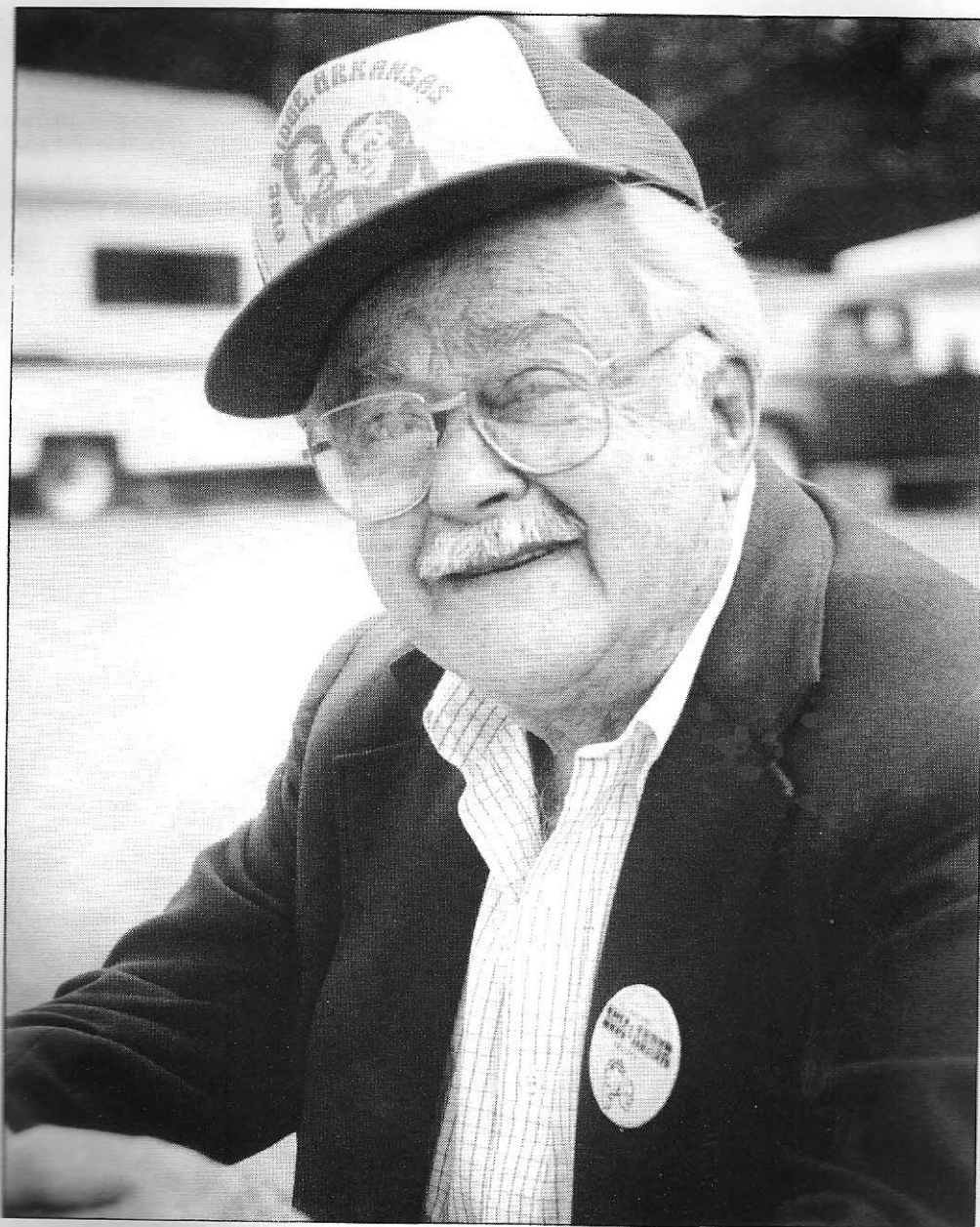


The Tot 'Em Down Journal

Official Publication of the National Lum and Abner Society

June 1993



JERRY HAUSNER

May 20, 1909 - April 1, 1993

THE NATIONAL
LUM & ABNER[®]
SOCIETY

CONVENTION



Special Guest
**WILLARD
WATERMAN**
("The Great
Gildersleeve")

This is our last issue of the *Journal* before the 9th annual NLAS Convention, to be held in Mena, Arkansas, on Saturday, June 26. This year's meeting will be literally packed with activities, so let's give you an idea of what will be going on, and when.

Our special guest for this year will be famed radio actor **WILLARD WATERMAN**. Mr. Waterman is most famous to old-time radio buffs as being the second performer to play the title role in *The Great Gildersleeve*, replacing Hal Peary, the creator of the role. Mr. Waterman became Gildersleeve in 1950, and his natural speaking voice was so nearly identical to that of Peary that the change in performers was totally undetectable. But prior to this role, Mr. Waterman had had a distinguished radio career of his own... among many other appearances, he was almost a semi-regular cast member on Lum and Abner's 30-minute series in 1948-50. It seemed that any time L&A found themselves encountering a businessman or other stuffed shirt, Waterman was the voice of the windbag in question!

Mr. Waterman's appearances at the Convention will be sandwiched between two other historic programs: this year we are also observing the 50th anniversaries of the two 1943 L&A movies *Two Weeks To Live* and *So This Is Washington*. 16mm prints of each film will be projected on the BIG screen, accompanied by our traditional recreation of a typical 1940's theatre program.

So, here is the schedule: *Two Weeks To Live* will be shown at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, with the program... including a cartoon and classic wartime-era shorts... ending around noon or shortly thereafter. There will be plenty of time for members to search out lunch before we reconvene at 2:00 p.m. for our visit with Mr. Waterman. Included in this presentation will be the debut of a newly-written L&A skit, "Lum and Abner Meet the Great Gildersleeve" (sounds intriguing, doesn't it?). Then, at 7:00 p.m., the *So This Is Washington* 50th anniversary salute will begin... again, of course, accompanied by "selected short subjects."

As usual, the NLAS Convention will be held at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn in Mena. It would be extremely wise for you to make your reservations NOW, if you haven't already. The number to call is (501) 394-6350. Once you arrive in Mena, the desk clerk at the Lime Tree Inn can put you in touch with the NLAS's official "temporary headquarters" if you have any further questions. See you there!

