaving cream tubes, etc. for "makin' de-fense stuff" - anything with tin and rubber content. Cedric, ever ready to help, misunderstands Lum's description of hot water bottles ("foot-warmers") with hilarious results. Pine Ridge folks stream in to contribute items for the Victory Boxes.

Circulation Manager Edwards' travels lead him to a shady-looking character or two, and Squire Skimp tells Lum of a stranger discovered carrying a package of explosives in the Mena depot - a package resembling Lum's pamphlet parcel sitting on the store counter! Lum and Abner hear something ticking... does Diogenes' package contain a bomb?!? (I refuse to spoil the ending of this classic!)

Lum, enamored with important titles, soon adds another to his list: Pine Ridge Air Raid Warden (February 24)! Two days later, bedecked in a second-hand porter's uniform, Lum appoints night-owl Mousey Gray an official airplane watcher. It is in this episode, while Lum fills out paperwork, that we learn Mousey's true name: Llewelyn Snavelly Gray. Diogenes, upon learning of Mousey's appointment, insists he be allowed to be a watcher, at least long enough to give Mousey a break for an hour or two each evening. The following day, Lum, after trying to file the word "Game" off a Game Warden's badge (to use on his uniform), takes his first report from "Official Watcher # 6Q29", Mousey Gray, which turns out to be a minute-by-minute recounting of every detail of the previous night. Instead of enemy airplanes, Mousey

recorded his encounters with a friendly hoot owl ("hoo-HOOO") who seemed "just like a mother to him". Diogenes had spelled him around 2:00 A.M., but Mousey, from a distance, observed an automobile stopping, its driver paying Diogenes for a large package of "pamphlets". Ever-observant Mousey had jotted down the license plate number, which later turns out to belong to Cedric! Lum fears Cedric has taken away the Circulation Manager job, but it is soon discovered that his license plate has been stolen, and appears again on March 3, on the car making another nocturnal transaction with Diogenes! Watcher Mousey notices the car departing later, but with Illinois plates! The mystery grows thicker, as Cedric's plates eventually reappear on his vehicle!



Like Lum, Laurel & Hardy became "Air Raid Wardens" in their 1943 film of the same name.

Also on March 3, the Pine Ridge lady folk get involved in the war effort, as Lizabeth and Little Pearl practice bandaging techniques for the Red Cross. Abner, in a telephone conversation, advises Lizabeth to half-sole her worn shoes with old saddle leather, but not to bother the old tires he has stored nearby, reminding her "...the givermint needs that rubber." The Victory Boxes are still being filled on March 5, providing Grandpap with fodder for his reading appetite in the way of discarded newspapers.

Lum's chatty visit with a detective during one of his circulation trips to Hot Springs makes Diogenes nervous, so much so that he leaves Pine Ridge quickly, on the pretense that he needs to pick up printing supplies. Diogenes leaves Lum in full charge, should anyone come to town questioning the pamphlet operation. Lum relishes his new authority, imitating Diogenes' voice and wearing the clothes he left behind (even adopting the name "Diogenes Eddards"!); however, it seems Cedric has been assigned the duty of keeping Diogenes' lantern burning brightly. Cedric, who drove Diogenes to Hatfield to catch a train, also inherited the feedroom keys, dropped by Diogenes' in his haste.

Cedric mysteriously becomes a "big spender" on March 9, asking Abner to order an expensive bicycle from the "wish book". This transaction is interrupted by an emergency call from Lum, ordering Cedric to bring his Air Raid Warden uniform to him at the barber shop - are enemy planes flying overhead? Has the war come to Pine Ridge? No, Lum needs the uniform pants to re-

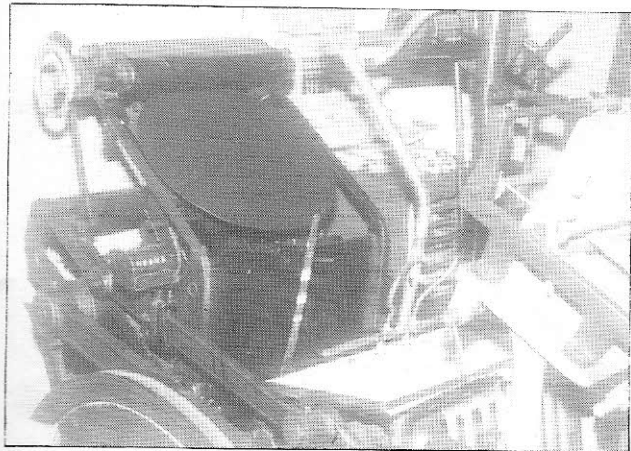
place those of Diogenes', which have split on him! But what of Cedric's newfound wealth? The affable young man continues to order items from the mail-order catalog, despite Lum's warnings, claiming there is more money to come. With the help of Grandpap (who has been reading *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*), reasons that both Diogenes and Cedric must have received their wealth from a magic lamp - Diogenes' lantern, left in Cedric's care! Tricking Cedric into leaving the lamp with them temporarily, Lum and Abner attempt rubbing the lamp to obtain magical money, but to no avail!



