

LUM AND ABNER

IN
So This

Is Washington



with
ALAN MOWBRAY
MILDRED COLES
ROGER CLARK
SARAH PADDEN
A JACK WM. VOTION PRODUCTION
Directed by RAYMOND MCAREY Produced by BEN HERSH

You'll roar till you're sore... as our pals
push to put Pine Ridge on the map... and
get the Washington merry-go-round!



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October 1993

LET'S TOON IN ON LUM AND ABNER®

You may recall that in our August issue we had a report on "Lummox and Abner," two characters who were to appear in this summer's new animated cartoon feature *Tom & Jerry: The Movie*. Well, this film seems to have come and gone rapidly, but those who managed to find it in theaters undoubtedly found out that those particular character names were never actually used in it. In fact, the two figures identified as "Lummox and Abner" in the advance publicity were not given names at all in the final production: in the credits they were listed only as "Straycatcher #1" and "Straycatcher #2."

The novelization of the plot that was used in the advance publicity was stated as "based upon the original screenplay by Dennis Marks." It seems likely that between the time Marks wrote his screenplay and the time the film was in final production, someone must have advised the producers that using the names "Lummox and Abner" could produce some unhealthy side effects, especially since LUM AND ABNER is a registered trademark. Apparently, it was Marks' intention that these names be only two of several oblique references to famous teams: remaining in the film are moving men "Pat and Mike" (the well-known Irishmen of joke fame) and a restaurant named "Bill and Joe's" (a reference to Tom & Jerry's creators, cartoonists Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera).

The world of L&A and the world of cartoons again merged briefly on the weekend of September 11 & 12, 1993, when for the first time all three NLAS Zekatif Ossifers appeared together at the

annual convention of the Popeye Fan Club in Chester, Illinois. (As Mena, Arkansas, is the hometown of Chet Lauck & Tuffy Goff, so is Chester the birthplace of Popeye's creator, E.C. Segar.) The Popeye Club's co-founders, Mike and Debbie Brooks, have attended the NLAS's annual meeting in Mena every year since 1990, proving to be an invaluable help in moving equipment, setting up, and running errands. The Brooks couple freely admit to knowing very little about L&A, but their enthusiasm and willingness to work more than makes up for that. Conversely, the NLAS Ossifers probably know more about Popeye than the Brooks do about L&A: Zeck Seck Tim Hollis has been a cartoon historian for many years, and Prez Uncle Donnie Pitchford (long before his NLAS days) made an abortive attempt to start a Popeye Fan Club of his own!

The Ossifers (including Singin' Sam Brown, who is not a cartoon buff but is solid and true blue... he also lives near Chester, Illinois!) performed much the same duties at the Popeye convention that the Popeye officers perform in Mena. Of course, there was ample opportunity to promote L&A and the NLAS as well, and it is hoped that we will be picking up several new members from this appearance. Since the Popeye Fan Club's special guest performer for this year was TV personality "Cousin Cliff" Holman, late of the 1992 NLAS Convention, it truly seemed as if Mena had been transplanted to the banks of the Mississippi River!

We hereby express our appreciation to the Popeye Fan Club for allowing the NLAS to join them in their event. We look forward to all of us being together again in Mena in 1994!



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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

October 1993

**THE NATIONAL
LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**

Zekatif Ossifers

PRESIDENT
Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT
Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Tim Hollis

Cover: Original RKO lobby card from *So This Is Washington* (1943).

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Stuff you'll be proud to own.

The Golden Era by Gary Stivers



SO THIS IS...



Lum and Abner's fourth motion picture for RKO Radio Pictures, *So This Is Washington*, was copyrighted on September 8, 1943. Inasmuch as one source says that a review of the film appeared in the December 1943 issue of *Photoplay*, it seems reasonable to assume that the autumn of 1993 marks the 50th anniversary of its release.

If one is lucky enough to view an original RKO release print of the movie, a truly historic shot is the first thing to appear on the screen. Like most RKO movies that had a wartime theme, the familiar revolving radio tower beeping out the words "An RKO Radio Picture" is accompanied by a booming, echoing, staccato rendition of the familiar "Dah-dah-dah-DAH" of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; these four notes became the musical symbol of World War II for a rather convoluted reason. The Morse code symbol for "V" (as in "V For Victory") is dot-dot-dot-DASH, and it just so happened that Ludwig Van B.'s "dah-dah-dah-DAH" sounded much like "dot-dot-dot-DASH." Get it? We guess you had to be there.

At any rate, the opening titles for *So This Is Washington* are the first in an L&A movie to not feature the familiar organ rendition of the radio theme song; instead, a prestigious-sounding orchestra version of the same theme is heard, as the credits unfold over a patriotic background of the U.S. Capitol building. We learn that both the original story and the screenplay for this movie were co-written by L&A's talented and versatile radio writer Roswell Rogers (the plot is, in fact, cobbled together from L&A's own radio

shows of the first part of 1943... which were Rogers' work to begin with).

After the credits, the opening shot of Pine Ridge is the same marvelous establishing shot that has introduced the little community in each of the previous features. L&A are busy with war work in the Jot 'Em Down Store. First they must deal with Miz Pomeroy, played by hatchet-faced actress Minerva Urecal. She claims that one of her little boys has torn some more stamps out of her ration booklet; Abner has been keeping track, and reports that the kid has actually "torn out" ten more stamps than the book had to begin with! The Margaret Hamilton lookalike storms out in a huff. Next on the agenda is the town freeloader, identified as "Earle," but presumably not Earle Pomeroy. The actor who portrays Earle is not identified in the credits, but it is strongly suspected that he is Jimmie Dodd, the performer who won everlasting immortality as the "big brother" leader of TV's *Mickey Mouse Club* in the 1950's. It is known that Dodd was working in movies at this time, and this Earle fellow sure looks and sounds a lot like him!