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

June 1993

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Cover: Jerry Hausner relaxes in Pine Ridge, Arkansas, during the 1987 NLAS Convention. (Photo by Donnie Pitchford)

* CAN YOU HELP? *

* Lon Stucker of the Lum & Abner Museum in Pine Ridge informs us that the Museum is in need of a computer laser printer. They are willing to trade a genuine antique grandfather clock for one of these. If you are interested in dealing with them, contact Lon Stucker at P.O. Box 38, Pine Ridge, AR 71966. *

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IF THAT DON'T BEAT THE BUGS A-FIGHTIN': In the April issue, we announced that the winner of the "Who Said That?" trivia contest was Motto Scroggins of Elizabethtown, Tennessee. Mr. Scroggins is actually from Elizabethtown, Indiana. That's the last time we let Cedric Weehunt run one of our contests for us.



EVERYBODY'S FRIEND:

Jerry Hausner (1909-1993)

(Editor's Note: Much of the following article was originally published in the August 1987 issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*. It is being reprinted here as a memorial.)

Jerry Hausner occupied a position unique among Lum and Abner's associates in Hollywood. Not only did he become acquainted with them during a critical period early in their careers, but he went on to play more different roles on their show than any other performer... outside of Chet and Tuffy themselves, that is.

As with many performers, there was nothing in his background to indicate that he would be making his way in show business. He was born on May 20, 1909, in Cleveland, Ohio, into the family of a struggling shoe store owner, Max Hausner. According to Jerry, they managed to exist just above poverty level.

By the time Jerry reached his teenage years, he had begun hanging around the local Cleveland vaudeville theatres. On one of his adolescent excursions he happened to catch a performance by a Spanish clown named Pepito. Pepito's act consisted of imitating various types of baby cries and gurgles, and young Jerry Hausner was fascinated by them. Backstage, he asked Pepito to teach him how the act was done. After initial hesitation ("You might take my job away from me," Pepito said prophetically), the clown demonstrated to Jerry how to constrict his throat in order to effect the sound of a baby. This talent was to serve our friend well in the ensuing years.

Time passed and Jerry entered vaudeville himself, partnered with his girlfriend Velma McCall. By the early 1930's, radio was making inroads into vaudeville's territory, and station WTAM in Cleveland was utilizing the services of a couple of other struggling performers, Chet Lauck and Norris "Tuffy" Goff, known on the air as Lum and Abner. After their first success in Chicago in a series for Quaker Oats, they had fallen on rather hard times. During their tenure at WTAM, word came that the Ford dealers of Ohio wanted an audition disc from them for a new type of format to be known as "Lum and Abner's Friday Night Sociable."

The manager of WTAM, Warren Wade, asked Jerry if he would be willing to assist the two boys from Mena in the preparation

of their audition. Jerry agreed, and after consulting with Chet and Tuffy, decided he would appear on the show as a traveling medicine-show salesman who would attempt to bilk them in some way or another. The time came to record the show, and Jerry prepared a page of jokes in the "wise guy" characterization he had adopted in vaudeville. When he made his entrance, much to his surprise Chet & Tuffy plunged into one of their famous ad-libbing binges, leaving him standing there with a page full of half jokes. But the Ford dealers must have liked what they heard, as the "Friday Night Sociable," as hosted by Lum and Abner, became tremendously popular, and the L&A series did not fall on hard times again until the advent of television, which was now still just a glimmer in the distant future.

A few years later, in 1936, everyone's fortunes had improved even more. By then, Jerry was living in New York City, while in Chicago *Lum and Abner* was going full steam under the sponsorship of Horlick's Malted Milk. In February of that year, Chet & Tuffy took their show to New York for a week, and since they were unfamiliar with the metropolis, they called upon their old Cleveland pal Jerry Hausner to show them around. As it turned out, he was going to be out of town on a tour, so instead he fixed them up with Velma McCall, who was also living in New York. L&A were so



During a personal appearance at the Indiana State Fair in 1935: Chet Lauck (far left), Tuffy Goff (second from right), and Jerry Hausner (far right).

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impressed with Velma that once they got back to Chicago they sent her a telegram inviting her to come and work for them as their office manager. She accepted, and the association lasted for the next ten years. Jerry himself finally did get together with Chet & Tuffy that July, when the three of them wound up on the same bill in a lavish stage show at Cleveland's Palace Theatre.

1937 found L&A moving their whole operation from Chicago to Hollywood, and of course Velma went with them. Jerry soon migrated to the west coast as well, and that summer he was written into the show in a regular role... the first actor to appear on the show other than Chet & Tuffy. He became Spud Gandel, a small-time crook. Spud's main function was to be Lum's rival for the affections of schoolmarm Evalena Schultz, and, in fact, the unthinkable happened in August when Spud actually married Lum's longtime sweetheart! (The fragmentary recordings available from this period indicate that, while Jerry was out of town with his stage show, Tuffy Goff performed the role of Spud, delivering an extremely close approximation of Jerry's voice.) During the same period, Jerry helped write gags for the 1938 Lum & Abner Almanac and 1939's *Jot 'Em Down Store Party Book*.

On April 18, 1939, Jerry took the big leap and married Velma McCall. The wedding reception was held in the Hollywood home of Tuffy & Liz Goff; something must have been done right, because the marriage lasted until Velma's death on December 31, 1978, after a long illness.

Jerry continued to pop up on *Lum and Abner* in a variety of roles even after Spud Gandel was long forgotten. Even when not a part of the program itself, Jerry could often be heard in the commercials (especially during the years of Postum sponsorship). Beginning in 1941, he essayed a multitude of roles in the L&A episodes; the first and most famous of these was the phony Hindu miracle man Prince Ali Kush, whose real name was Louie. For this character, Jerry ad-libbed his way through a jumble of doubletalk, incorporating pig Latin, nursery rhyme phrases, nonsense words, and even the names of some of his friends and acquaintances (during one tirade, there is a clear reference to Mrs. Goff's maiden name, Liz Bullion, as well as Tuffy's son Gary). When plotting with Squire Skimp, the fake Prince's voice was a New Yorkish gangster accent.



Jerry's famous baby-crying act, circa 1943.

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Jerry during World War II, going over a 'Big Town' script with series star Edward G. Robinson.