Lum and Abner deal with ration coupons like this one in numerous WWII episodes.

Sugar rationing is referred to on March 13, as Mrs. Barton calls Abner with a grocery order. Abner misinterprets the "givermint" limit of two pounds of sugar per customer, thinking the customer must take two pounds, whether she needs it or not! Lum is still active as Air Raid Warden, and Abner pitches in as watcher, being awakened by his own snoring the next day, confusing the sound with that of an enemy plane!

Cedric's loose spending attracts the attention of a certain stranger named Mr. Adams (voiced deeply by Tuffy Goff), who interrogates young Mr. Weehunt without success. [*Editor's note: If you've never heard these programs, and do not want the ending of this series "spoiled", read no further!!*] Meanwhile, on March 17, Abner finally convinces Cedric to show him the true source of his wealth: it is none other than Diogenes Smith's "magic" printing press!! With a childlike belief in their "magical power" to produce ten dollar bills, "Mr. Peabody" and "Mr. Weehunt" begin ordering frivolous items from the "wish book", and decide to quit the "store binness" to become



Diogenes Smith would have likely used a press similar to this Kluge Letter Press owned by Duplicating Services Co. of Longview, Texas

wealthy "gypsies". During a "magic money" printing session on March 20, Lum catches the "gypsies" operating the press, realizing at last that Diogenes Smith was a counterfeiter all along! He decides to try the press himself, with the thought of using it to print handbills for the store, only to be witnessed by Mr. Adams (a "givermint" man!), who catches Lum in the act of printing a sheet of bogus ten dollar bills! Before he can explain, Lum is under arrest, with Cedric in tow (Cedric's stolen license plates were observed in another state, on the mysterious car that obviously picked up counterfeit money from Diogenes)!

The remaining episodes of March, 1942 feature Lum (out on bail) and Abner's worries over the upcoming trial, with Cedric remaining incarcerated. Mr. Adams will not believe Diogenes Smith exists, and Lum and Abner realize the true criminal will never return. Abner fears arrest, having ordered merchandise with counterfeit money, and wishes he had bought "de-fense bonds" instead:

LUM: That'd been a fine howdy do; take counterfeit money and buy de-fense bonds with 'em!

ABNER: Huh?

LUM: You would 'a-been in trouble, shore 'nuff, then! ...that ain't very "patrinotics"!

Luckily, Abner's order (full of fake cash) is returned for insufficient postage! The problems of Lum and Cedric are far from over, and Lum's patience is worn thin on March 24, as he tries to explain to literal-minded Abner what is meant by being "framed" for a crime and "railroaded" (this is some classic "Abner double talk"). To add to his frustration, Lum learns the grim truth that his lawyer will not touch his case. In a surprise move, Cedric escapes from jail, and is joined by Lum in an apparent escape from the law. Mr. Adams' superior, Mr. Freemont, is led on a whirlwind goose chase for the fugitives, aided by "Operator XW9" (Mousey!), a plot device that allowed Chet Lauck a two-episode vacation!

Monday, March 30, 1942: "Wonderful World!" booms an ecstatic Lum, boldly entering the Jot 'Em Down Store, ready to give himself up to the authorities, along with his "sprize" guest - **Diogenes Smith**, captured in St. Louis with the help of Cedric! The following day, Diogenes signs a full confession for Messrs. Freemont and Adams. Lum, Abner and Grandpap reflect on Diogenes' influence, noting the drastic improvement in the behavior of Pine Ridgeans during the \$10,000 honesty contest. Before being taken away, Diogenes (whose real name is Roswell Graham, taken from writer Roswell Rogers and actor Frank Graham) makes his final appearance, delivering a stirring soliloquy, having realized the error of his ways, and pledges to live the remainder of his life in true honesty. With a final "wonderful world", Diogenes departs from *Lum and Abner* forever, but leaves behind an envelope containing a check for a genuine \$10,000, to be used for the betterment of Pine Ridge. So ends the month of March, 1942, and so concludes a *Lum and Abner* series remembered today as a true classic, and one that must have helped ease the early tensions of a nation going to war.