A more pleasant arrival is Aunt Charity Spears, portrayed by Sarah Padden. This moonfaced actress may or may not have resented being typecast in films with rural settings: prior to working with L&A, she had been assigned the role of Loweezie, the blimp-sized wife of Snuffy Smith, in an obscure series of B-pictures based on Billy DeBeck's hillbilly comic strip. Aunt Charity has a new grandson, but doesn't have enough gasoline to go stay with her daughter and care for the baby. Kindhearted as always,



Is this Jimmie Dodd, trying to recruit Abner as a Mouseketeer? What do YOU think?

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Lum and kindly Aunt Charity Spears (Sarah Padden).

Lum appoints her a fire watcher for that part of the country, and allots her enough gas to get there.

Meanwhile, Abner has been listening to the radio. A Washington bureaucrat, Chester W. Marshall (played to perplexed perfection by Alan Mowbray), wants "the common man" to submit inventions that can aid the war effort; enthused, Abner gets to work in the feed room of the store. One of the first things he produces is a failed attempt at synthetic licorice candy, which he has whomped up out of sweetgum, stretchberries, and other



"Caution: Genus at work!!"

unhealthy-sounding ingredients (sound familiar?). The candy is not edible, but little Gomer Bates comes in and reports that he has been using it to make slingshots. Also, according to Gomer, Grandpappy Spears has used it to make sleeve garters, while Cedric Weehunt (who does not appear in this film) has fashioned suspenders from the substance. Lum's eyes light up: THIS IS IT! He immediately begins making plans for himself and Abner to journey to the nation's capital to present Mr. Marshall with their "synathetics rubber!"

In the very next scene, Grandpappy Spears makes his first appearance on the silver screen... the only one of the major characters not to have appeared in a movie so far. He is portrayed by Danny Duncan, the actor who had been voicing Uncle Henry Lunsford on the radio show, and had appeared in bit roles in the previous two L&A films. L&A are leaving the store in his care while they are gone, and the bewhiskered gent assures them, "I'll run this pigeon-toed store like it ain't never been run before!" "That's whut worries us," mutters Abner. Outside, the townspeople have gathered to give L&A a big sendoff. Lum responds by beginning his traditional "harp strings of memory strikes a tender chord" speech. He reports that "synathetics rubber" will put Pine Ridge on the map: "Tourists'll be flockin' in here from everwher to see wher we lived an' et an' done other historic things." (When filming this scene, Chet Lauck had no way of knowing that Lum's predictions would eventually come true, thanks to the efforts of such organizations as the L&A Museum and the NLAS!)

Once L&A actually arrive in Washington, they find the pace of life considerably more hectic than in Pine Ridge. They trudge the streets, looking for a hotel room, but even the "Goff Hotel" (an inside joke) has no place for them to stay. They try to sleep on a park bench, but a policeman (complete with Irish accent) drives them away. They finally encounter a shady-looking character who rents them a beautifully-furnished room for \$8.00. Too late, they find out that their "room" is actually the display window of a ritzy department store! ("He shore give us a room with big winders in it," Abner has observed.) Just as they are about to be hauled off to the calaboose, they are rescued by a young man from Pine Ridge who has made good in Washington: none other than Robert Blevins! (Apparently the report in a June 1942 radio episode that Robert had been killed in action was an error on the part of the government! Incidentally, no one ever seemed

to be able to agree on whether the family name should be "Blevin" or "Blevins;" when the name appears in print in this movie, it is definitely spelled with an "s.")

Robert (played by Roger Clark) befriends his two old pals from home, and they embark on a brief but hazardous ride in a taxicab driven by actress Barbara Pepper (in her later years, after a somewhat hard life, she would be seen on TV's *Green Acres* as Doris Ziffel, "mother" of Arnold the Pig). Robert is now a newspaper columnist who enjoys taking potshots at prominent Washington personalities, particularly Mr. Marshall (making him the Rush Limbaugh of 1943, perhaps?). This doesn't help endear him to his sweet intended (Mildred Coles), who happens to be Marshall's secretary. The prospects for getting L&A into Marshall's office look even dimmer when taking into consideration the crowd of lunatics who are all trying to push their crackpot inventions. One peddles a self-rising parachute, another a machine gun disguised as a pencil sharpener, still another with "Elephant Tablets" to give soldiers unflinching memory (but he can't remember what the ingredients are)... a bald man has the perfect hair restorer! This fourth looney is played by character actor Dink Trout, who later appeared on the L&A radio shows as ornery gas station owner Zed Whitsit ("I don't sell ethyl!") and had a regular role on their 30-minute series as Luke Spears. Since L&A can't make any headway, and Robert likewise can't convince secretary Jane that he isn't a bogeyman, Mr. Edwards and Mr. Peabody decide to take a walking tour of the capital. Through the miracle of rear-screen projection they visit the Capitol Building, the Lincoln Memorial, and Washington's Monument, while Lum soliloquizes with patriotic quotes



L&A rehearse their "synathetics rubber" demonstration.

from various founding fathers (it seems that most comedies of the war years featured at least one such serious scene in the midst of all the hilarity).

