

OCTOBER 1992

50 And Counting!

The *Jot 'Em Down Journal* you are now reading is the 50th issue to be produced since the National Lum and Abner Society was founded in July 1984. We feel that this is a very notable accomplishment for an organization that very few people thought would last when it first began. The question we heard over and over again was, "How can you find anything to say about Lum and Abner in a sustained manner?" Well, we suppose these 50 issues have answered that question.

Several of the back issues of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* are still available at \$2.00 each. The other issues are out of print for now; at some point in the future, we hope to publish *The Best of the Jot 'Em Down Journal*, which will reprint the articles from those long-ago issues. However, until we are financially able to pursue this, our members must get along with the back issues that are still in stock. Following is a list of available issues and the material that is covered in each (only the feature articles are listed... each issue contains assorted other trivia as well):

August 1985 - Roz Rogers' autobiography; Charles Lyon obituary; report on 1st NLAS Convention; checklist of Roz Rogers' work; *Two Weeks To Live* review.

October 1985 - Clarence Hartzell's biography; *So This Is Washington* review; Clarence Hartzell's "Memories of L&A"

June 1986 - *Lum and Abner Abroad* review; L&A animated cartoon series; 1935 newspaper articles reprinted

October 1986 - 1948 television pilot; Joe Troyan's "Memories of L&A;" Honorary Member roster; Pine Ridge ghost story

December 1986 - L&A's Christmas Story; 1949 television pilot; L&A's other holiday shows

February 1987 - Public TV documentary; 1941 magazine article; L&A's "lost chapter"

August 1987 - Jerry Hausner's biography; 1987 Convention report; L&A impersonators Frost & Jensen

October 1987 - Goff on *Gomer Pyle* series; reprints of *Mena Star* articles; 1st "And Now" column; Bobs Watson's "Memories of L&A"

December 1987 - "A Pine Ridge Christmas Carol;" Goff on the *Andy Griffith Show*; O.W. Hatfield obituary

February 1988 - Opie Cates obituary and autobiography; 1934 *Radio Guide* article reprinted; Chet Lauck narrates *The Arkansas River*

April 1988 - Clarence Hartzell obituary and biography; Bob Dwyer obituary; tributes to C. Hartzell from Roz Rogers and NLAS Ossifers

August 1988 - Elmore Vincent biography; *Two Boys From Mena*; 1988 Convention report

October 1988 - Lum For President campaign; 1938 newspaper articles reprinted; review of L&A's TV appearances; radio stations currently carrying L&A reruns

December 1988 - L&A's 1988 Christmas Wish Book; 1933 newspaper article reprinted

February 1989 - Parallels between L&A and Andy Griffith; the many faces of L&A; L&A crossword puzzle

June 1989 - The many faces of Grandpappy Spears; Illinois public TV salute to L&A

August 1989 - Jim Backus obituary; Wendell Niles biography; the NLAS's 5th anniversary; history of NLAS; 1989 Convention report

October 1989 - Parallels between L&A and Li'l Abner; Jerry Hausner salutes Jim Backus; the many faces of Squire Skimp

December 1989 - L&A and the Christmas Tree (1953 Christmas program)

February 1990 - Quaker Oats sponsorship; *Dreaming Out Loud* toy boat; the many faces of Mousey Gray; 1980 Chet Lauck obituaries reprinted

April 1990 - Ford sponsorship, 1932-34; the many faces of Dick Huddleston; 1933-34 magazine article reprinted

June 1990 - Horlick's Malted Milk sponsorship, Part 1; the many faces of Ben Withers

August 1990 - Bobs Watson's biography; Horlick's sponsorship, Part 2; 1990 Convention report

October 1990 - Making of *Dreaming Out Loud*; Postum sponsorship; *Dreaming Out Loud* anniversary showing

February 1991 - Alka-Seltzer sponsorship; L&A's 1000th Keystone broadcast

April 1991 - Elsie Mae Emerson obituary; L&A's 60th Anniversary; tributes from Ethel Huddleston Ball, John Faulkner, Eloise Plaster, and Harriet Lauck

June 1991 - Frigidaire sponsorship

August 1991 - Les Tremayne biography; Lum addresses the Legislature; Ford sponsorship, 1950; 1991 Convention report

October 1991 - Halloween with L&A; 1950's radio shows; L&A in the Twilight Zone; history of KTHS radio

December 1991 - L&A's Christmas Parade Float; Dec. 1941-Jan. 1942 wartime shows

February 1992 - Parallels between L&A & Laurel & Hardy; Feb.-March 1942 wartime shows

April 1992 - Advance publicity for *The Bashful Bachelor*; April-May 1942 wartime shows

June 1992 - June-July 1942 wartime shows

August 1992 - Ruel Bain obituary; Louise Currie biography; Aug.-Sept. 1942 wartime shows; 1942 L&A woodcarving contest; 1992 Convention report