Jerry turned honest, even slightly daffy, in his next appearance about six months later. In the story of L&A's "Wonderful World Apartments," he appeared as the befuddled J.W. Tiffin, whose motto was "I never can remember a name, but I always forget a face." Simultaneously, and ever since his move to California, Jerry was being kept extremely busy on radio shows besides *Lum and Abner*, primarily because of the baby-crying act he had learned from Pepito the Clown. He cried and gurgled as Baby Dumpling on the *Blondie* show, and as Robespierre, the baby brother of Fanny Brice's *Baby Snooks*. He also appeared as scores of anonymous babies on other series. Naturally, this talent did not go unnoticed by L&A, so in July 1942 a mysterious lady left her baby in the Jot 'Em Down Store, setting off a new mystery for L&A to bungle through. When the baby's father finally showed up over a month later, his voice might have sounded vaguely familiar: yes, it was Jerry Hausner, once again.

After this appearance, Jerry answered Uncle Sam's call and entered the military, where he continued to perform on the Armed Forces Radio Service in a number of shows. Photography had always been one of Jerry's passions, so he was also made the official staff photographer for AFRS. On furlough in the spring of 1945, he visited his old pals L&A in the guise of another one of his trademark shady characters: the "man with the black hat" who sold Lum the cursed Kunlun Diamond.

Well, the war ended and Jerry returned to civilian life. In 1946 he came to L&A's store again, this time in the role of Bob Hope's fictional manager, Jimmy Diamond. He found his attempts to line up personal appearances for Hope in Pine Ridge to be completely futile. By this time, Jerry was being kept busy performing regularly in the series *Big Town* with Edward G. Robinson, and *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, as Sam's agent Sid Weiss.

Velma retired as Chet & Tuffy's office manager in 1946, and moved on to greener pastures. Jerry appeared on the show less frequently after that, although according to the late Clarence "Ben Withers" Hartzell, Jerry worked on *Lum and Abner* more than once during 1947 and 1948.

In 1949, Jerry's friend, famed cartoon director John Hubley, asked him to help find a voice for a new character being created by



The TV years: Jerry in one of several appearances on 'The Dick Van Dyke Show.'

United Productions of America (UPA). Jerry took a look at the early sketches and suggested one of his old pals from the Cleveland days, Jim Backus. And so was born the nearsighted Mister Magoo. For the next several years, Hausner and Backus worked together on the Magoo cartoons, with Jerry providing the voice of Magoo's lunkheaded nephew Waldo as well as numerous incidental voices.

Jerry began concentrating on television in the early 1950's. When the pilot for *I Love Lucy* was shot in 1951, Jerry was cast as Ricky Ricardo's fast-talking agent, known coincidentally as "Jerry the Agent." When the series began production, Jerry the Agent was not cast as a regular, as had originally been intended, but he still popped up in "guest appearances" in many of the episodes. And naturally, when Little Ricky was born, it was our old friend Jerry who provided the gurgles and cries. He remained with the show until 1953, when he had an argument with hot-tempered Desi Arnaz and quit. Jerry and Velma spent two years overseas, working for Radio Free Europe, but once they returned stateside Jerry found himself busier than ever.

TV sitcoms of the late 1950's and 1960's are practically a repository for radio character actors, and Jerry found himself appearing in guest roles in a steady stream of them. From *I Married Joan*, *The Patty Duke Show*, and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* to *Green Acres*, *My Three Sons*, *The Mothers-In-Law*, and *The Flying Nun*, as well as countless others, Jerry stayed as busy as ever. In 1964 he had a regular role on a short-lived sitcom, *Valentine's Day*, starring Tony Franciosa. Jerry also appeared in many motion pictures; his screen debut was actually as a reporter in Lum and Abner's 1943 release *Two Weeks To Live*. After that, Jerry appeared in many more films, including *Off Limits* with Bob Hope and Mickey Rooney, *Ma and Pa Kettle Back Home*, *Sailor Beware* with Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis, *Who's Minding the Store*, again with Lewis, and he made a dramatic appearance in Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory*, with Kirk Douglas.

Not forgetting his animated friend Magoo, Jerry returned to the UPA Studios in 1960. The cartoon studio was producing a series of limited-animation Magoo cartoons for television, simultaneously working on a similar series of Dick Tracy cartoons. Jerry served as dialogue director on both cartoon series, and continued providing a multitude of voices for each.

Late in the 1960's, Jerry eased off of TV and back into live

theatre, touring with a long succession of stage plays, many with his good friend Hans Conreid. Jerry and Velma also traveled to various foreign countries with their 16mm motion picture camera, and the resulting travelogue films were in great demand for TV and personal appearances.

Jerry finally made it into semi-retirement, but emerged again in 1985 for a role in the TV movie *Amos*, which again starred Kirk Douglas. In this drama, which dealt with cruelty in a nursing home, Jerry was seen as Sol Kessler, a former delicatessen owner and resident of the nursing home.

It was in October 1986 that Jerry became an Honorary Member of the NLAS. He was delighted that something was actually being done to preserve the memory of his two old co-stars, and he demonstrated his approval by searching his files and donating literally mounds of rare and one-of-a-kind material to the NLAS archives. Scripts, photographs, negatives, clippings, correspondence, and dozens of other items found a permanent home thanks to Jerry's generosity. He was the guest of honor at the 1987 NLAS Convention, receiving the Lum & Abner Memorial Award for his efforts. At that convention, he participated in a recreation of a vintage 1937 Spud Gandel script, which he had discovered lurking in his collection.

Jerry returned to the NLAS Convention in 1988 (making him our only two-time guest thus far), in company with Elmore "Phinus Peabody" Vincent. The pair performed a new script penned by Uncle Donnie Pitchford, in which Spud returns to the Jot 'Em Down Store and tries to pull a shady scam on Abner's papa Phinus. In the years that followed, Jerry contributed to the Conventions even when he was not able to be there personally. In 1989, he and Uncle Donnie cooked up a hilarious ad-lib telephone routine, in which Jerry appeared as Spud... who, it seems, was in jail sharing a cell with Prince Ali Kush and the sheriff's daughter's baby boy. In 1990, via tape, Jerry participated in a recreation of a typical L&A commercial for Postum. On July 19, 1992, Jerry was a guest via telephone on Bill Bragg's Yesterday USA satellite network; with Uncle Donnie and Tim Hollis, he again demonstrated his versatility by recreating some of his classic radio and cartoon voices.