In the park, L&A encounter a senator and a congressman discussing their troubles with farm aid, and the fact that many small rural communities are becoming ghost towns as the citizens move to big cities to work in defense plants (this problem was very real in rural America at this time). With simple logic, stemming from personal experience, the Pine Ridge duo has soon solved the problems that have been perplexing the greater intellects. Word of their simple homespun solutions spreads fast, and the newspaper headlines soon blare, "Park Bench Solomons Dispense Wisdom" and "Rural Sages Advise On Farm Problems." Crowds of government heads line up to visit L&A's park bench, and the old fellows are soon obliged to keep regular office (bench?) hours in order to accommodate the crowd of advice-seekers.

They haven't forgotten about trying to pitch their "synathetics rubber" to Mr. Marshall, however, and leave the bench promptly at 1:00 each day

to return to his office... even when Marshall is one of the politicians waiting to see them! Through a series of misunderstandings, they finally accompany Marshall back to his office, where he is ecstatic over their presumed discovery that will eliminate the rubber shortage. He arranges for Abner to demonstrate the formulation of the rubber for benefit of the press (including skeptical Robert Blevins), but just before the demonstration is to begin, a heavy statue of "The Common Man" in Marshall's office falls on Abner's head, producing an instant case of amnesia!

Abner begins talking in 1943 "jive" slang, and reports that his name is "Buster V. Davenport," based on the initials BVD in his underwear. Now the newspaper headlines gleefully shout Marshall's humiliation, particularly since no one but Abner knows the secret formula for the rubber (Lum considered it a government secret and insisted that Abner keep it to himself). Finally, word comes down from the top that Marshall must produce synthetic rubber within one week, or he loses his job!

A doctor examines Abner and suggests that the most likely way to restore his memory is through another blow to the head. Lum refuses to permit this, so the next best idea is to return to Pine Ridge in the hope that familiar faces and surroundings will help Abner remember his past. On the train ride back to Arkansas, Lum points out various local points of interest to Marshall; among them is Rich Mountain, the peak near Mena atop which today is located the Queen Wilhelmina Lodge and state park. This movie differs from both reality and the radio show by having Pine Ridge contain a railroad depot of its own. The previous film, *Two Weeks To Live*, had revolved around the fact that Pine Ridge did not have a railroad, and in the next movie, *Goin' To Town*, L&A once again take the train to Mena and then ride the rest of the way to Pine Ridge by car.

Once L&A are back in town, the word goes out over the party line for everyone to assemble in the Jot 'Em Down Store. When Abner arrives, instead of recognizing anyone, he insults all of his old friends and attacks

the mannequin "Mr. Dilbeck" (introduced in the 1941 radio shows and in *The Bashful Bachelor*), thinking the dummy is a Japanese spy. In utter desperation, Lum agrees to be the one to clunk Abner on the noggin, in a last-ditch attempt to help him.

By now, Abner (aka Buster V. Davenport) is holed up in the feed room, convinced that he is a commando leading an "invasion." Lum's attempts to whop him one are hindered by (1) Lum's own squeamishness, and (2) the fact that Commando Abner is wearing a metal helmet. Just when it looks like the setup is perfect, Lum accidentally catches Mr. Marshall with his backswing, knocking the bureaucrat unconscious. In the excitement that follows, Abner bumps his head on a low shelf and restores his own memory.

Jubilation reigns, in the midst of which Robert Blevins and his newly intended, secretary Jane, arrive to announce that tests have proven that Abner's formula is not rubber at all but a new brand of surfacing for airstrips. For producing the product, Abner will receive a huge annual salary from the government! **ABNER:** "Did ye hear that Mr. Marshall?!" **MARSHALL:** "Who's Mr. Marshall?" **LUM:** "Why, that's you!" **MARSHALL:** "No, I'm Buster V. Davenport... a commando..." Fade to black.

All in all, *So This Is Washington* comes across as very faithful to the radio series. You will recall from our February 1993 issue that the story of L&A's rubber formula occupied much of the radio show's storyline in the early months of 1943; in that version, Grandpappy Spears was the inventor who developed a Buster V. Davenport complex. You may also recall that there is some evidence that the story was performed with Abner as the inventor (as he is in the movie) as early as 1932, so this film is most likely based on a combination of the two versions.

If you have not seen *So This Is Washington* for yourself, it is available on videocassette for \$29.95 from Lum & Abner Associates, 35 Circle Drive, Hot Springs, AR 71901.

- Tim Hollis



LUM AND ABNER® GO TO WAR



Welcome to chapter twelve 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. The months of October and November 1943 were active ones indeed. In October, the foreign ministers of China, Great Britain, Russia and the U.S. met at Moscow to draft the *Moscow Declaration*, proposing an international organization, which would later see reality as the United Nations. Allied forces captured Finschhafen on October 2, and on the 13th, Italy (having signed a secret armistice with the Allies on September 3), became a "co-belligerent," declaring war on Germany. Most Italian soldiers were unsuccessful in their attacks on German garrisons throughout Italy. By early November, the Allies found themselves unable to pierce the German troops, who were defending a line 75 miles south of Rome.

By November 6, the Russians had captured Kiev. In the Central Pacific area, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz waged an "island-hopping" campaign against the Japanese forces. On November 20, U.S. Marines invaded Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands (the United States suffered 3,110 casualties), while Makin fell to Army troops in three days.