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

October 1992

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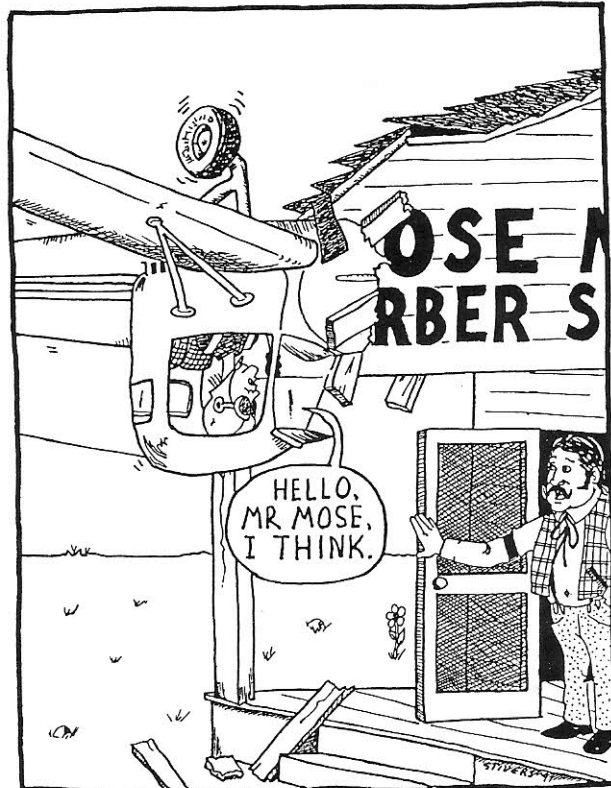
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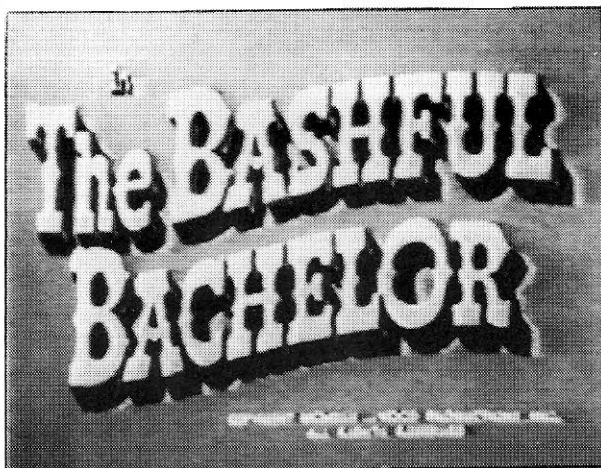
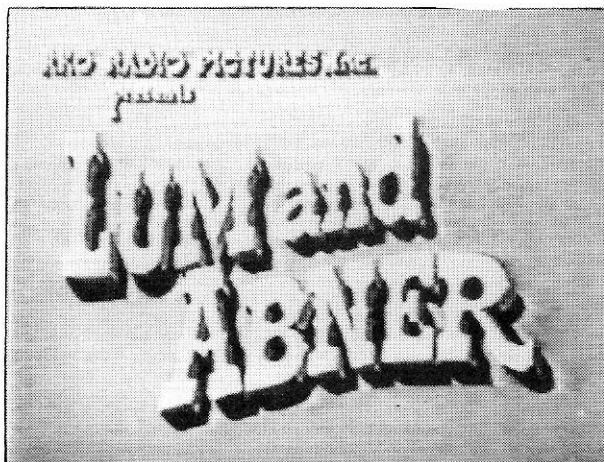
The Golden Era by Gary Stivers



COVER: Lum & Abner's October 1942 radio storyline about a rocket ship to Mars is adapted for the movie screen in *Two Weeks To Live* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943).

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The Annotated BASHFUL BACHELOR



Lum and Abner's fans who had been somewhat disappointed with the pair's first motion picture, *Dreaming Out Loud*, because of its melodramatic overtones and romantic subplot, must have been pleasantly surprised when L&A's second film, *The Bashful Bachelor*, was released in 1942. Out of our old friends' seven movies, this is the one that most closely resembles the radio series. This is due largely to the fact that the plot was cobbled together from several storylines that had actually been performed originally on radio.

The resemblance to the broadcasts begins immediately after the familiar and classic tower beeping out "ANRKO RADIO PICTURE." As this logo fades from the screen, the opening notes of the 1941-44 organ theme are heard; this is the theme that Chet Lauck usually identified as being called *Evalena*; at any rate, it is the theme heard on the syndicated L&A recordings today. This radio theme plays through the "LUM AND ABNER in THE BASHFUL BACHELOR" title cards, after which the melody is picked up by the studio orchestra for the rest of the credits. We see that the screenplay is written by one Chandler Sprague, "from an original story by Chester Lauck and Norris Goff" (undoubtedly because much of it originated in the radio broadcasts).

Viewers may have been somewhat baffled at first by the opening scene: we see two medieval knights engaged in furious battle while a captive maiden stands tied to a tree. One of the knights defeats his opponent and frees the damsel in distress; when she runs to kiss him, he lifts the visor on his helmet to reveal the face of... Lum Edwards??? At this point the scene freezes to become an illustration in a book being read out loud by Lum's sweetheart Miss Geraldine (ZaSu Pitts). Lum is intently imagining himself to be the hero of the tale. Their reverie is broken by the clock striking 10:00. "Latest I've kept you up in years," Lum comments. "I guess you forgot about 1935... you stayed till 12:00, remember?" Miss Geraldine asks. "Oh yeah, New Year's Eve," chuckles Lum. "I never got in bed till 12:15 that night..."

After starting one of the movie's several running gags by walking into Miss Geraldine's closet instead of out her front door, Lum wends his way home, practicing swordsmanship with a loose board from a picket fence ("Come out, Sir Desmond, dad blame ye!"). He awakens an irate Pine Ridge citizen whom Lum calls "Knute," but who sounds a lot like Dink Trout, the character actor who appeared in several roles on *Lum and Abner* in the late 1940's. Lum convinces the grouch that he was actually calling for his lost dog, Sir Desmond.

Comes the morning, and we find Abner already at work in the Jot 'Em Down Store. The old fellow is busy building rabbit cages and mumbling to a store mannequin he calls "Mr. Dilbeck." Both of



these elements were taken from the series of radio programs L&A created in the summer of 1941 as a West Coast "test series" for Miles Laboratories (see Tapes #308 to #310 in the NLAS Tape Library). Into the store comes beautiful Marjorie (Louise Currie), Squire Skimp's niece, with an extra rabbit that has somehow escaped. Through her dialogue, we learn that Abner's constant trading habit has been driving Lum almost stark raving mad crazy... now Abner confesses that he has swapped the store's dilapidated delivery car to some gypsies in exchange for a horse. (Probably the same delivery vehicle L&A purchased on the radio shows of autumn 1941.) When Lum enters, Marjorie wisely makes a hasty exit before the sparks begin to fly.

Lum tells Abner that his greatest desire is to become a hero in the eyes of Miss Geraldine, so that "maybe I could git her ta marry me... now laugh, dad blame ye." This is a scene that is long on dialogue but short on visual action, much as if an episode of the radio show were literally translated to the screen. (During the 15-minute radio conversations, exactly what ARE L&A supposed to be doing as they talk?) In the case of this movie, Chet and Tuffy almost seem at a loss for physical gestures to perform as they talk... frequently they just begin wandering aimlessly about the store set; anything to provide the theater audience with some sort of visual activity!

