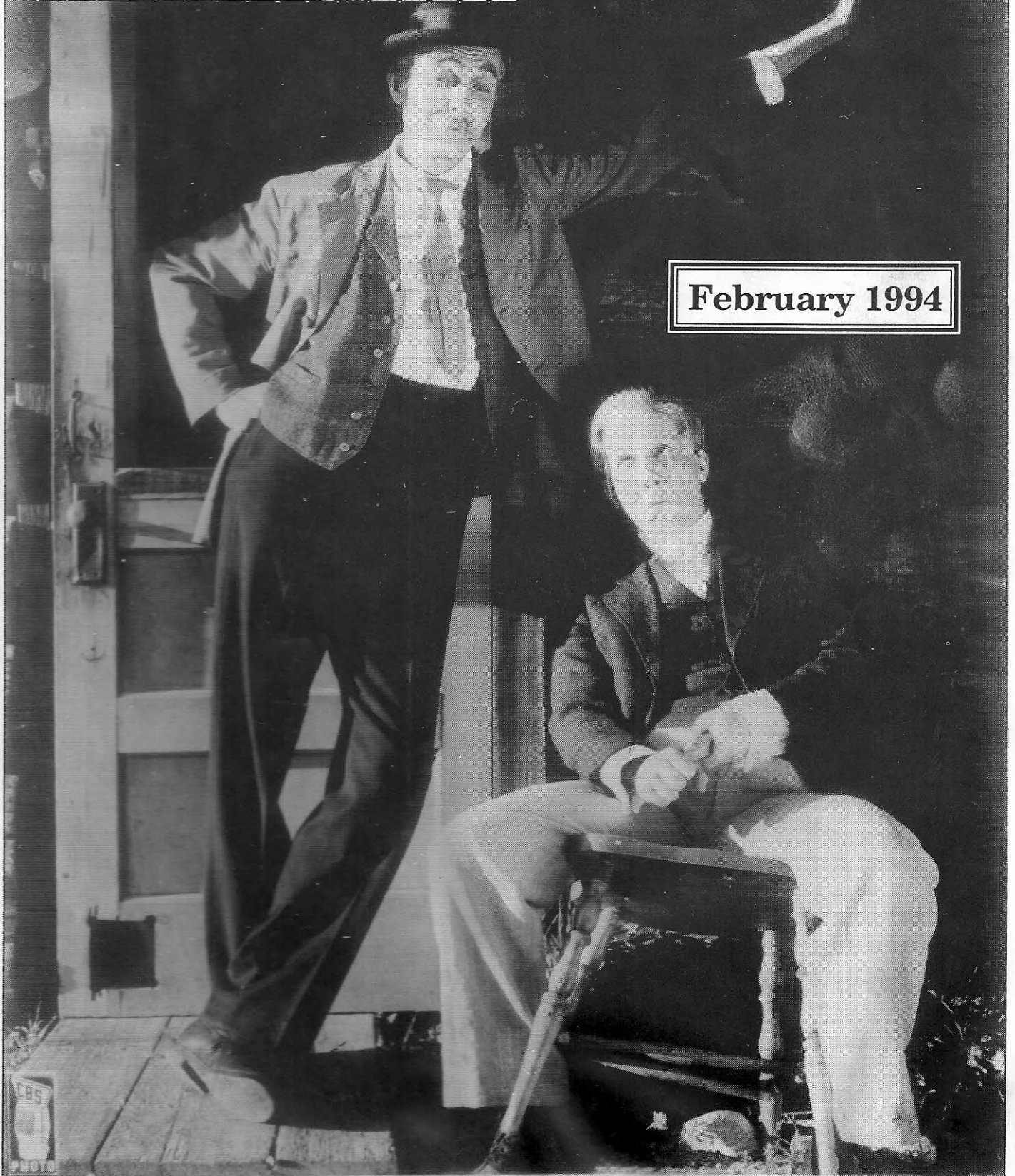


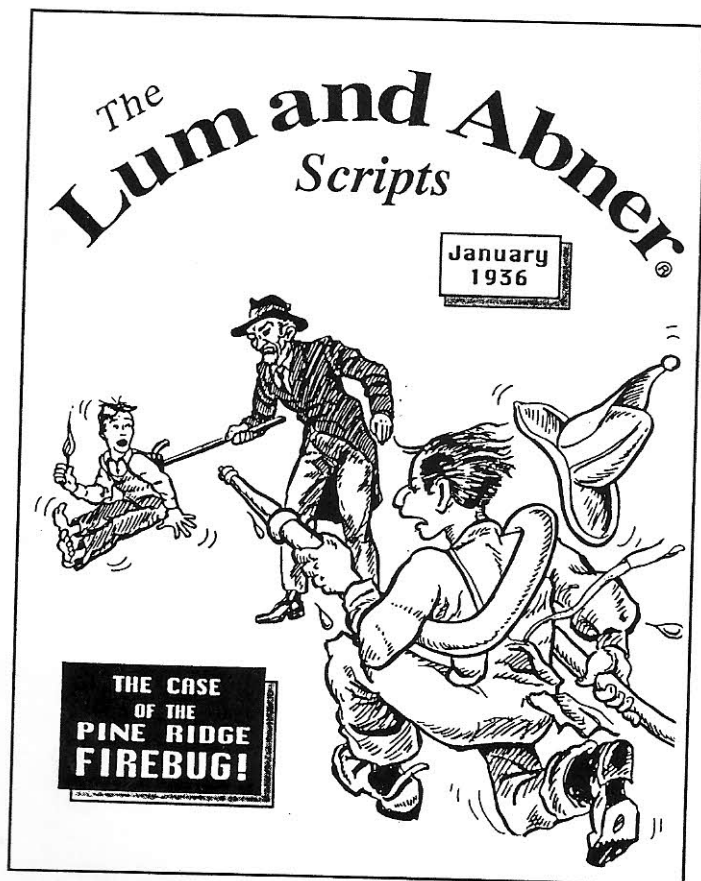
**The JOT 'EM DOWN  
JOURNAL**

*Official Publication of the National Lum and Abner® Society*

**February 1994**



# New Script Reprint Volume Now Available!



weasel all the money he wants out of the city treasury? WILL Lum succeed in trying to explain the story of *Robinson Crusoe* to Abner? And, the question that is on the whole town's mind: WHO is the "firebug" responsible for setting a new fire almost every day in Pine Ridge? Whose home or business will be next? It's all here for you in *The Lum & Abner Scripts: January 1936!*

Copies of this volume are \$5.00 each, including postage. We also have about a dozen or so copies left of the first volume in the series, *The Lum & Abner Scripts: 1934*, also for \$5.00 each. Send your orders for either volume to the NLAS Executive Secretary at #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062.



Waters, Arkansas, resident Lasker Goble posed as Fire Chief Cedric Weehunt for this postcard, which was marketed by Dick Huddleston during the period the scripts in this volume were being broadcast.

2-15-94

E BALL

The NLAS is pleased to announce the publication of the second volume in our ongoing series of books reprinting the original scripts of the unrecorded *Lum and Abner* broadcasts. *The Lum & Abner Scripts: January 1936* should be available by the time this issue reaches you.

To our knowledge, January 1936 marked the first time that Lauck & Goff attempted to preserve and file their scripts on a daily basis, rather than an occasional script here and there which they felt would be of future use. This new volume contains a complete month's worth of shows... and what shows they are!!

The month opens with the officials of the newly-incorporated town of Pine Ridge facing several dilemmas: WILL Cedric Weehunt be able to carry out his duties as Fire Chief without benefit of a fire truck? WILL Chief of Police Grandpappy Spears persevere in bringing all lawbreakers to justice? WILL Squire Skimp be able to

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# THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

## February 1994

### *In This Issue:*

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**

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**PRESIDENT**

*Donnie Pitchford*

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

*Sam Brown*

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

*Tim Hollis*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Cover:** A 1939 CBS publicity photo with the following caption: "Lum & Abner, back in character after two months' vacation, are chockful of enthusiasm (witness above) as they start their 1939-40 Jot 'Em Down Store series over Columbia network. Thoughts of the fish that escaped and the horse that lost by a photo finish are uppermost in the comics' minds as they whittle away outside their Pine Ridge emporium. The Arkansas humorists are heard Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays." (Courtesy of the Nashville Tennessean.)