Jerry continued to provide the NLAS with materials and valuable information, but during the winter of 1992-93 his health began to fail noticeably. He had suffered from angina for several years, but now the attacks grew more frequent and severe. On March 12, 1993, Jerry was scheduled to be a guest at a Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters luncheon honoring his old co-star Dick Van Dyke, but he was too ill to attend. That weekend he reluctantly checked into a hospital, where it was found that he had indeed suffered a major heart attack. Triple bypass surgery was performed immediately, but while recovering from it Jerry was the victim of a massive stroke, from which he did not awaken. He died on April 1, 1993, a month short of his 84th birthday.

A memorial service was held on April 5. Besides Jerry's nephew (who also served as his attorney) Bob Kornswiet, the speakers were legendary comedy writers Ted Reed, Hal Kanter, and Everett Greenbaum, who all related funny stories about Jerry and helped the audience remember the good times their friend represented. It is certain that we at the NLAS will miss Jerry, but the mountain of information he contributed... much of which we have still never released for publication... will ensure that his influence will be felt in the *Journal* and the Society for many years to come.

- Tim Hollis

Jerry
Hausner's

HOLLYWOOD

During the past several years, Jerry Hausner has granted us numerous interviews via telephone and in person. Many fascinating tidbits concerning his experiences in Hollywood (and show business in general) found their way on tape during these sessions. Much has been printed about Jerry's associations with *Lum and Abner*, *I Love Lucy*, and Jim Backus, but there are still more recollections that need to be preserved. In this article, we offer highlights of those many enjoyable conversations with Jerry. (While offered in the form of quotes, some paraphrasing has been done, which we feel is as Jerry would have desired.)

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Tuffy's Philosophy

"When I first came to Hollywood, I stayed at Tuffy Goff's house for a couple of weeks until I could find a place to live. I would ride into town with Tuffy every morning to look for a job, and then ride back with him in the evening. He asked me, 'how're ya doin'?' and I said, 'I'm kinda nervous. I came out here almost totally broke, and I'm afraid I'm not gonna make a living!' Tuffy said, 'look, have you ever been to the funeral of a guy who starved to death?' I said, 'no, I don't think so,' and he said, 'but you know plenty of guys who died from overeating and overindulging!' 'That's right!' I said, and he added, 'so there's more danger of dying from overeating or overdrinking than there is in starving!' I always remembered that, his 'dime store philosophy.' He was a good guy, very human."

Suspense!

"I was in several episodes of *Suspense*, and never heard any until Roger Chambers, an NLAS member sent me about 20 of them on tape. When my good friend Elliott Lewis died, one of the PBS radio stations here ran a memorial program with two *Suspense* shows featuring Elliott. In the second show, there was a wonderful part of a bellhop. The minute I heard the voice, I said, 'that's me,' even though I didn't remember doing it. But then, I never remembered doing anything, because these were all done 50 years ago! It's like asking a butcher how many pork chops he sold last Tuesday! I was sure this bellhop was me - I checked the breathing, the phrasing and the timing, and I said, 'oh sure, that's me, all right!' When it was over, they credited Gil Stratton, who is a sports announcer these days! To this day, I still think I played that part!"

Arturo Toscanini

"I once had 300 or so transcription discs of broadcasts I had done during the war, when I was with Armed Forces Radio Service. Some of them were terrific broadcasts, such as concerts with the NBC Orchestra, conducted by the greatest conductor of all time, Arturo Toscanini. The announcer one day got his name twisted, and introduced 'Artino Tosca-ru-ru!'"

The Three Stooges

"When the Three Stooges were in the theatre, they worked with a comedian named Ted Healy in vaudeville, and some some big Broadway reviews, like *A Night in Paris*, *A Night in Venice* and *A Night in Spain* - all big Schubert musical reviews. But the Stooges never had dressing rooms, they had to dress down in the coal cellar! Shemp Howard, the older brother, was a genius in his own way. I saw them on stage back in the 1920s, and then I met them again years later at a recording session. They were very funny!"

Jerry's Mom in Hollywood

"I eventually moved my parents out to Hollywood, and my mother enjoyed attending the shows I was on. I was on the first George Gobel show, which was a live TV show. The guest star on the show was Fred MacMurray, who was originally a saxophone player. The plot of the show had them trying to work out what he was going to do on the show as the guest. He kept saying, 'I could play my saxophone!' and Gobel wouldn't let him. We did two shows, one for the east coast, and one for the west coast. There were three hours in-between, so I would walk home with my mother, who lived just around the corner, have dinner, and then go back to do the repeat the show. As we were walking home, I said, 'how'd you like the show, Mom?' She said, 'Oh, Mr. Gobel was very funny, I had all I could do to keep from laughing!' I said, 'you're supposed to laugh!' She said, 'I just didn't feel like laughing out loud. I thought that Mr. MacMurray wanted to play his saxophone, but Mr. Gobel wouldn't let him!' My mother was a very naive person!"

Overture, Curtain, Lights: Dr. Christian!

(Note: *Dr Christian* debuted in 1937 on the CBS network. One of the actresses to portray the doctor's nurse was Lurene Tuttle!)

"*Dr. Christian* with Jean Hersholt was done in front of a live audience in studio A at CBS station KNX in Hollywood. Programs like this were more like a 'show,' with microphones on stage in front of the footlights. The sound effects were off to one side, with a separate microphone, and we had a live orchestra, with around 35 musicians, including a harp! Somebody got the bright idea one night that we ought to dress for the show - formally! We had to wear tuxedos, and the girls wore evening dresses. The scripts in those days were mimeographed on a rotary machine, which printed the words in purple ink. One of these bright guys from the ad agency decided that inasmuch as we were doing this in front of an audience, in formal dress, they would utilize the theatre-style studio light. They turned on reds and blues, to make it kind of romantic looking. When we got up to the 'mike' with our purple scripts, you couldn't read one word!! It was all washed out! We were on the air live!! Someone realized the problem, and the white lights were turned on!"

The Marx Brothers

"When I was a kid in Cleveland, I worked as a bellhop at the Statler Hotel, which ultimately became the Hilton. It was the best hotel in town. The Marx Brothers came to the Ohio Theatre with their first big musical show, called *Coconuts*. They appeared in the lobby of the hotel playing golf, actually hitting golf balls in this very stylish lobby. They went into the restaurant, and began throwing butter around, and doing wild things everywhere! They were never really tamed, they were awfully hard to get along with. Years later, after Groucho was older and more or less retired, I was invited to a party at a friend's house down in Palm Springs - Bill Morrow, who was Bing Crosby's writer - we spent a whole day in Groucho's presence, and he was not too funny!"