In this film, the feed room has been replaced by a shed in the back of the store, and this is where Lum discovers Abner's horse. Abner at first feigns ignorance: "I doggies, that does look sompin' like a horse, ye know it?" This is the cue for Cedric Weehunt to make his screen debut! Cedric is portrayed by character actor Grady Sutton, who is most famous today for his many supporting roles with W.C. Fields. At the time of this movie's release, Sutton was 34 years old, and so gives a bit different interpretation of Cedric than the radio series, which portrayed the lovable oaf as somewhere between 18 and 21 years old. His impersonation of Cedric's voice is also different from Chet Lauck's radio performance, even though Sutton repeats "Yes mom" often enough to make the characterization stick.

It develops that not only has Abner traded off the delivery car for this horse, but he has hired Cedric to take care of the animal. ("Do I hafta sleep in the same stall with him?" asks Cedric. "He snores.") All of this is just too frustrating for Lum to take: "I've got headaches

enuff without all o' this," he groans. This prompts the strangest radio-related scene in the entire film... Abner declares, "Well, if a headache's all that's botherin' ye, I kin fix that up fer ye right away," and promptly mixes Lum a glass of Alka-Seltzer (their current sponsor!). Abner is so desperate to keep the horse that he will agree to nearly anything. Lum makes Abner promise that he will help make a hero out of Lum and so impress Miss Geraldine.

Later in the day, L&A play checkers (something that rarely was depicted on radio, when Grandpappy Spears was usually Abner's checker partner). A customer identified only as "Obadiah" waits impatiently for one of the proprietors to fill his grocery order; Abner impatiently directs him to Dick Huddleston's store... probably the only time Huddleston was mentioned in an L&A movie! The game is interrupted again by the ringing of the telephone... not the familiar three rings of the radio series (someone must have forgotten to inform RKO's sound effects man). The call is from Widder Abernathy, whose order fails to disrupt the continuing checker game: Lum simply hangs up on her in mid-sentence.

Another customer enters. This time it is Uncle Henry Lunsford, who is played by Danny Duncan, the actor who was voicing the character of Uncle Henry on the radio at the time. Thus, Duncan has the distinction of being the only actor other than Lauck and Goff themselves to perform his radio character in the movies. (He would be used in many of the future L&A films, eventually becoming the screen version of Grandpappy Spears in *So This Is Washington*.) Even so, Uncle Henry's personality in this film is drastically different from his blustering persona of the radio show: it seems that the Lunsford family has fallen on hard times, and Uncle Henry is quite ashamedly wanting to settle up his bill. In true Pine Ridge fashion, L&A feel so sorry for the old man that they load him down with groceries and special favors... all on credit, of course.

After Uncle Henry's grateful departure, the sentimental mood is shattered upon the entrance of the aged and portly Widder Abernathy (Constance Purdy) and her ill-mannered brood. She decided that, instead of phoning in her order, she would come in person. She flirts shamelessly with Lum, requesting that he deliver her order personally. As she leaves, one of her brats deliberately taunts Lum by knocking over a display of stacked canned goods... another running gag in the film. The falling cans knock a cardboard Alka-Seltzer sign out of



sight, preventing the movie from being accused of having too much advertising in it!

L&A start getting the Widder's order together (ABNER: "Two canso' dog food...hmm,must be havin' company."), while discussing her age-old pursuit of Lum. Mr. Edwards insists, "I'd jest as leave marry a bunch of pizen ivy," and the conversation turns to the subject of Mister Abernathy. He supposedly died in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but Lum's opinion is that the poor man probably just ran away. He just can't bring himself to deliver the Widder's order, and sends Abner out with the basket to face the old hag.

On the street, we find a traveling salesman (well-known character actor Benny Rubin) and his female assistant, who are desperately in need of ready cash. The pitchman spies Abner's grocery basket, and promptly identifies himself as an eye doctor: he will trade Abner a brand-new pair of glasses for the contents of the basket! (This story concerning glasses, which figures throughout the rest of the film, originated in a plot used on the radio series in April 1935, recently discovered in the Worth Ware transcription disc collection.)



Meanwhile, back at the store, Lum and Cedric discuss heroes. Cedric tells of seeing a movie in which a man rescued a girl who was tied to the railroad tracks. CEDRIC: "An' then guess what happened?" LUM: "She kissed him?" CEDRIC: "Aw shucks, ya seen it yerself." This gives Lum an idea... he will become a hero by rescuing Abner from the same fate!!

We return to Abner and the salesman, who has fitted Mr. Peabody with new glasses; in an amusing point-of-view shot, we see how blurred and wavy everything looks through the cheap spectacles. (There is an inside gag when the pitchman accidentally reveals a poster advertising "Dr. Hersh's Tonic..." this was a reference to the movie's production manager, Ben Hersh.) Abner stumbles on his way, blithely stepping right into a watering trough ("Doggies, musta rained last night."). When Abner gets back to the store and Lum learns what has happened, the sparks fly once again. Lum takes the glasses and leaves with Cedric, purportedly to run the salesman out of town.

While Lum is gone, Abner gets back to building his rabbit hutches. Then, into the store comes Squire Skimp, portrayed by Irish

actor Oscar O'Shea. Physically, O'Shea is just about perfect as Squire, but his heavy accent takes some getting used to. Squire has gotten wind of Abner's horse trading, and wants to see the animal for himself. He examines Abner's horse with great interest, but then coughs and pronounces the beast worthless. Marjorie comes out of nowhere and disagrees with him; she thinks the horse looks like it may have come from the Frank Williams stables near Hot Springs, in which case its lineage would be fine indeed. She suggests that Abner enter the horse (which he has named Skyrocket) in the county sweepstakes in Mena, which would put it into direct competition with Squire's own horse, Brown Bess.

With Squire and Marjorie having left, Lum returns and gives Abner his blurry spectacles back, saying that Abner just hasn't had time to get used to them. Then, not unexpectedly, Lum pulls out a pair of glasses of his own, prescribed for him by the good "doctor." "My eyes wuz gittin' awful bad," Lum explains. "He said that might be what's causin' my azmy." Then, in a true radio style blackout, Cedric also enters with a pair: "He said I look more extinguished



lookin' with 'em on," he says as the scene fades to black.