The focus of these articles is closer to the home front. Let's go back - back - back a couple of generations... my Grandpa has just walked through the sticks to Uncle Ivan's house, as he does almost daily, to share his brother's radio, as the two enjoy a quarter-hour of *Lum and Abner*. The characters of Pine Ridge are real to them, and they are concerned about Lum's welfare; after all, as the episodes of September 1943 concluded, Lum had vanished, apparently having "ended it all" over his recent misfortunes!

It is now Monday, October 4, and we find Grandpappy Spears attempting to console Abner, who has not had a "hearin'" from Lum since his disappearance. "Th' mail's slow these days," Grandpap reassures his friend, "Aunt Charity got a hearin' from her nephew Emory th' other day. Taken five days fer it ta gitcheer. Five whole pigeon-toed days!" Nephew Emory was formerly a resident of Hot Springs, and Grandpap claims a letter would only take one day to arrive in Pine Ridge. The latest letter from Emory was very brief, Grandpap claims - no reason it should travel so slowly - and all it said was that Emory was stationed near the Panama Canal now! "An' it taken five days," continues Grandpap, "I cain't git over it!"

Squire Skimp has "undispossessed" the "widder" Jessup's property, claiming he is offering it to Walt Bates for war plant expansion (patriotic, isn't he?). Certain that his old partner has "gone on to his re-ward," Abner decides to rent Lum's house to the "widder" and her "youngins," and proceeds to give away much of Lum's clothing! Imagine Abner's mixed feelings when his partner suddenly reappears! Lum, his spirits raised by a new business idea, has returned to Pine Ridge to open a "pitcher show!" (If you have

listened to the 1935 "Hog Chain Letter" series in modern syndication, you'll be interested to know that the ending of the final episode is edited to eliminate Lum's identical "pitcher show" decision. The 1935 "Pitcher Show" series was cut from syndication in favor of the 1943 version, taken from the same scripts. The newer version features better sound quality.)

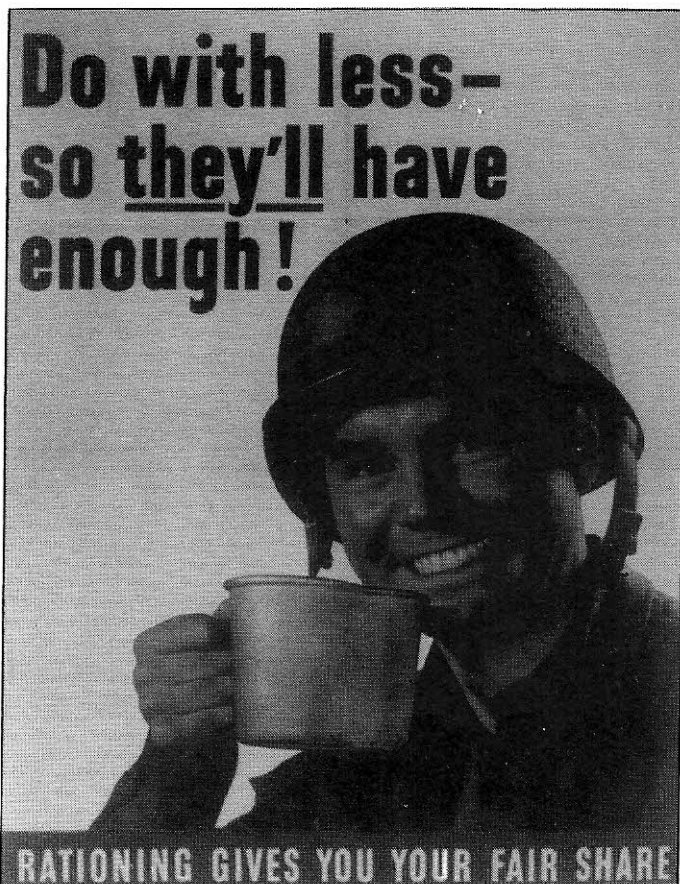
How will L&A get the "widder" and "youngins" out of Lum's abode? Lum doesn't dare tangle with the strapping 16-year old Jessup boy, explaining, "this is National Safety Week. We ain't s'posed ta hurt nobody durin' this National Safety Campaign... gotta save manpower fer war power!"

Although it is over three weeks before Halloween, L&A don bed sheets, creeping around in the dark to convince the "widder" that Lum's house is haunted! The "spooks" become the "spooked," as L&A are frightened by two more "spooks," who are actually Cedric and Mousey, enjoying a night off from the war plant!



Posters such as the ones illustrating this article urged Americans at home to do their parts!

The “widder” finally gone, Lum jumps headfirst into planning his “pitcher show.” The first order of business is to locate a suitable building. A slanted floor is needed, and Abner suggests buying the already crooked floor of “th’ ol’ Pomeroy barn.” A theater needs more than just a floor, Lum insists, it must have a ceiling! “Call up th’ O. P. A.,” suggests Abner, “Dick Huddleston said th’ other day th’ O. P. A.’s puttin’ ceilin’s on ever’thing!” (The Office of Price Administration placed “ceilings,” or maximum prices, on rents and many goods.) A suitable building is found in the form of an old cotton warehouse, rented to them by Dick. Remodeling begins, as Eugene Blevins and his carpenters get underway, despite Abner’s attempts to economize with such well-intentioned suggestions as raising the front of the entire building, rather than constructing a slanted floor!!