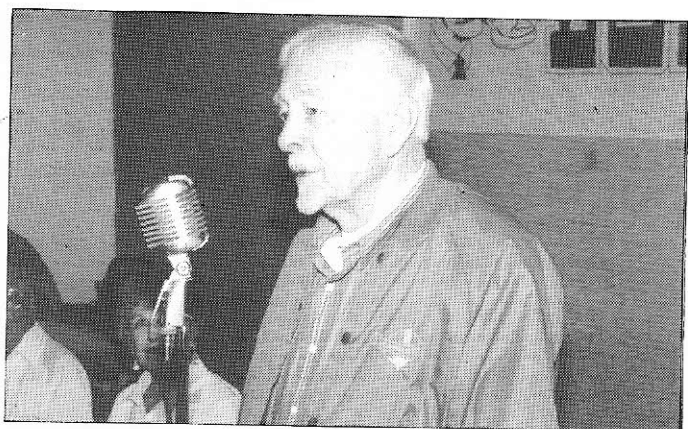
The programs discussed in this installment of "Lum and Abner Go to War" may be found on Tapes # 54 through # 62 of the NLAS Tape Library. For those of you with special memories of *Lum and Abner* during the years of World War II, please write us and share your recollections for upcoming articles.

“AND NOW...”



Rex Riffle at the boyhood home of Chet Lauck, Mena, Arkansas, in June of 1985.

Rex Riffle, Publicity Director for the National Lum and Abner Society since 1984, announced his resignation from that position December 16, 1991. Rex cited changes in his teaching assignment at Buckhannon-Upshur High School (Buckhannon, West Virginia) and the resulting increased workload as reasons for relinquishing his NLAS duties. Sam Brown, our Vice-President, has incorporated the duties of Publicity Director within his position. Rex remains Vice-President of the International Jack Benny Fan Club, headed by Laura Lee. We wish Rex, his wife Peggy, and their daughter Emily the very best.

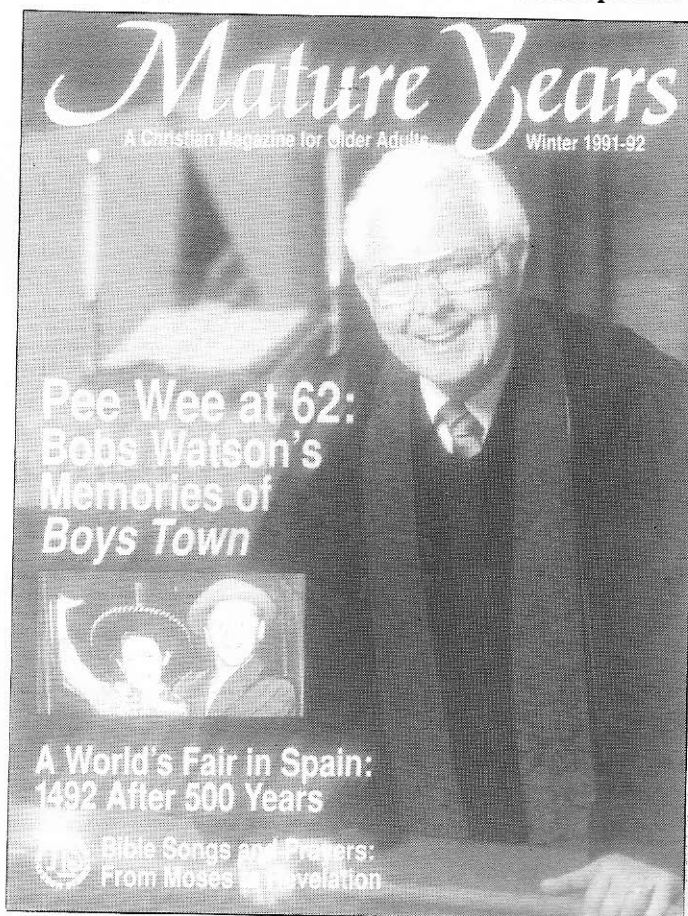


Les Tremayne at the 1991 NLAS Convention

SHAZAM! Mr. Mentor to the rescue! Versatile actor **Les Tremayne**, who joined us with his wife **Joan** as our special guests at the 1991 NLAS Convention, has answered the Society's call for **HELP!!** In our December, 1991 issue of the *Journal*, we put out a call for assistance in locating a 16mm print of *The Bashful Bachelor*, Lum and Abner's second film, for a special "big screen" showing at our convention this June. Mr. Tremayne was kind enough to locate a film rental company, and generously offered to finance the use of the film for the NLAS! We would like to recognize and thank Les profusely for this wonderful gesture! As Abner might express it to him, "Bless yer heart... bah-**LES** yer LIT-tle HEART!!"