Paul Hughes

(Note: Paul Hughes was the familiar, grizzly-voiced actor on *The Lone Ranger* radio series. One of his many characters was Thunder Martin. Another *LR* alumnus was Gilbert Shea.)

"Paul Hughes, Gilbert Shea and I came from Cleveland, and all went to the same dramatic school together. Paul Hughes was the boyfriend of Velma McCall, the girl I finally married. For a time in New York City, Velma and I were playing brother and sister in Vaudeville, but there was nothing between us. Paul was my roommate, and wanted me to bring Velma home with me one night after the show, and then disappear so they could have a romantic evening! Like a fool, I told her, 'you're old boyfriend wants to see you, so if you'd like to come over to our place, I'll leave you alone together.' She said, 'you don't have to leave us alone, there's nothing between us!!' I said, 'well, he wants to see you; maybe something will develop, who knows?' When the evening was over, I came home finally, and Paul said, 'she's been gone for two hours! That's not gonna work!' Then I said, 'well, then, it's safe for me to get involved with her!!' I never saw him again after those days."

Tarzan of the Apes

(The *Tarzan* series Jerry speaks of was aired from 1932 to 1935, and starred Jim Pierce, a silent screen Tarzan actor, and his wife Joan as Jane. Mrs. Pierce was the daughter of Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of Tarzan, who produced the 364 15-minute episodes, and introduced the concept of prerecorded programs for syndication.)

"There was a series called *Tarzan of the Apes* years ago. A company called World Broadcasting of New York syndicated them; they were some of the first transcriptions, on breakable material. I went to work at WTAM in Cleveland, an NBC outlet. Warren Wade was in charge of broadcasting. He was an actor himself, and a former director in the theatre, and he wanted to keep actors working whenever he could, so he had a stock company. Every once in a while, one of the *Tarzan* records would come in broken, and sometimes Wade would break one, and put into the budget that we had to recreate the show! A script came with the disc, so he'd mimeograph it, and we would do it live! It was to keep the actors going, and we'd get three or five dollars at the most. I remember I did one job in those days and I got 15 dollars, and I took the check home to show my father, and he slapped my face! He said, 'don't lie to your father! You didn't get 15 dollars for doing a radio show! I work all week for 15 dollars!' I expected him to be proud of me!"

Thurston the Magician

"Stage magic has become too big and manufactured. It used to be simple; even sawing a lady in half was a very simple operation. The greatest magician when I was a boy was a man by the name of Howard Thurston. I had an uncle who was seven years older than myself, and he worked his way through high school and college doing magic. When I was seven or eight years old, my uncle would ask for 'some bright young man to come up on the stage' to help him, and I was that kid. He had all kinds of handkerchiefs and sausages stuffed into my shirt that he would pull out! In fact, once Houdini came to town, and his baggage was lost, so he used my uncle's tuxedo! My uncle was the president of the Cleveland Magicians' Club and they were the same size. But when Thurston came to town, my uncle actually bought two tickets, and took me to the theatre, up in the balcony, to see Mr. Thurston. He did some marvelous things; no great big illusions with lots of scenery, everything was done in front of black drapes. He did the 'Floating Ball' - this golden ball just floated in, and he would just point, and the thing would go wherever he wanted, and then it floated out into the audience! I never could figure out how that was done! And then he had a trick of throwing playing cards. He could throw a playing card from the stage, up into the balcony! He had a way of just flipping it between his fingers. The big moment of the evening was sawing a lady in half, which was new at that time. It scared the heck out of the audience! He asked for people to come up on the stage, so my uncle said, 'go on, run downstairs, maybe you can figure out how it's done!' I rushed down there, and I stood with this crowd of people around this box. I realized that it was necessary for him to have those people on the stage to cover up what he was doing, because when he turned the box around, I was small enough to see what happened: as he turned the box around, she pulled her feet in through the holes at the end of the box, and two fake feet were stuck out! She doubled up in one half of the box, and that's the way it was done. Thurston was a fine looking old gentleman, with white hair, and he would step out in front of the footlights, and say in a grand, mysterious manner, 'and now, ladies and gentleman... you are about to witness something that you will remember all the days of your life... the levitation of the princess Karnack!!' And, boy! All of a sudden all these people in Egyptian costumes rushed out onto the stage, the princess came out, he hypnotized her, and she went up into the air! It was just so exciting!! What made it so exciting was that one sentence, 'you will remember it all the days of your life!' And that's what show business should be, the suspension of disbelief!"

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There are more memories of show business where these came from! As space permits in future issues of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*, additional stories from "Everybody's Friend" will appear. On various occasions, Jerry told more humorous anecdotes about his mother's reactions to Hollywood, his friendships and working relationships with actors Arthur O'Connell, Arthur Q. Bryan, Jim Backus and others, his audition for *The Flintstones*, his experiences with dramatic programs produced for Radio Free Europe, and more. On a personal note, I speak for the NLAS in expressing my appreciation for the many hours Jerry spent with us, sharing his vivid memories. Through these recollections, Jerry Hausner, Lum and Abner, and the Golden Age of Radio live on!

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford



LUM AND ABNER®

GO TO WAR



Welcome to the tenth 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. Let's get that battery hooked back up to our farm-model Delco, but be careful! Papa warmed it up in the oven and it's still hot!! Pine Ridge is "hot" as well, with the rising temperature of summer as well as a steamy "romance" between our old friend Lum "Bashful Bachelor" Edwards and Mabel Melrose.

In case you missed our April installment, Lum and Abner, co-chairmen of the Pine Ridge War Savings Staff, are involved in a war bond rally with a twist: the citizens of Pine Ridge are helping to elect a wife for Lum, their bond purchases serving as votes (initiated due to a misunderstanding by Abner)! Rivals for Lum's hand are Sister Simpson and the "Widder" Abernathy. To avoid marrying either of these undesirable ladies, L&A (at Squire Skimp's suggestion) enter the imaginary "Mabel Melrose" in the race. Lum is hopeful that enough votes will be bought for the "mystery womern" to save him from matrimony.