Marjorie tests riding Skyrocket, while Squire keeps an eye on the proceedings through a spyglass. Marjorie has learned that Skyrocket is indeed faster than Brown Bess, but there is only one little problem: Skyrocket is a balker, and refuses to run when such action is necessary. Abner wants to try riding the horse himself, and while he is aboard, Skyrocket sees a rabbit dash out of the nearby woods. With a whinny, the horse takes off like a shot. Squire joins the group just in time to witness this turn of events, and is highly amused, guffawing that Skyrocket operates on "one rabbit power."

The next sequence is one of the most commonly seen from any L&A movie. Lum and Cedric tie the unwitting Abner to the railroad tracks, the plan being that Lum will rush out from the bushes and rescue his partner as the "Fast Express" thunders down the line. Through none of Lum's efforts, both narrowly escape mutilation. This scene is quite effective, although the railroad tracks in the distance and the oncoming locomotive are quite obviously a rear-projection screen. In fact, Tuffy's daughter, Gretchen Goff Dooling, recalls becoming distraught during this scene when Tuffy had

borrowed a print of the film to show at home. She says that, even though she was sitting on her daddy's lap at the time and knew very well that he was portraying Abner on the screen, the drama of the moment was too much for her four-year-old mind to comprehend!

Lum's railroad track idea having failed miserably, Mr. Edwards comes up with another plan. They will pretend that Abner has been kidnapped, and will forge a ransom note demanding \$1000 for Abner's safe return. Lum will hire a couple of hoboes to pose as the kidnapers, and he will stage a daring rescue of his partner. (While Lum is explaining all of this in typical radio dialogue, once again L&A wander about the store's set, trying to provide some movement to the scene.) Lum will bring a ladder to Abner's house that night and get the old fellow out of town; he makes the mistake of saying that they have to "strike while the iron's hot," which leads to an abbreviated version of an Ol' Eddards Sayin' routine.

Lum's attempted "kidnapping" of Abner is a slapstick comedy in which lamps and various other household furnishings are broken, and it ends with Lum carrying Abner piggyback (as the rocks hurt Mr. Peabody's bare feet). During parts of this scene, the radio theme *Evalena* is played softly in the background. The next morning, Marjorie discovers the ransom note nailed to the door of the Jot 'Em Down Store; it is signed "The Red Circle Gang." (Collectors may recall that in the 1950's L&A performed a radio story concerning the "Red X Gang;" it is highly possible that both of these concepts have their roots in some radio storyline of the 1930's.)

When word gets around that Abner has been kidnapped, a posse forms. The sheriff is portrayed by character actor Irving Bacon, who had appeared as town drunk Wes Stillman in L&A first film, *Dreaming Out Loud*; he would have an even larger role in the pair's next picture, *Two Weeks To Live*. Lum leads the way, but a surprise is waiting for him. The two hoboes he hired to pose as the kidnapers have decided that as long as someone is supposed to be paying a \$1000 ransom fee, they might as well hold Abner at gunpoint until they collect the money! The odds are highly against Lum, as his pistol contains blanks while the hoboes are firing real bullets! Once again, blissful ignorance prevails, and the hoboes are defeated. When Lum discovers what has actually been going on, he faints.

It turns out that Marjorie has entered Skyrocket in the county sweepstakes. She and Abner are playing checkers, while Lum



reports that Miss Geraldine "AD-mires" his handling of the kidnapping. Abner's dry comment: "Mighty funny when a feller don't know when he's well off, an' goes stickin' his head into matrimony." Nevertheless, Lum has composed a note to Miss Geraldine: "My love fer you is strong and true/It'll last ez long ez skies er blue/Will you be kind an' share my life/In short, will you become my wife? Signed, Lum Eddards, Proprietor of the Jot 'Em Down Store, Pine Ridge, Arkansas." Since Lum is too much the "bashful bachelor" of the title to deliver the note in person, Marjorie suggests that Abner hand the note to Miss Geraldine instead.

This proves to be a near-fatal mistake. Because of his new spectacles, Abner mistakes (horrors!) Widder Abernathy for Miss Geraldine, and cheerfully hands her Lum's note!! (The Widder's multitude of children set up a cheer: "Mom's got him at last!") Lum's reaction to this mistake on Abner's part is pure radio: he uses a rope to divide the store into two equal halves. A character named Judge Akins (the actor is unidentified) informs Lum that the Widder intends to sue for breach of promise unless the wedding goes through.

Marjorie is thoroughly exasperated by the two old fellows' antics, and she gets to the root of the problem by tearing the phony eyeglasses from L&A's faces and stamping them into oblivion (the glasses, that is, not L&A's faces!). Then Squire appears upon the scene once again: Lum tries to get him to shop in his half of the store by shouting, "Don't go over thar to git skinned, Squire... come over here!" But Squire isn't there to buy anything. He is representing the Widder in her breach of promise suit, and has come to threaten Lum. The conversation turns to the upcoming horse race, and Lum bets his half of the store that Skyrocket can beat Brown Bess. Not to be outdone, Abner then bets his half of the store as well: if Skyrocket wins, Squire will pay Marjorie's tuition to an art institute. (It is possible that this was an inside joke as well, since Louise "Marjorie" Currie was studying to become an interior decorator at the time.)

The setting for the county fair in Mena is, in reality, Chet Lauck's own ranch, with the rear projection screen brought into use to depict carnival rides and sideshows in the background. Cedric, who is supposed to ride Skyrocket in the race, wants to visit the Hall of Mirrors, but doesn't have the admission fee; Squire generously pays





Cedric's way in. The simpleminded Mr. Weehunt promptly gets lost in the maze and is out of the story for the rest of the film. With Cedric having been disposed of, Abner is scheduled to be the substitute jockey, but Lum and Marjorie can't find him, either. Squire has seen to that as well. It seems that Skyrocket had indeed been stolen from Hot Springs by the gypsies, and since Abner bought the horse, Squire had him arrested for possessing stolen merchandise!