A second-hand projector is purchased from the Lyric Theatre at the county seat (the same Mena, Arkansas establishment which hosted a gala 1940 showing of L&A’s first film, *Dreaming Out Loud*). Cedric Weehunt takes on the task of learning to operate the formidable device by reading the instructions he finds, but sadly, those directions are for the product that originally came in the recycled shipping crate: they are from the Ajax Iron Skillet Company! Thankfully, L&A rescue their projector before Cedric finishes boiling it in a pan of water!!

Grandpappy Spears and his player piano become the official music makers for the “pitcher show,” as Lum begins giving away free movie passes to practically everyone he meets. As Cedric has been unable to master the mysteries of the movie machine, the decision is made to send Abner to Mena to learn to operate the

gadget. (Listen carefully to this episode of Wednesday, October 20, and you’ll hear Lauck and Goff cracking up!)

War shortages affect the remodeling of the warehouse. “Eugene,” relates Lum, “says he cain’t buy no reg’lar reflectors fer th’ ‘lektrick lights ‘cause he never had no priorities fer ‘em.” Old tin cans, well-polished, are to be substituted, but can-collector Cedric is intercepted by salvage committee chairman Squire Skimp, who gloms them for the tin drive! L&A win a ribbon for their huge “contribution” - virtually every tin can in town! Says Squire, “you’ve helped the war effort along tremendously! Tin, y’know, plays a vital part in our war weapons, and in the cases they use for sulfa drugs, and blood plasma, and all that! In fact, you could say that the lives of our boys overseas depend on tin! And, to meet that need for tin, we’ve got to git every housewife in America to cooperate, to turn in their old tin cans! And, they’ve got to do it, not just this week, but every week, too!” Lum attempts to argue with Squire, but is quieted by his compliment of “it’s men like you that America looks to for leadership and patriotism!” “Looks like we ain’t gonna have no re-lectors,” reflects Lum, “but I reckon we have did sump’m a whole lot more im-portance!”

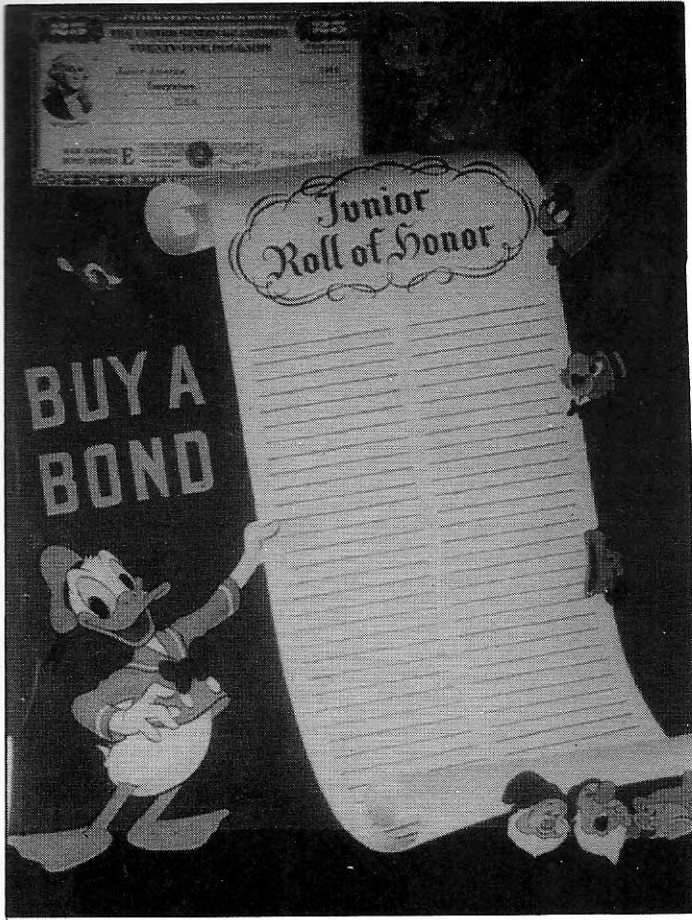
Tuffy Goff enjoyed some time off during the week of Monday, October 25, since the Goff characters were written out of the scripts, as Abner leaves for Mena to begin his training as an M. P. O. (Motion Picture Operator). The padding really shows, especially in two rather tiresome episodes in which a Mr. Virgil Kleespies arrives in Pine Ridge to sell some “fillums” to Lum. (The real Virgil Kleespies, a friend of writer Roz Rogers, was the head of Morell Packing Plant in Ottumwa, Iowa, and became a political cartoonist for his local newspaper. The radio Kleespies was portrayed by character actor Phil Kramer.) Later in the week, another outside actor portrays a Mr. D. Hempstead Dwyer, supervisor of Kleespies. (“HEmpstead” was a telephone exchange in the Hollywood area, while Bob Dwyer was L&A’s producer from the Wade Advertising Agency.) Lum somehow manages to buy a grade Z picture entitled *The Vulture’s Revenge*, a low-budget Western featuring everyone’s favorite star, Llewelyn Feldnap! The miserable motion picture comes complete with three stuffed vultures to display in the theatre lobby!

Grandpap refuses to make store deliveries during Abner’s absence, since he already has two jobs (delivering a very occasional telegram and playing the “player pianner”), plus he insists, “I cain’t do it ‘cause I ain’t got no ‘vailability cer-tiffy-kate!”