Sister Simpson theorizes that Mabel is a "fickatitious" character, and if the mystery woman wins, Lum will be in yet another awkward spot! There seems no chance of that, as "re-lates" of the Pine Ridge ladies literally "dig up" enough currency to keep buying bonds: "I'll say one thing fer this con-test," Lum observes, "hit's brangin' out a lotta hoarded money. Th' givernint's ag'in' hoardin'." Soon, Sister Simpson is in the lead for Lum's hand, and the worried fellow comes up with a brilliant work of "psycho-lology." Through Lizabeth, he spreads the gossip that Mrs. Abernathy can't possibly win, and feels certain the "Widder" will turn her votes over to Mabel Melrose, just to keep Sister Simpson from landing Lum. Abner soon delivers the results to Lum, hot off the party line: Mrs. Abernathy gives her votes to Sister Simpson!!! It seems she'd rather Lum marry a hometown girl!!

As the noon deadline approaches, the future "Mr. Simpson" is frantically packing his valise, readying himself to run away from home and marriage. He vows to write Mr. Morgenthau a letter explaining his plight. (Henry Morgenthau, secretary of the treasury from 1934 to 1945, organized the Victory Bond campaign, which raised more than \$200 billion.) Says Lum, "I'm gonna send 'im a pitcher o' Sister Simpson, too. Then I know he'll unnerstand 'zackly why I done what I'm doin'." To explain his disappearance to the townsfolk, Lum instructs Abner to "tell 'em I'ze called away on givernint bizness. Tell 'em it's a military secret, so you cain't let 'em know 'zackly whut it is!" His escape is halted when Lum finds out from Grandpappy Spears that Mabel Melrose has won the contest!! Just who bought enough bonds to put her in the lead? Why, a lady named Mabel Melrose!!!!

Lum meets with the Squire a day later, who assures him he had

nothing to do with the real Miss Melrose's appearance in Pine Ridge; it is a coincidence! After Abner informs Lum that the Jot 'Em Down Store will be collecting fats and greases for war use while Jeff the butcher is out of town, Lum discusses with Squire his fears of being "lawsued fer breachin' th' promise" if he refuses to marry Mable. Their legal discussion is repeatedly interrupted by Abner's "public 'nouncement" on the party line, encouraging the "wimmen folk" to bring their fats and greases in: "Th' givernint needs it sump'm wunnerful, an' they need it right now... We're way behin' th' big cities on this, so now let's show 'em what Pine Ridge folks is made out of!" This impassioned plea was due to the fact that only 31% of U.S. women were turning in their fats and greases at this time, needed for the extraction of glycerine to be used in the manufacture of ammunition. Cedric enters, attempting to donate some car grease, which Abner must refuse. "Bullits made outa grease'd be sorta loose an' slippery, I'm 'feared," Cedric reasons. Meanwhile, Miss Melrose herself is headed to the store, wishing to deliver a pound of grease to Lum personally! Little does she know that Squire has agreed to speak to her in Lum's behalf, in an attempt to dissuade her from marriage!

As Monday, June 7 rolls around, Abner and Grandpap are planning a huge combination public wedding and bond rally, charging the sale of bonds for admission, an idea repugnant to Lum. Squire delivers Miss Melrose's ultimatum to Lum: for \$1,000, she will release her "fiance" from his "engagement!" His deadline is noon the next day, and his other two options are marriage or a breach-of-promise suit! Lum fails to bring the money to Squire, who claims his "client" Mr. Edwards is now in serious trouble! A tardy Lum soon arrives, happy as a lark. Why? He has met Miss Mabel, fallen in love with her, and discovered that she knew nothing of Squire's claims of a \$1,000 agreement!! As usual, Lum was the intended victim of another Skimp scheme. Mabel had heard of the war bond contest, and bought the bonds to help her "namesake" win!

Soon, Lum is hard at work convincing Abner he should rent Mabel his "nice, broke-down attic" to live in, starve in, and paint in! His beloved is a "surrealist" artist, as well as a "cubist." Thinking a "cubist" is a citizen of Cuba, Abner comments, "I doggies, I wish she'd a-stayed in Cuby then, 'stid o' comin' over here." "She ain't from Cuby," insists Lum, "she's from Little Rock!" Before long, "starving artist" Melrose is painting her masterpieces in Abner's attic, but soon spreads throughout the Peabody home, expecting to be treated like royalty! Abner complains to Lum of his tenant's annoying stomping about in his attic, but Lum suggests the sound is created by mice! In an apparent ad-lib, Tuffy Goff adds, "them mice is got '17 coupons an' got shoes, I hear 'em!" to which Chet Lauck nearly cracks up on the air! Lizabeth quickly tires of waiting on Miss Melrose hand and foot, but lovesick Lum is blind to Mabel's faults.

The June 15th meeting of the Pine Ridge War Savings Staff results in the approval of a "high class art exhibit" as its next project! There are soon two surrealist painters in Pine Ridge - "Eddards Van Lum" joins Miss Melrose in dabbling meaningless blobs of paint onto canvas, christening their absurd works with such fitting titles as, "Bewildered Soul of a Cottonwood Stump Calling Out to Its Sister." Even newborn surrealist Lum has to concede what many of us have often suspected: "Hit's a whole lot easier ta paint that stuff than it tiz ta try ta splain it!!" Lum's efforts to create his first masterpiece are interrupted by Grandpap's discussion of his own painting of some years back, "A Bowl of Fruit - Two Bananers and a Apple."

Lum begins a new work on June 17, a painting of the Four Freedoms (Freedom of Speech and Worship, Freedom from Fear and Want). Cedric enters the store, angry over a circular which asks workers to contribute more to the Payroll Savings Plan:

CEDRIC: I'm already puttin' ten per-cents into it!

ABNER: That's fine, Cedric... but, that ain't enough! See, hit ain't enough ta git th' soldiers ever' thing that they're gonna need ta win this war with!

CEDRIC: Are ye shore it ain't?

ABNER: I know it ain't!! We got that straight from th' givermint! An', y' know, me an' Lum er sorter givermint fellers, now that we're co-chairmans here o' th' War Savin's Bond, y' know!

Abner reminds Cedric that his current job earns him more salary than ever, but there are fewer items to spend his wages on, what with wartime rationing. War bonds are a wise investment for the extra income, but Cedric insists, "...but I like ta hear all that money jinglin' in m' pocket!"