Abner is languishing in jail, while in the cell next to him, two vagrants (Bill and Joe) decide to frighten Abner by bragging of the dangerous crimes they have committed. But Abner can play that game as well as they can. He soon convinces them that he is "Horse Thief Peabody," wanted in several states. One of the bums wants to know if Abner ever committed any crimes around Tulsa, Oklahoma, as that is where he used to live. A light goes on in Abner's head at hearing this.

Lum springs Abner from the calaboose by setting off a false fire alarm, and he yells that the blaze is at the county fairgrounds. L&A ride the fire truck to the nonexistent conflagration, arriving just two minutes before post time. Once the race begins, Skyrocket displays his old reluctance and refuses to run, but Marjorie opens a sack and releases a rabbit, which gives the horse his cue. Skyrocket is off like a shot, with Abner aboard.

The filming of this scene provided one of the strangest "backstage" stories in L&A movie history. As related by Gretchen Goff Dooling, Tuffy had been relentlessly playing practical jokes on his good friend Andy Devine at this particular time. When Andy finally caught on, he determined to get his revenge on Tuffy. Knowing that Tuffy was going to have to ride the horse in full uncomfortable Abner makeup, Andy decided to do everything in his power to prolong Tuffy's misery. As Devine was an amateur pilot, he took great pleasure in "buzzing" the set with his small airplane; every time the scene began, Andy would see to it that his plane either got in the shot or ruined the audio with the sound of its motor. Tuffy arrived home in a state of exhaustion only to find a gloating Andy Devine waiting for him. It is fairly certain that when Tuffy found out the truth behind his tiring day, he probably said something besides "Well, I do know!"

Back to the movie: Lum, Abner, and Marjorie are elated over

Skyrocket's winning of the race, and even Squire pays Abner's bail. He reminds Lum that Abner couldn't very well remain in jail... WHEN HE HAS TO BE BEST MAN AT A WEDDING TONIGHT, har har har! Before departing for Pine Ridge (Lum looks more like a condemned prisoner heading for the gas chamber), Abner whispers something to the sheriff, who says he'll see what he can do.

Now it is time for the wedding to begin, presided over by a rather eccentric-looking judge. The actor is not identified, but he somewhat resembles the Three Stooges' longtime supporting player Emil Siuka; he probably is not, however. When the judge asks if anyone has any objections to these two being married, Abner speaks up: "He's too young to know his own mind." No one buys this excuse, not even when Lum puts in, "I sorta object to it myself..."

Just as the wedding has reached the crucial "I do" stage, the sheriff bursts in with one of the two vagrants from the jail. He is JOE ABERNATHY, the "Widder's" supposedly-deceased husband!! The Widder faints. Abner explains, "He run off an' left her, and she's been tellin' it around that he's dead!" The Widder recovers to make a lame excuse: "Well, someone said he was!" Squire has no choice but to announce that the wedding is "postponed." Lum corrects him: "Postponed?! I grannies, it's canceled!"

The movie's closing scene finds us right back where it opened, with Miss Geraldine again reading to Lum. Lum concludes that "a body jist don't git a chance to be hero these days," but Miss Geraldine is nevertheless very proud of his exploits. This is Lum's big chance: he gathers all his courage to ask, "Miss Geraldine, would you.....", only to be interrupted by the striking of ten o'clock again! As the organ theme of *Evalena* begins playing in the background, Miss Geraldine asks, "What were you going to ask me... just before ten o'clock?" Lum stutters, "Oh...uh... I don't recollect now... maybe I'll think of it by Wednesday night... good night, Miss Geraldine..." and hurriedly ducks out the door as the organ music swells to its full volume for the THE END and classic RKO RADIO PICTURES end titles. One almost expects Lou Crosby to appear on-screen to deliver a closing commercial for Alka-Seltzer!

(For those of you who have not yet had an opportunity to view *The Bashful Bachelor* for yourself, remember that it and the other L&A films are still available for \$29.95 each from Lum and Abner Associates, 35 Circle Drive, Hot Springs, AR 71901. Please specify Beta or VHS format.)

- Tim Hollis



LUM AND ABNER®

GO TO

WAR

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES



Welcome to the sixth 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.

As the tubes on the Philco start to glow again, we rejoin "those two lovable old fellows from the hill country, Lum and Abner," still concerning themselves with a phony love letter they've concocted, supposedly penned by the new "professor" of the Cloverleaf School, Mr. Marion Orville Sloane. Its intended recipient is "Widder" Lydia Abernathy (referred to as "Toane" at other times). Lum figures he can "get shud of the perfesser" by causing the "widder" (whom Lum suggests could be "sold to the givermint" as a "secret weapon!") to come after Mr. Sloane in romantic pursuit! It seems the new instructor of the Pine Ridge "youngins" is driving School Board President L. "Eddards" purlt' near "stark-ravin' mad crazy" with all his "prittle-prattle" about educational theory (much like in-service training affects some teachers of the 90s). The only problem is that stenographer Abner scribed Lum's "dickertated" letter, as well as a "referness" (reference) letter for Cedric, on the same sheet of paper! The October 1, 1942 episode depicts Lum's paranoia over the fact that Professor Sloane will read the embarrassing letter intended for Mrs. Abernathy. Lum fears he will be a "dissagrace" when Sloane realizes who wrote the note, and plans to flee in shame to Mexico, to grow Mexican jumping beans. All ends well, when schoolboy Cedric reports the professor was unable to read the letter due to Abner's poor penmanship!

With the new week beginning Monday, October 5, Abner is off and hopping with Lum's discarded idea of starting a "jumping bean farm," and enlists Grandpappy Spears' aid in writing a "Mexican langridge" newspaper ad, requesting information on suitable real estate. They'll have to be careful not to make too much money on their new venture - the "givermint" says no one may make in excess of \$20,000! (Congress gave the President the power to freeze prices, salaries and wages as of September 15, 1942.) Lum will be stuck with the professor; Mr. Sloane actually likes the "widder!" However, Sloane's latest idea actually appeals to Lum: establishing an observatory in Pine Ridge! Perhaps the proposed name of "The Eddards Me-morial Obbaservatory" is what sways him! The following day, Sloane encourages Lum to "get a jump on," and join him in a trek up Ol' Piney Mountain to see the "waxing moon." "Huh?" Not certain if the professor intends to actually "wax the moon" with a spray gun, Lum packs some liquid wax! Lum rushes off with his sack lunch, having borrowed Cedric's heavy boots for climbing (they've sold all the store's stock of boots to Walt Bates' "de-fense" workers). After Lum's departure, Abner and Cedric discover their friend picked up the wrong sack: he got a sack of grasshoppers!