**The "Other" L&A: Lauck & Ameche ..... 2**

A tribute to the late, great actor Don Ameche

**Lum & Abner Go To War ..... 4**

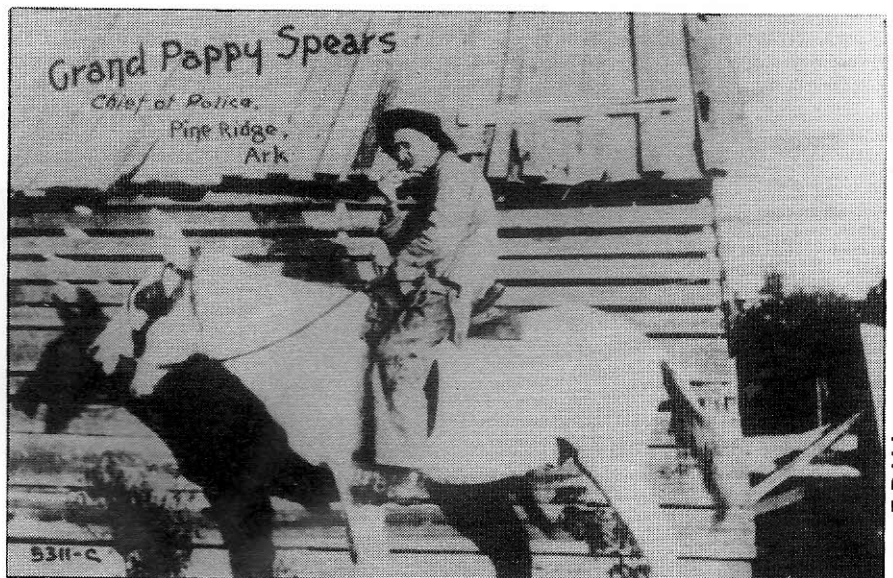
What went on in February and March 1944?

**Big Blowout At The County Seat ..... 8**

An in-depth report on the Mena tornado

**Pine Ridge Library Bookshelf ..... 10**

Head librarian Lum Edwards digs up another notable volume



*ABOVE: This postcard was sold at Dick Huddleston's store in Waters, Arkansas (now Pine Ridge) in early 1936. "Grandpappy Spears" is portrayed by local resident Cling Wilhite. For the story of how Grandpap became Chief of Police, see our new publication, "The Lum & Abner Scripts: January 1936."*

**LUM AND ABNER** is a registered trademark. Used by permission of Chester Lauck, Jr.

# The "Other" L & A: LAUCK and AMECHE



J HAUSNER

When legendary actor Don Ameche died on December 6, 1993, at the age of 85, most of his obituaries concentrated on his Oscar-winning screen career. Not surprisingly, nowhere was it mentioned that his fame among *Lum and Abner* fans rests more on his close personal friendship with the boys, particularly Chester Lauck.

It is not certain just how Chet and Ameche became acquainted with each other, but it is fairly certain that their friendship reached its full bloom around the time Lauck & Goff moved their families and radio show to Hollywood early in 1937. Tuffy Goff had his own circle of friends in the show business community (Andy Devine and Phil Harris being two of the most prominent), and Chet seems to have gravitated more toward the sportsman's angle of Hollywood recreation.



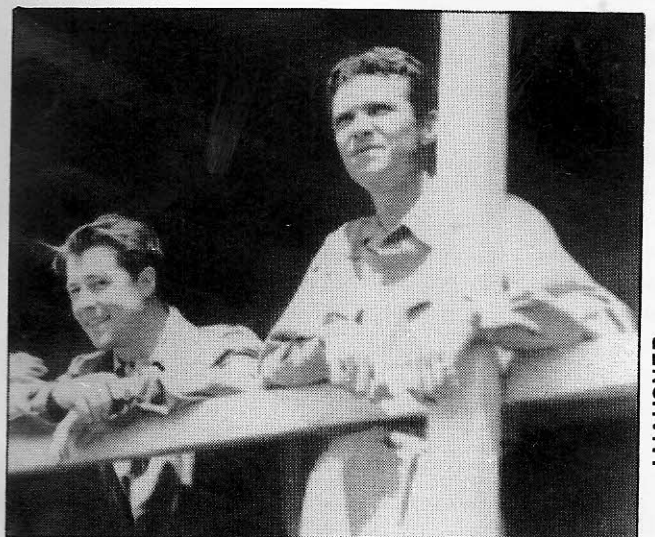
He and Ameche undoubtedly met and became friends through this mutual interest. Ameche's starring role in the 1939 film *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell* (which also featured future L&A co-star Bobs Watson) provided L&A and other gagsters with years of jokes about Ameche inventing the telephone.