ABNER: That jinglin' is a awful dangerous sound! It's all that loose spendin' money circ'latin' about that's makin' prices go up! An' Lum says that's what causes that inner-flation! ...you better tell Walt Bates that you wanna put more money into that Payroll Savin's Plan!

CEDRIC: ...what if I start puttin' more money into th' pinball machine?

ABNER: Why, Cedric Weehunt! You ort to be shamed to death of yerself fer even sayin' sich a thing as that! That Hitler would just love to hear you say that!

CEDRIC: Why, is he a good pinball player?

ABNER: Fer th' land sakes, Cedric!!

CEDRIC: Does he make some purty good scores?

ABNER: Well (chuckle), he ain't made no good scores lately, I kin tell ya that, Cedric! Facts is, I think he's got ta whur he has ta sorter tilt his machine! (laughs)

Lum eventually emerges from his feed room "studio" with his painting of the Four Freedoms: a portrait of a war bond! "Do you know what yer sayin' ever' time when you buy one o' them bonds?" Lum asks, "yer sayin', 'I b'lieve in th' ideals o' th' Four Freedoms - an' here's th' proof of my faith!" "I doggies, Lum," Abner responds, "fer once that surrealism makes good sense!"

With a new week underway on June 21, Lum begins to plan a big "nouncement" to be made at the upcoming art exhibit: his engagement to Miss Melrose! But how can he gain the courage to propose? Abner encourages him to do so on the phone, which results in no more than a discussion of the weather! An embarrassed Lum orders Abner not to repeat any part of the conversation; after all, "the weather is a military secret!" As the week progresses, works of art (?) are hung in the schoolhouse in preparation for the big auction.

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Writer Roz Rogers and actors Lauck and Goff no doubt had fun parodying the more absurd side of the art world, in which ridiculous titles and pseudointellectual explanations are offered to justify canvasses containing squiggles and blobs. Some of the Pine Ridge artists' titles for their works: "Daffydill with a Umbreller," "Wilted Pine Cone," "Alter-Ego of a Lonely Hayloft," and "Zebra with Moon Crater!" Lum explains the modus operandi of the modern artist in layman's terms: 'y' see, fer this surrealism stuff, you throw yer mind into th' unconscious an' ya start paintin' from there; an' when ye git conscious ag'in, ya cain't always reco'nize yer work!" Abner adds, "I could tell you's unconscious when y' done that'n, Lum," referring to Lum's "messterpiece," "Fog Engulfing Woodchuck." The "fog" truly seems to come to life the longer L&A gaze at the painting, until it turns out to be smoke from Grandpap's abandoned cigar, upon which the now nearly scorched "woodchuck" sits!!

No, Lum didn't lose his "17" stamp - he wears old shoes and shabby clothes on purpose, in an attempt to look like a "starving artist" at the combination bond rally and art exhibit on Thursday, June 24. The down-to-earth Pine Ridge folks react with dismay and laughter as auctioneer Milford Avery Spears attempts to peddle paintings with titles the likes of "Ectoplasm in Limbo!" A \$100 war bond is the prize for the artist who sells the most bonds with his or her paintings, and "Eddards Van Lum" feels certain Mabel will win the prize, plus a carefully worded note of marriage proposal! The most any painting will bring is a mere \$10 for "A Bowl of Fruit - Two Bananers and a Apple!" Naturally, artist Grandpap declines Lum's offer of wedded bliss!!

As June winds down, a disgruntled former artist named Lum has his sense of failure compounded by Grandpap's new "career" as an artist, specializing in bowls of fruit (naturally). He advises Lum to take up the banana-painting business, but to limit the number of the tropical fruits in the composition: "It's too hard ta git points ta buy th' pitcher with!"

Perhaps Mabel and Lum are meant for each other - she jumps into one "crazy idee" after another! Now it's studying "the wild birds and animals inhabitin' th' foothills!" Enlisting Abner to hide and provide birdcalls, Lum impresses Miss Melrose, identifying each tweet with names like "Australian weaver bird" and "the Baltimore and Ohio Oreo." Abner also releases some caged birds Lum found at the post office, which Lum identifies as "genu-ine ring-tailed Arabian beetle-hawks!" "Those aren't beetle-hawks," exclaims a distraught Mabel, "those are my own love birds! I had them sent from home!"

Another day, another kick: grammar! Lum explains, "durin' war times, Abner, lotsa slang words gits into th' langridge! We got ta keep th' langridge pure!" Abner, however, is more concerned with the point rationing system.

The first day of July finds Lum arriving at Abner's house, prepared to "pop the question" to Miss Melrose! Mabel is more concerned with quoting a World War II pamphlet, the "Basic Seven Food Chart." Says Miss Mabel, "we must all eat at least one food from each of the basic seven every day, if we expect to keep America working at peak efficiency!" Lum makes numerous abortive attempts to "pre-pose," but Mable continues, "we must eat our way to health and victory! Wartime conditions demand proper nutrition!" Eavesdropping Abner becomes curious about "hidden hunger," and Lum's growing appetite leads him to abandon his plan to propose, as the trio raids the icebox!

Even though he would like to quit painting bowls of fruit, Grandpap announces on Monday, July 5 that he is "froze to his job" by the "givermint" for the duration of the war. Artist Spears is commissioned by Grandma Masters to paint a beef roast, scarce due to rationing, "so she could re-collect what one of 'em looked like." Because of rising beef prices, Grandpap feels justified in inflating his fee for the art work! This duty is hampered by his new job: telegram delivery boy for Dick Huddleston! Unexpectedly, Llewelyn Snavely "Mousey" Gray returns from military service!! He had to walk most of the way from Mena, since no one met him at the depot! This is odd, since he sent L&A a telegram the day before... OOPS! Grandpap failed on his first delivery!

Mousey is the center of interest, having served in combat in Africa, where he suffered a leg wound! His attempts to discuss the war with a group gathered at the store are overshadowed by the ordinary gossip of the day! Mousey has, however, kept a "secret" war diary, and meets L&A at the store on July 7 to read from it. The diary offers nothing more than a chronicle of Mousey's activities in peeling spuds and hooting at an African owl! He did, however, leave out one minor incident: the capture of a Nazi soldier!!! (In actuality, the German man surrendered peacefully, asking to be captured!)