Little Mary Edwards (formerly Ellie Connors, escapee from a girls’ reformatory), portrayed by actress Lurene Tuttle, makes her final appearance on Thursday, October 28, as she visits her “Uncle Lum” to discuss school. It seems Mary is “boy crazy,” a condition which is affecting her grades! (Her character will soon be forgotten.)

Abner returns on November 1, to accept Lum’s assignment that he tutor Cedric in the operation of the movie projector. Although he spent a week observing the Lyric projectionist, “expert” Abner is unable to make their big machine run... until “student” Cedric discovers the electrical cord is unplugged!!

“De-luxe,” “Princess,” “Orphan,” “Lum’s,” “Abner’s” - all are suggested names for the new Pine Ridge movie house! The argument centers around the last two of those choices, as L&A battle it out! (No one remembers to suggest the original 1935 name, “Pine Ridge Planetarium!”) In discussing plans for future films to be screened, L&A reprise their discussion of movie great Charlie Chaplin, still on the scene in 1935, but having ended his role as “the Little Tramp” by 1943. “He always struck me funny, fer some



reason,” observes Lum, “I hate ta laugh at a feller’s troubles thataway, but he’s always doin’ sump’m enybody with jist half-sense’d know better!” As many of their listeners reacted to L&A as real people, so did Lum and Abner feel sympathy for “the Little Tramp!” Whereas the entrepreneurs discussed the wonders of a Mickey Mouse cartoon in 1935 (Lum reasons it is a man in a mouse suit!), the 1943 script incorporates Donald Duck, and features a more sophisticated Lum attempting to explain to Abner the basic process of animation.

“Compy-titions” rears its ugly head in the form of Squire Skimp, who is eager for a partnership in the new venture. Upon their refusal, L&A are threatened by their “old friend,” who now plans to open a rival theater! This tense turn of events does not prevent the war from entering the picture. Grandpappy Spears informs the old fellows on November 4 of a paper shortage: “Some o’ them big paper mills makin’ stuff fer th’ war cain’t git enough waste paper ta keep runnin’. They need that waste paper fer makin’ boxes an’ containers an’ paper cartoons fer packin’ up vittles an’ equip-mint fer th’ soljers, an’ I don’t know what all! Why, they got a million er a thousan’ uses fer that stuff! That’s why all us fokes has ta save ever’ bit o’ waste paper we git aroun’ th’ house!” This “patriotics” talk is interrupted by a disturbing phone call, informing them that Squire Skimp has rented the lodge hall to use for his theatre, including the chairs L&A had wished to use! His interference doesn’t stop there - he also manages to hire away all of Lum and Abner’s help: their carpenters, their pianist (Grandpap!) and their projectionist (Cedric!). Each was offered a contract and a tremendous raise in salary. Unfortunately, the contracts contain a loophole, allowing Squire to void them at will. Grandpap is quickly dismissed, after Squire (who

should have known better) realizes that 1943 films are “talkies!” (Even Lum should have known this, having recently seen a Donald Duck cartoon, among other films!)

Regardless of the paper shortage, on November 10 Squire issues handbills advertising the opening of the new “Skimp’s Hippodrome” to be held the following Tuesday, November 16, one day before L&A plan to premiere their first film! Feverishly, our old friends take on the task of completing the renovation of the old cotton warehouse themselves. The reuse of 1935 scripts creates a blooper for announcer Lou Crosby on the introduction of the program of Thursday, November 11. He states, “after the old fellows announced their grand premiere for Wednesday night, Squire came out with some handbills announcing that his Hippodrome would open... (pause as he realizes the error) Friday night! As we look in on the little community today... (another pause) we find Mousey Gray in the lobby of the theater as Lum approaches.” Chet Lauck, as Lum, leads Tuffy Goff, as Abner, into an ad-lib discussion of one of Squire’s handbills, clarifying the Tuesday opening of the Hippodrome. The error came from the fact that the original 1935 scripts had Friday as the day of Squire’s opening, which was apparently not updated when the scripts were revised and retyped!

Other differences in the 1935 and 1943 versions arise. Dick Huddleston’s “live” roles are modified to “off-stage” activities (the norm for most of the 1940s), and the Western hero of L&A’s first movie becomes “Texas Jim” instead of “The Texas Kid.” Retained is an unusual sequence in which Lum admonishes Abner for painting over the glass of their ticket booth. After Lum remarks the glass might as well be broken out, Abner does just that, to which Lum reacts angrily, moving Abner to tears! Seeing this reaction, Lum’s heart softens, and he comforts his old friend, who, sobbing, discusses recent disagreements at home. This is one of those unique episodes that can strike a chord with everyone who has experienced stress and reaches a point where emotions are expressed strongly. Programs like this establish Lum and Abner as truly human characters who just happen to be humorous.

Planning to upstage Squire by screening *The Vulture’s Revenge* early as a free matinee for the children of Pine Ridge, L&A run into a brick wall named the Ladies’ Uplift League, commanded by Sister Simpson! Unknown to Lum and Abner, “Civic-minded” Squire Skimp alerted the organization, claiming their picture was not suitable for the young folks. In response to the group’s signed petition, the partners decide to deny the gathered crowd of kids the free showing they had been promised.

Lum and Abner beat Skimp to the draw anyway, after discovering (1) that it was the Squire who misrepresented their film to the ladies’ group, and (2) that Squire’s first batch of film has been delayed in shipping! Sadly, their standing-room-only free matinee of Wednesday, November 17 is overshadowed by Squire’s equally well-attended evening premiere, due to the fact that the latter show has paid admission! Even L&A are anxious to see Squire’s picture, attempting to watch it through a window, hiding in a tree, until the embarrassed duo is spotted by Skimp, and forced to parade into the theatre, in full view of all the customers, to take seats on the front row!