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We have two reports on honorary member **Bobs Watson** this issue. Bobs, the former child actor who appeared in *Dreaming Out Loud*, the first Lum and Abner motion picture (1940), and was our convention guest in 1990, is featured in the Winter 1991-92 issue of *Mature Years*, a Christian magazine published by the United Methodist Church. An excellent seven-page article by John Warren Steen traces Bobs' movie career from childhood (focusing on the classic *Boys Town*) to his adult years, and recounts his calling into the ministry. Anyone interested in ordering this magazine may call Cokesbury (the denomination's "bookstore") toll-free at 1-800-672-1789. Profits from publications sold by Cokesbury go to the retirement fund for Methodist pastors.



Part two of our report on **Rev. Bobs Watson** arrived in the Christmas greeting he and **Mrs. Jaye Watson** sent to NLAS headquarters. The Watsons wrote, "Bobs has been granted a medical disability leave as of December 1, 1991, and relieved of his duties at the Methodist Church here in Montrose (California). Jaye remains at the church, holding things together until an interim pastor is assigned (January 1, 1992)." We of the NLAS wish Rev. Watson a speedy recovery, and will keep Bobs and Jaye in our prayers. We are certain their combined faith will see them through, as is evidenced in another quote from their letter, "...God has always watched over us, and our needs will be supplied through continued faith and applied talents."

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

Meet the Members

Send Your Article & Photo
To: MEET THE MEMBERS,
P.O. Box 869, Carthage,
TX 75633

DWAIN W. SMITH

of Franklin Square, New York

"Having enjoyed the Pine Ridge gang every weekday evening as a youngster, I was delighted to learn of the existence of the NLAS. It was mentioned in the annual newsletter of the Friends of Vic and Sade, and I hastened to join your ranks.

"I retired in 1987, having spent the previous 17 years with the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics in New York City, where I was Administrative Director. A veteran of WWII (USAF), I finally got my bachelor's degree from New York University in 1957, after nine years of night school. By that time, two of our three children were born, and they've produced four grandchildren.

"Other than membership in the Vic and Sade group, my activities include bagpiping (I've played at Carnegie Hall), senior softball (our L.I. team won the 65+ category at the Senior World Series in Arizona in September 1990), backyard gardening, and active participation in the Sons of the Desert, an international club dedicated to the appreciation and preservation of the films of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.

"Last year I organized a reunion of my 1939 grammar school graduating class. It started small, but by the time the event was held there were 225 students attending, representing graduating classes from 1932 through 1956. We also had seven former teachers there, some of whom began their teaching careers before 1930.

"The *Lum and Abner* program was one of my two favorites during the growing-up years. *Jack Armstrong*, *Orphan Annie*, *Terry and the Pirates*, and Tom Mix just couldn't begin to compete. And unlike so many things from the past, the L&A shows are just as enjoyable today as they were in the 1930's. Thanks for keeping the NLAS alive!

"P.S. The lady in the photo is my wife Elaine."