Just how did Mousey become wounded? The old fellows hire him to work in the store, trying every gimmick to coerce him into revealing the facts. Eventually, Mousey spins a heroic tale of his leading a group of brave men in capturing a hill, suffering his injury in the process. Lum reads a postcard from Mousey's army buddy Ed, however, which reveals the famous wound was accidentally received from a potato knife! Ashamed, Mousey admits his previous fabrication, but Lum assures him he and Abner are proud of him nonetheless, having provided a valuable service for Uncle Sam's fighting men!

Mabel Melrose leaves town on July 13, to the relief of the Peabody household. Lum fears he has broken her heart, since he has "iggnored" her lately. Mabel calls, asking for a ladder to be rushed to the Peabody farm - to elope, Lum wonders? No, she just wants to get her cat off the barn!!

Situations resolved, the War Savings Staff resumes its duties, allowing Lum to "drown his sorrows" in hard work. Grandpap delivers a telegram to the co-chairmen, notifying them that a Mr. Lloyd Partain of the U. S. Treasury Department is coming to Pine Ridge to deliver a citation to L&A! Lum fears this means he and Abner are to be arrested, possibly for errors in filing their income tax return!

On Thursday, July 15, L&A nervously approach a platform, set up in front of the townfolk. Are they to be handed a stiff "penintentury" sentence, in front of the entire town? On the contrary, Mr. Partain announces, "every single family in your community has purchased a war bond, and is continuing to purchase them 100%! And, therefore, Pine Ridge has earned the title of America's first 'T town!' And, so it is, with sincere pleasure that I present to you, on behalf of the Treasury Department, this 'T' flag, and as it flies from your flagpole, we hope it will be a challenge to other American towns to emulate your excellent achievement!"

The Golden Era Discussion Club enters the picture again, with war veteran Mousey Gray as its guest of honor on July 21. Abner "drafts" Ol' Blue, his beloved dog, as a "co-guest of honor," for he fears his canine friend is soon to be drafted into the army! Since Blue is practically a member of the Peabody family, Abner mourns his imagined loss, but his patriotism leads him to draft a letter (suppos-

edly written by the dog!) to register him for service! This nonsense ends when Abner learns that Blue has been following Cedric to the defense plant, where the young man works extra hours as a guard. "Ol' Blue'll be de-ferred now," exclaims a cheery Abner, "'cause he's workin' in a de-fense plant!!!"

Female characters appearing "in person" are a rarity on the 15 minute *Lum and Abner* series, but on Friday, July 22, a young girl named Ellie Connors enters the store in search of a job. Thanks to the memory of writer Roz Rogers, we are certain this character was performed by actress Lurene Tuttle (who probably played Mable Melrose as well). Unknown to L&A at first, Ellie, age 12, has escaped from a reformatory. Town Marshal Uncle Henry Lumsford is hot on her trail, but something about the child's demeanor causes sympathetic Lum to hide her from the authorities.

The final week of July 1943 focuses on Lum's efforts to help Ellie, whom he feels is a victim of circumstance. By day, "Jestice o' th' Peace Eddards" roams the hills with Uncle Henry and the state police in search of Ellie, but by night, L&A visit her in the feed room of the store, delivering food and clothing. Dressed in some of Pearl Peabody's old clothes, they take Ellie to the Mena depot, where she will catch a train for Wisconsin, to spend some time with Lum's Aunt Minnie until the situation can be smoothed over. Abner lingers at a shop window, wanting to buy some Indian moccasins, to which Lum responds by scolding Abner for his foolish spending habits, reminding him of the war and the dangers of inflated spending. While Lum buys a ticket for Ellie, Abner gets his fortune told by the penny weighing machine, learning he will soon take a trip. How true this is! Seeing a state police officer ahead, "zaminin' th' other youngins 'fore they git on th' train," Lum suddenly pushes Abner in line with the other passengers, as he and Ellie bid their confused friend a fond farewell! Listen carefully and you will hear the only known appearance of Roz Rogers, playing a train conductor, yelling, "C' mon, c' mon old timer, git aboard, we ain't got all day!!" No sooner has Abner left than Squire appears, forcing Lum and Ellie to concoct yet another "story," telling Mr. Skimp that she is Mary Edwards, Lum's niece, who has just arrived on the train!



What happens to Abner? We will find out next time!!

The programs discussed above are available on tapes #102-108 of the NLAS Tape Library. See you in August, and we hope to see you **June 26 at the 9th Annual NLAS Convention!!!!**

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

New Tape Releases!

Members will be glad to learn that we now have another set of programs ready for release, dubbed directly from the original 16-inch transcription discs in the collection of the National Museum of Communications!

While there are not nearly as many episodes in this batch as there were in our first release (the Horlick's Malted Milk discs, #'s H-3 to H-35), the material contained within them is equally historic and interesting. The new releases have been assigned the numbers of P-1 through P-17. They begin with Lum and Abner's very first broadcast sponsored by Postum, from February 28, 1938; the Postum episodes remain continuous through April 22. Then, several weeks of shows are missing, picking back up on June 6 and continuing until the show went off the air for its summer vacation at the end of the month. All of these episodes mentioned here are totally "unreleased" material; that is, they have never been available on tape before! L&A operate their own motion picture studio, dig for dinosaur bones in Pine Ridge, plan for Lum's big trip to Europe, and otherwise carry on such day-to-day activities.

There are some assorted individual broadcasts in this collection as well: among them is the mega-historic "transatlantic" show from the summer of 1938, in which Chet (Lum) Lauck read his lines via shortwave from England, while Norris (Abner) Goff responded from the CBS Studios in Chicago. This is a broadcast that has been talked about for many years, but until less than a year ago, no one even suspected that a recording of it existed.

The balance of the new tapes incorporate the previously-released January through March 1940 Postum episodes, for which we have been unable to locate the original discs. These shows were formerly given the numbers of #35 through #41; please note that **THOSE NUMBERS ARE NOW INVALID**. They have been replaced by #'s P-11 through P-17.

To receive your copy of the new pages for the Tape Catalog, just send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Executive Secretary's address. If you do not already have a complete catalog, you may obtain one for \$5.00; order from the same address. We hope you will enjoy hearing this "lost" Lum and Abner material!



The late Jerry Hausner visits Mrs. Harriet Lauck in her Hot Springs home while in Arkansas for the 3rd Annual NLAS Convention, June 19, 1987. This issue is dedicated to Jerry's memory.