Skimp’s Hippodrome continues to make money as Squire books new films, while L&A struggle with their turkey - or *Vulture* - which most of the town has seen. Brainstorming ideas to increase business, such as bank night and Screeno (a form of Bingo), Lum mentions the giving away of dishes during the showings of movies.

Abner immediately thinks of free food, but Lum insists that would not be wise:

LUM: ...special not after them slides we been a-runnin' on 'Food Fights fer Freedom.' It shows how im-portance it is fer us ta save on food, not waste none of it, presarve all the stuff we kin, an' put in our own gardens an' work on farms, an' all that. It warns fokes agin' payin' more'n ceilin' prices fer food, an' buyin' 'em in places whur they don't ask fer no food stamps - black markets, an' sich as that. Them things help cause th' prices ta git outta hand. It tells how we got ta share our food with our Allies an' all our buys that's doin' th' fightin'. Got ta keep 'em fed ta whur they kin whip enybody they come up ag'inst. That takes a lotta food! Jist like that ol' Eddards sayin' o' mine, a Army travels on its stummick!

ABNER: I reckon Lizabeth could plow four er five... HUH? On it's stummick!?

LUM: That's th' way th' sayin' goes.

ABNER: Well, you'd think that'd be awful hard on their uny-forms; they must keep wearin' 'em out in front thataway! Who give 'em that idie, enyway?

LUM: Well, that don't mean they actual git down an travel on their...

ABNER: You take ol' Fatty Thompson, he's in th' Army now, Lum, he'd never git noplace with that big stummick o' his! He'd jist git ta rockin' an' stay right thar in one place!

Thankfully for Lum, Cedric interrupts for some legal advice. It seems Squire is renegeing on his agreement regarding the amount of Cedric's salary. In researching the city ordinances, Abner runs across an interesting law: "It shall be unlawful to hold a theatrical entertainment in any building above the ground floor because of the fire hazard." Bingo!! (Or rather, Screeno!!) Lum has found his loophole to rid them of Squire's competition - the lodge hall is on the second floor!! (As for Cedric's legal woes, Lum can offer no help. The only witness to the signing of the contract was Barrel-Legs Crockett, now unavailable for comment - he was drafted, and is stationed in "Okla-homy.")

Lum begins to feel he should not use the law to oust Squire from his Hippodrome; he fears it will mirror negatively upon his office as
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justice of the peace. In the 1935 version, it is Dick Huddleston who enters the store to demand Lum issue a warrant against Squire, but Dick is replaced in 1943 by Grandpap, who conspires with Abner to have Town Marshal Uncle Henry Lunsford serve papers on Skimp.

Trial commences in the livery stable on November 25, with Tuffy Goff giving a sterling performance as Squire Skimp, moving Judge Edwards (and everyone present) to tears as he testifies in his own behalf. So effective is he that Lum dismisses the original charges, but finds him guilty of violating another ordinance: Squire stated he had sealed one of the two exits to his theater, and the fire safety laws require two accessible exits!

The week of November 29 begins happily for L&A, with their "pitcher show" thriving now that Skimp's Hippodrome has been ordered closed. All of Pine Ridge turns out for the evening's movie (including Gussie and Mousey, who has just been transferred from night work to the day shift at Walt Bates' defense plant). To L&A's surprise, Squire Skimp himself appears, claiming to hold no grudges, and insisting upon buying a ticket to see the show! No sooner does their defeated competitor enter than a commotion erupts inside: Squire has apparently fallen and hit his head on the back of a chair!

As the month concludes on Tuesday, November 30, we find a concerned Lum and Abner writing a friendly letter to a bedridden Squire

Skimp, a message in which they admit total responsibility (due to the lack of proper lighting) for Squire's injury!! (Can you guess what's coming? Unless you're familiar with the 1935 and/or 1943 programs, you'll have to join us in two months to find out!)

The programs discussed this time around are available on NLAS Cassette Library Tapes #114 - 119. The 1935 shows mentioned in comparison have been recently made available in new recordings from the original Horlick's Malted Milk transcriptions discs (complete with commercials), and may be found on volumes H-20 through H-24.



MEET THE MEMBERS

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

CECIL WHITMIRE

of Birmingham, Alabama

Cecil Whitmire grew up in Tennessee, developing an interest in music early in life. He basically taught himself how to play the organ, and his earliest experiences with the instrument involved playing for churches and funeral homes ("sacred songs and layin' away music," he calls these jobs). In 1956, he was asked to become the staff organist at the Tennessee Theatre in Knoxville.

Although he had never played the flamboyant theatre organs before, Whitmire fell in love with the position. An executive in the wholesale hardware business by trade, in 1975 he and his wife were transferred to Birmingham, Alabama.

Here Whitmire became associated with Birmingham's magnificent Alabama Theatre, a vintage 1927 movie palace that was suffering through some bad times. The era of the old traditional downtown theatres was long past, but the Alabama was doing its best not to fall into the trap of sleaziness in which most of Birmingham's other downtown theatres were mired. In 1976, Whitmire was appointed staff organist for the Alabama, playing during evening movie programs on weekends and ladies' shopping matinees during the week.