RONNIE CRAMER

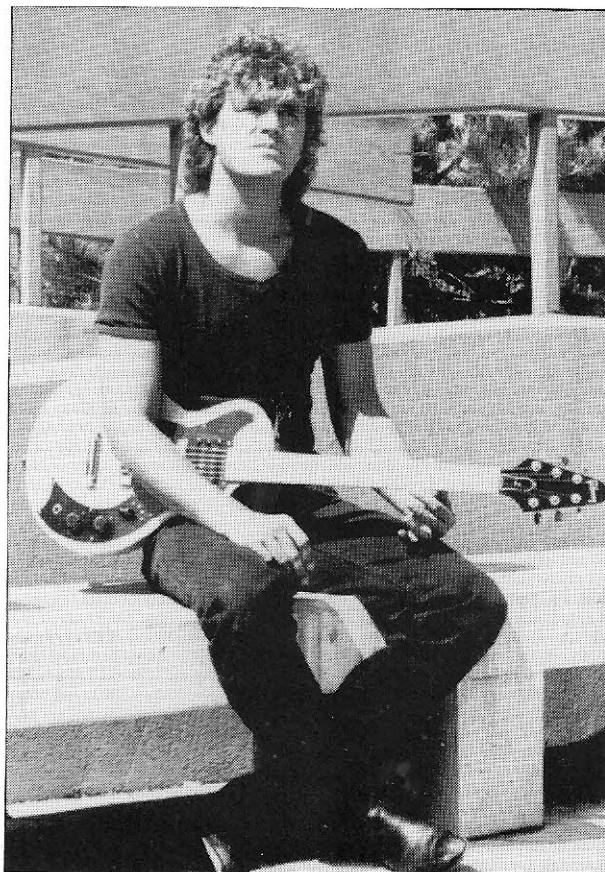
of Denver, Colorado

Joining the NLAS last year, 33-year-old Ronnie Cramer has been a member of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado since 1982, and provides cover artwork and a trivia column for that organization's monthly newsletter, *Return With Us Now*.

Guitarist for the Denver-based rock group "Alarming Trends," Cramer is also a filmmaker, having recently directed the crime feature *Back Street Jane*, which has been favorably compared to John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle*.

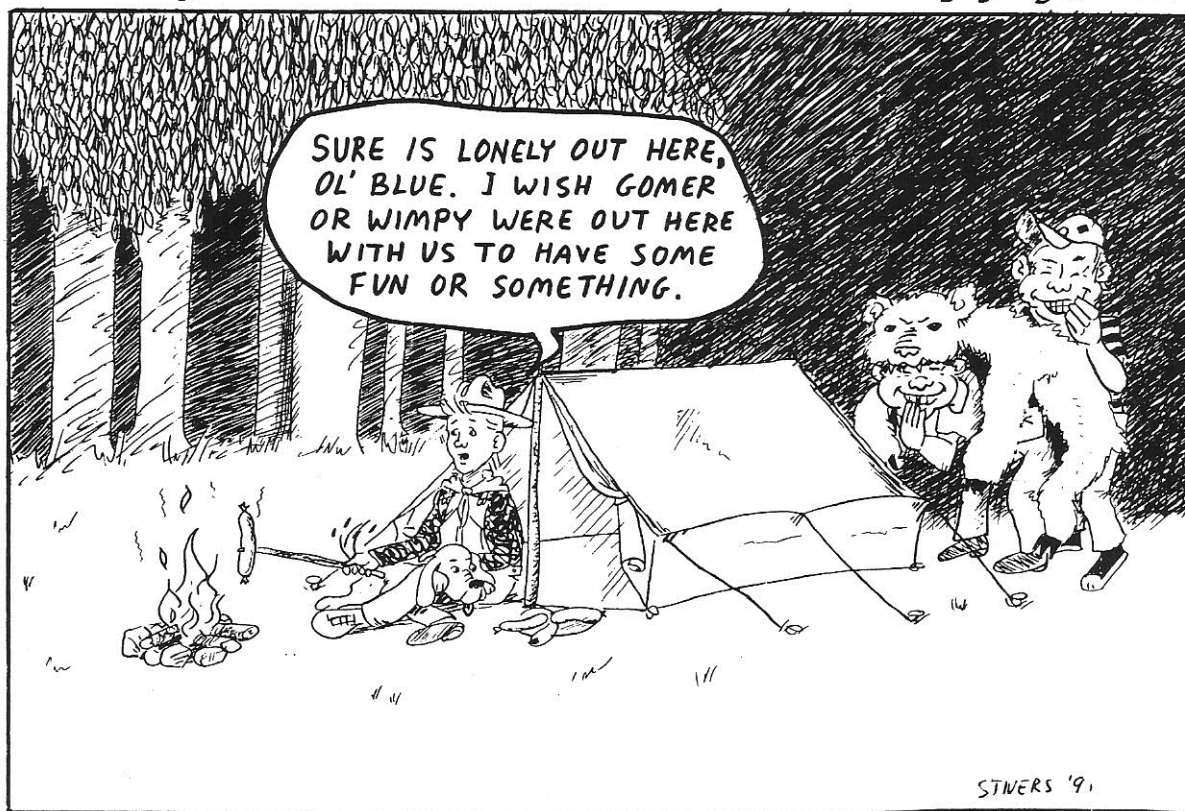
A longtime radio program collector and *Lum and Abner* "affectionado," Ronnie would like nothing better than to take his wife and three children on a motor trip to Pine Ridge.

(This year would be a great one to do it, Ronnie! Our Convention in Mena on June 27 promises to be one of our greatest yet.)



The Golden Era

by Gary Stivers



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