(Abner felt he could train American beans to jump like Mexican beans if they had an example to follow!!)

The week closes on Thursday, October 8, as the efforts of "astronomer Eddards" to demonstrate an eclipse, using his pocket watch to simulate the moon, are interrupted by Cedric, who is anxious to serve his country in the Army, which needs 100,000 "skilled teckanitions." L&A try to convince poor 4F Cedric that he is not qualified, but when Lum isn't looking, young Mr. Wechunt dismantles the "moon" pocket watch to prove his skill! Can he put it back together? Guess!

Plans for the "obbaservatory" grow into reality, as our friends take delivery of the professor's equipment (hampered by Cedric's confusion of a telescope with a horoscope - he brings the professor a fortune card from the weighing machine at the county seat!). Even Abner becomes excited when Lum plans to discover and name new planets "Lum" and "Abner!" The shack they plan to convert into an "obbaservatory" needs an opening in its roof for a telescope - how will that be accomplished? Lum reminds Abner, "Necessity is the mother of invention." If you've listened to a number of L&A shows, you'll know that this becomes another exasperating session for Lum, who tries to explain to Abner that "Necessity" is not the female parent of a child named "Innavention!" This is an "Abner gets confused" classic, a.k.a. a "double-talk" or "Old Eddards Sayin'" routine (broadcast October 13). Lum's brilliantly delivered "ah, sassyfras!" has our empathy! The problem of an opening in the shack roof, meanwhile, is made moot abruptly when a cyclone twists the building off a hill and scatters it about!

Professor Sloane, working in the "obbaservatory," is shaken up by its brief airborne trip, and is visited a day later by L&A. Their attempts to cheer him have the opposite effect! Lum is about ready to hit the sickbed himself, as he tries to be Sloane's substitute teacher! The young scholars pull every trick in the book (and a few more) on the bedraggled "Professor Eddards!"

As Monday, October 19 rolls around, Lum utilizes Cedric (with a false name) to phone Squire Skimp, inquiring about a price for "the ol' Buford place," a new location for the observatory. Almost simultaneously, Abner and Professor Sloane check into the property, unbeknownst to each other. Squire plays each offer off the other, never revealing who the other parties are. Finally, Lum, visiting Squire's office, is surprised by Abner's entrance. They soon reason out Squire's scheme of allowing Cedric, Sloane, Lum and Abner to outbid each other, but not before the Squire makes a profit.

Excited about their "new" observatory, the partners begin cleaning out the building. A large box of junk, they decide, will be best turned over to the scrap drive - that is, if they can ever get it

"unstuck" from the doorway of the house! Thinking the professor's desires for them to become "meateorologists" means they must "eat a lotta meat" (as a vegetarian eats vegetables), Lum learns on October 22 that he and Abner will not be able to buy much meat, due to war rationing. Jeff the butcher can't sell them more than 2.5 pounds of meat weekly per adult, not counting chicken, fish, eggs or cheese. Cedric misunderstands, and devours his entire week's allotment in one sitting! No doubt announcer Lou Crosby would have prescribed Alka-Seltzer!

As the final week of October gets underway (Monday the 26th), Abner, with the help of Grandpap, cooks up one of the wildest ideas in *Lum and Abner* history: a rocket trip to the planet Mars!!! After all, Grandpap read all about just such a journey in the newspaper some years back. The paper even printed pictures! (The fact that this account was told in the comic strip *Buck Rogers* doesn't seem to matter!) Lum finds the idea positively ludicrous - until his mentor, Professor Sloane, suggests the very same idea! 24 hours later, L&A are busily planning their new adventure, when friend Mousey Gray enters, "just in a rage." Mad Mousey is anxious to be Mars-bound, to escape his mate Gussie, who has been making her miniature man do "womern's work" since she has joined the women's service as a lieutenant. Lum encourages Mousey to do those feminine chores with pride, since both men and women are working jobs usually foreign to their traditional roles, all in an effort to win the war (even if the "womern's work" is chopping firewood?!).

Rocket ship construction begins - sort of - the following day, with provisions being made for the possible lack of oxygen on Mars ("Are they rationin' that stuff?" asks Abner). Professor Sloane's instructions during the work session result in a lot of "rabbit chasing," the end result being almost no progress!

As October closes, Squire Skimp makes his bid to become manager (controlling finances and publicity) of "The Lum and Abner Mars Expedition Corporation!" During their conversation, Squire responds to several calls concerning a "Princess Belmont." When queried, he falsely explains to Lum that the "Princess" is a movie star he is managing. Lum eventually remembers that Belmont is actually a racehorse - and decides that if the Squire can make a star out of a horse, he should be able to do wonders for L&A!!

November kicks off with a flurry of excitement, as newly-appointed treasurer M. K. Skimp begins pushing shares of stock in the rocket ship venture to a doubtful public (perhaps they remember his silver mine swindle of 1935). Positive that he and Abner will be great attractions to their adoring fans ("reg'lar monstrosities!"), Lum pushes his partner onward in their efforts to construct their space vehicle. Abner needs little prodding, and proceeds to order some outlandish supplies. He and Cedric feel that a marching band should greet the Pine Ridge visitors, and requisition plenty of band instruments for the Martians to play! His plans for Cedric to deliver the instruments, and be on Mars in time to "Kodak" the rocket ship landing, require some careful examination! Squire Skimp soon comes to regret the downside of his "job" - he is responsible for paying the bills!