Then things started to look bleak. Between 1980 and 1985, the Alabama Theatre was closed more than it was open. Whitmire and a small band of other theatre enthusiasts obtained permission to at least maintain the theatre's legendary Mighty Wurlitzer, since disuse was one of the worst things that could happen to such an

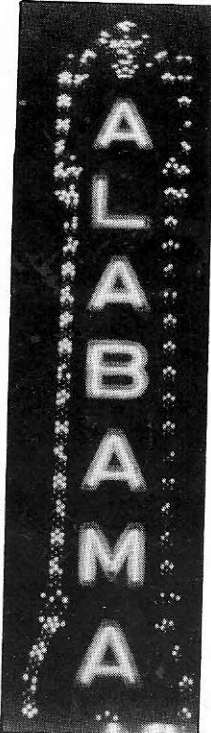
instrument.

In the spring of 1986, Whitmire began making an attempt to revive the Alabama's sagging fortunes by opening it on weekends to show classic films of the 1930's and 1940's. There were some hair-raising moments while he and his group staved off a growing number of bankers and real estate brokers who began hungrily eying the Alabama's prime downtown spot as a good place for a parking lot or office building. But when the dust settled, Whitmire and his non-profit organization, Birmingham Landmarks, Inc., were made owners of the Alabama Theatre and its future was assured.

It was around this same time that Whitmire became a member of the NLAS, and he was instrumental in arranging the Alabama Theatre recording sessions for our NLAS cassette *The Music of Lum & Abner*, released in 1988. (The cassette is still available for \$4.00 from the NLAS Executive Secretary.)

In the years since, Whitmire and Birmingham Landmarks have been kept busy restoring the Alabama Theatre to its full 1927

glory. Recently, they obtained the Lyric, a 1912 vaudeville theatre located across the street from the Alabama, and which has been virtually boarded up and abandoned since 1958. Whitmire is currently getting ready to begin overseeing the long process of restoring the Lyric. The NLAS, being involved with historical preservation itself, extends its full encouragement and best wishes for these worthy projects. For information on merchandise and memorabilia you can purchase to help the restoration of these two fabulous theatres, write to Birmingham Landmarks Inc., 1811 3rd Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203.



NLAS Ossifers Singin' Sam Brown, Uncle Donnie Pitchford, and Mousey Tim Hollis meet with Cecil Whitmire in the fantastic Alabama Theatre, Birmingham.

- Tim Hollis

NLAS Fall Clearance Sale

With the holidays fast approaching, we thought this would be a good opportunity to remind you of some of the merchandise the NLAS still has available for sale. All prices include postage; send orders to the Executive Secretary at #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062.

TOTALLY HIDDEN LUM & ABNER - A 90-minute cassette containing program clips and L&A guest appearances that have never been released on tape before. A few of the selections have since been incorporated into the NLAS Tape Library, but most of this tape's contents have not. PRICE: \$4.00

THE MUSIC OF LUM & ABNER - A 60-minute cassette with musical selections relating to L&A. The songs are taken from a

THE LUM & ABNER SCRIPTS: 1934 - This first volume in a new series of books reprinting L&A's unrecorded scripts has already been more than half sold out. If you want one, do not hesitate! We hope to release the next volume in the series this coming February. PRICE: \$5.00

LUM & ABNER LOBBY CARD REPRODUCTIONS - By now you should have a listing of our 11 x 14 color laser reproductions of lobby cards from L&A's seven movies. Please be advised that two new designs have now been added: these are designated TWTL-R4 (*Two Weeks To Live*, Abner examining Lum's head with a stethoscope) and PIT-R4 (*Partners In Time*, Abner defending the store with a baseball bat). If you do not have a list of the others, please let us know. PRICE: \$5.00 each



Mr. Marshall (Alan Mowbray), Grandpappy Spears (Danny Duncan), Aunt Charity (Sarah Padden), and Miz Pomeroy (Minerva Urecal) are eavesdropping to see what great bargains the NLAS has for its members!

variety of sources; three of them (*Eleanor*, *Southern Belle*, and *Hail Arkansas*) were recorded on the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham (see this issue's "Meet the Members" feature). The tape is accompanied by a copy of the article "The Music of Lum & Abner" from the April 1989 issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*. PRICE: \$4.00

FOLLER THE EAST STAR - This 8 1/2 x 11 print of a piece of art by our Prez, Uncle Donnie, is suitable for framing. It depicts L&A's famous annual Christmas program, and was originally used as the cover of our first December issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* (1984). PRICE: \$1.50

PINBACK BUTTONS - These round buttons have an ivory background, with the NLAS logo in black. PRICE: \$1.50

NLAS TAPE LIBRARY CATALOG - Lists the approximately 300 (and counting) cassettes of L&A material in our Tape Library. Even if you do not plan to order any tapes, this catalog is THE source for the correct sequencing and broadcast dates of the L&A episodes. PRICE: \$5.00

JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL BACK ISSUES - The following issues are still available: 10/85, 10/86, 12/86, 2/87, 8/87, 10/87, 12/87, 2/88, 4/88, 8/88, 10/88, 12/88, 2/89, 6/89, 8/89, 10/89, 12/89, 2/90, 4/90, 6/90, 8/90, 10/90, 2/91, 4/91, 6/91, 8/91, 10/91, 12/91, 2/92, 4/92, 6/92, 8/92, 10/92, 12/92, 2/93, 4/93, 6/93, and 8/93. PRICE: \$2.00 each