The subject of meat rationing is brought home on Thursday, November 5, as our famished astronauts visit Luke Spears' eatery, to find henpecked Mousey Gray taking their orders. In typical meticulous fashion, Mousey explains the concept of rationing, which is already understood by L&A. Rather than telling them just which foods they can have, young Mr. Gray details what they cannot

order! When finally a food order is made plain to Mousey, it turns out the restaurant "is outta ever' dad-blame thing they got!"

The heat in Luke Spears' kitchen is nothing compared to the action of that weekend. That very day, Rommel's Afrika Korps were beaten at the Battle of Alamein, and began a retreat to Tunisia. At 9:00 p.m. Eastern War Time on Saturday, November 7, a network news announcer reported, "Our troops at this minute are landing in North Africa." President Franklin Roosevelt declared, "We come among you to repulse the cruel invaders. ...Help us where you are able. *Viva la France éternelle!*" This was "Operation Torch," designed to help the Russian Allies run the Axis armies out of French North Africa. Commanded by Lt. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied troops landed on the coast of Algeria and Morocco on Nov. 8. The Germans were caught by surprise! In retaliation, Hitler ordered the occupation of France, but the Germans met powerful resistance at Toulon, where the French sank about 50 ships (Nov. 27). Meanwhile, the North African campaign would continue into the following year.

Japanese bases in New Guinea threatened Allied airfields in Australia. Late in 1942, Japan launched an overland campaign against the Allied base at Port Moseby. Its troops came within 32 miles of the town. American, Australian and Dutch forces then took the offensive. Allied troops under General MacArthur inched their way to Buna, Gona, Salamaua, and Lae, the main enemy position in New Guinea. But Japanese planes based on nearby Rabaul continued to attack Allied shipping.

During November, the Allies lost a record 807,754 tons of shipping, thanks to the massive attacks of German U-boats, traveling in "wolf-packs" of between 8 to 20. The losses would total 23,351,000 tons by the end of the war. By the last two years of the war, however, the Allies, with the aid of sonar and radar, would begin sinking submarines faster than the Axis could build them.

Luckily, the Allies did not have Abner and Cedric constructing their vehicles of war. These two can't even manage to apply a coat of varnish to their rocket ship (November 9) without having it disappear! Is the "obbaservatory hainted?" What makes the varnish vanish? If Cedric could read better, he would discover that the word below "varnish" on the can label is "remover!!" The none-too-skyworthy craft is finally painted, with "Pine Ridge to Mars or Bust" lettered across it. "Bust" better describes their financial records, as once-eager treasurer Skimp decides to resign his position under the weight of unpaid bills. For two days, Squire attempts to relinquish his position, but Lum insists he stay on.

"The harp strings of memory strike a tender chord," as Lum addresses the crowd on the day of the unveiling of "the senna-sation of the age," on Thursday, November 12. Where is the Squire, who should be circulating among the crowd, selling stock? Mrs. Skimp says he is "off to Washington" to be a "dollar-a-year man." Not only does no one buy stock, but the long-awaiting unveiling of the rocket ship is strangely delayed. Despite stalling efforts by Mousey (two poems) and Cedric and Abner ("They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree"), no one seems to be able to squeeze the large rocket ship through the small "obbaservatory" door!

The following week, we listen to the final arguments and preparations between our aged astronauts, nervously anticipating their liftoff. But just how will the ship "lift off?" Lum promises Abner that when the skeptical folks of Pine Ridge see them returning from Mars, "hit'll be a horse of a differ'nt color!" Bingo! Abner

envisions the rocket being pulled through the air by a pastel-coated flying horse!! (Thank you, Roz Rogers, for such absurdly humorous scripts!) Finally, Abner fears the rocket's real propellant system: a bundle of "dinna-mite!" Lum claims their "blastoff" will be perfectly safe, and he has a box of good luck charms (not to mention his will) to back his claims!

The fleeing Squire, obviously not on his way to Washington, meets a gentleman named Mr. Corey, who admits quite an interest in the Mars expedition. Perhaps he is the wealthy friend Professor Sloane wrote to, in hopes of selling more stock! The two arrive in Pine Ridge just in time for the actual launching of the rocket ship (Wednesday, November 18). Lum, outfitted for his star trek, refuses to deal with Squire after his attempt to jump ship, and concentrates on the impending lift-off. Since Cedric can't remember which direction the "dinna-mite" switch must be thrown, Lum attempts to demonstrate... **BOOM!!!** Within seconds, the patchwork spacecraft disintegrates!!! A shocked Lum fears he has ended Abner's life - but no! His partner did not report to the rocket as ordered, but went home for some last-minute supplies! As for the Squire, he is arrested by Mr. Corey, who is actually an agent tipped-off by Professor Sloane's wealthy friend! It seems the Lum and Abner Mars Expedition Corporation was a total phony - are you surprised? Squire Skimp faces a hefty fine and a suspended jail sentence, and disappears for a time.

In 1943, elements of the "Rocket Ship to Mars" radio continuity would sneak into the RKO-Radio Pictures release, *Two Weeks to Live*, which will celebrate its demicentennial at our 1993 NLAS

Convention. Script co-writer Roz Rogers concocted a scene in which Lum is actually rocketed to Mars (Iowa, that is!) in an experiment conducted by a scientist cut from the same mold as Professor Sloane. As for the Pine Ridge teacher, we will not hear him speak on the show again; he will only be referred to.

As the pieces of the former rocket ship are picked up from all around the county, Lum and Abner attempt to patch up their financial difficulties. "Accordin' to the almanac," their brief jaunt to the angry red planet would have taken the old fellows some 274 years (one way!), providing they could have traveled 100 miles per hour! Traveling on earth is difficult enough, especially for Cedric. Lum has difficulty explaining the "A-Book" of gas-rationing stamps, each stamp entitling Cedric to buy four gallons of gas. Cedric feels he must move to a metropolitan area - he can't use up all that gasoline in tiny Pine Ridge! Lum coins the phrase, "Share yer car and go twicet as far," encouraging car-pooling.

How will Lum and Abner pay the \$600+ owed for rocket ship expenses? After all, the "givermint" wants the home-folks to keep their bills paid during wartime. A possibility for earning \$750 arrives in the form of an offer from a national magazine, for L&A to compose an article about their Mars expedition! Lum's reinflated ego is burst when he discovers the story will be printed in a series entitled "The Ten Biggest Chumps of 1942!" Rather than deciding to "go to Mexico and become a sombrero," Lum "dickertates" an "ar-tickle" to Abner, but has difficulty keeping out his references to "walkin' to school in the snow barfooted." After a series of misadventures in obtaining photographs to accompany the article, L&A benefit from the fastest turnaround in publishing history! A mere one day later (November 26), Lum has already deposited their earnings in the county seat bank! With their profits (and after buying two War Bonds), Lum shops for items he and Abner have long desired, which include luxurious pairs of gloves and shoes. Upon being visited by "Ed Clayton's womern," L&A, upon realizing how the Claytons have suffered ill health and poverty, offer them groceries on credit, throwing in the gloves and shoes to assist ailing Ed in his difficult job. It is poignant, human moments like this that endear *Lum and Abner* to so many listeners.

During the war, rationed items included meats, butter, sugar, fats oils, coffee, canned foods, shoes and gasoline. Price controls were used with rationing to combat inflation. This process has virtually emptied the shelves of the Jot 'Em Down Store, bringing the effects of the war home in an economic manner. On a more personal level, L&A (and the radio audience) will "lose" a beloved character to the war effort - on Monday, November 30, 1942, Llewelyn Snavelly Gray is drafted!!!

The programs discussed this issue may be found on NLAS Tape Library volumes #79 through #85.

Many thanks to Rev. and Mrs. Harold R. Jones for research materials used in this series of articles. Join us in two months as we bid Mousey farewell, and welcome a new character to the program! Reserve your seat for the weekly meeting of the "Golden Era Discussion Club!"

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

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GRAND-PRIZE winner, Mrs. J. D. Petty, is the wife of a lieutenant colonel in the Army's Inspector-Generals' Department, stationed in Santa Ana, California. The Pettys' home, like Lum and Abner's, is Arkansas. Mrs. Petty patriotically chose \$750 in war bonds rather than \$500 in cash or \$50 a month for one year.

Mrs. J. D. Petty, whose name "Calem" won the grand prize in the baby-naming contest



Although the "abandoned baby" was reunited with his parents as August 1942 ended (see our last two issues), the winners of the "Name the Baby Contest" run by Movie-Radio Guide were not announced until their issue of November 21-27, 1942.

MEMBERS

Send your article & photo to: P.O. Box 869, Carthage, Texas 75633

JOANNE KENNEDY

of Montrose, California

Mrs. Kennedy writes to tell us, "I am a real 'child' of the radio era. Because I was sickly, I can remember many days curled up by myself listening to radio soaps, kids' shows, big band remotes... Then came the war years, with the endless 'We interrupt this program' announcements which made your heart race and your stomach do flip-flops. And during the 'last' days, when *Young Widder Brown*, etc. left the air, I was listening from a portable radio on a camping trip with my husband and little children.

"But, strangest of all, I had never been a big fan of *Lum and Abner*. In fact, I cannot recall ever hearing an episode before I joined SPERDVAC and decided the storylines sounded like they might be amusing. So I ordered a few tapes and was instantly hooked (a condition shared by my 34-year old son). I hope to complete a set of all the tapes in the next few years. These shows hold up to endless repeat listenings, something not said for most other shows.

"I am a widow and a retired bank officer. I have a daughter and son-in-law in addition to the already mentioned son. I enjoy traveling, my bridge club, and decorating my home."

Mrs. Kennedy offers her thanks to the NLAS ossifers "for volunteering your time so that the rest of us can have so much joy added to our lives." We offer our thanks in return, Joanne, for your orders from our tape library, and your support!



Left to right: son Craig, Joanne Kennedy, daughter Lynne and her husband Richard.

EARL and BERNICE CARIKER

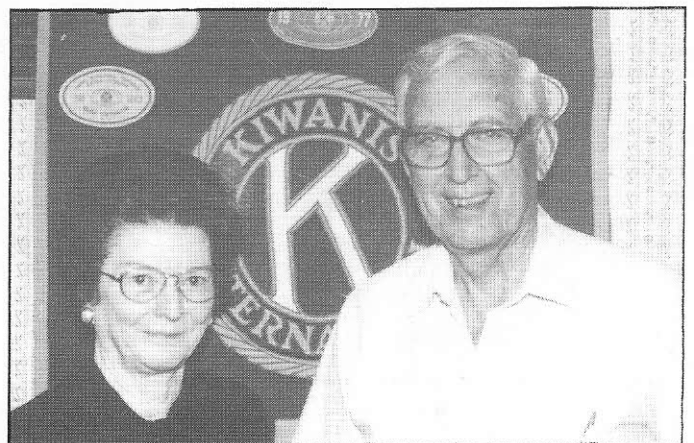
of Carthage (Murvaul), Texas

Earl Cariker has been an educator in East Texas since 1938. A graduate of East Texas Baptist University, with a Master of Arts Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University, Mr. Cariker has done additional study at Texas A&M University, the University of Houston, and Southern Methodist University. He began his teaching career at Murvaul School, moving to Carthage Schools in 1949, where he retired as Assistant Superintendent a few years back. During those years, he was a pioneer in educational media, developing an audio-visual department that grew into a modern high school broadcasting facility, which today produces *Carthage Schools Present...*, a weekly half-hour radio-TV program. Mr. Cariker serves as executive producer and host. In addition, he teaches a Government course for Panola College, and supervises student teachers for the University of Texas at Tyler.

For over three decades, Mr. Cariker has been an active member of the Kiwanis, holding numerous offices in that group, as well as in other educational and community-oriented organizations.

Earl and Bernice are active members of Murvaul United Methodist Church (their pastor and wife, Rev. and Mrs. Harold R. Jones, were featured in our April issue).

The Carikers are the proud parents of three children, Kay, Earl Jr., and Kevin, and grandparents to Jennifer, Michael, Jeff, Laurie and Emily. Both Earl and Bernice have been inspirations to the citizens of Panola County for many decades, and we are proud to have them in the NLAS!



KEEP THOSE PHOTOS AND ARTICLES COMING!!!