By this time, Lauck and Ameche had become partners in the horse racing industry, even owning their own stables. For many years, we at the NLAS always presumed that "L & A Stables" stood for "Lum & Abner," but in fact the initials represented "Lauck & Ameche." In the summer of 1938, Ameche and his wife accompanied the Laucks on their vacation tour of Europe, during which Lauck and Goff performed their famous "transatlantic" broadcast, with Lauck reading his lines in England and Goff responding in Chicago. (This broadcast, and the *Lum and Abner* episodes that led up to it, can be heard on NLAS Tape Library cassettes #P-8 through #P-10.) After February 1994 - Page 2

the European tour was over, Chet and his family returned to their hometown of Mena for some much-needed relaxation; on August 19, 1938, *The Mena Star* reported:

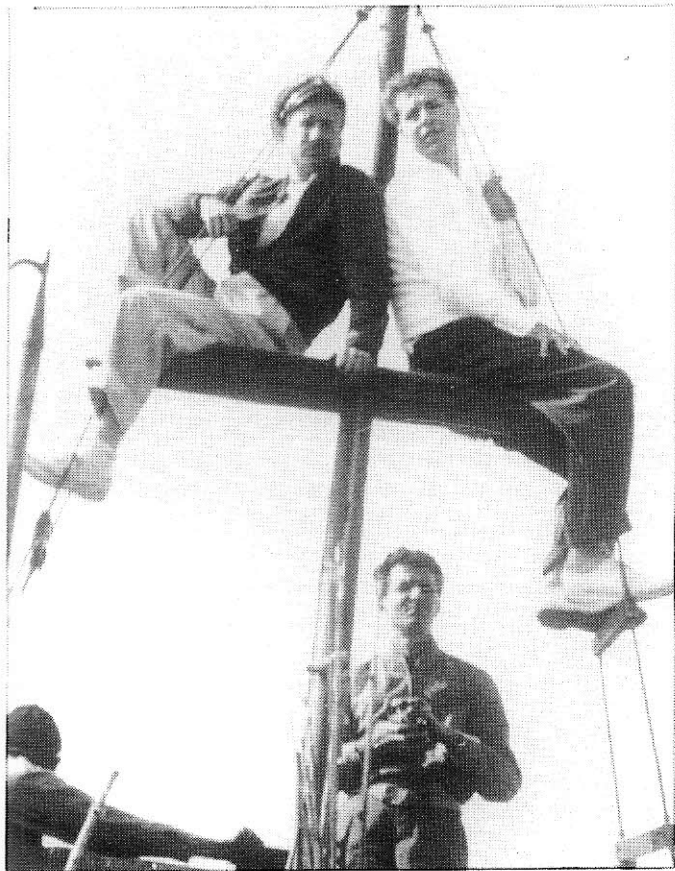
"While it had been expected earlier that Mr. & Mrs. Don Ameche would be here with 'Lum' and family, due to an unexpected illness while the party was abroad, Ameche had to change his plans. It was said Friday morning that there was a possibility that the Ameches would join the Laucks here sometime during the next ten days, but it was not definitely known whether this would happen." Apparently Ameche never did make it to Mena, but local legend has it that a special room was added onto the Lauck family home there in anticipation of his visit. The illness that prevented Ameche's visit was appendicitis, and during the transatlantic broadcast, Lauck, in character as Lum, referred to the actor's health setback.

Horse racing seems to have occupied the vast majority of both actors' free time for several years. In 1940 they were associated with a contest that was being conducted by *MIKE*, a weekly radio publication that was available at Red Lion service stations in southern California. For a grand prize of \$50.00 and five pairs of tickets to a broadcast of the Old Gold Cigarettes radio show (which starred Ameche), contestants had to submit their choice of a name



J HAUSNER

*Ameche and Lauck on an inspection trip to the racetrack, circa 1937.*



J HAUSNER

During a fishing trip, Tuffy Goff and Ameche are perched aloft, while Chet Lauck mans the deck.

for one of Lauck and Ameche's race horses. This contest is known to us only through some clippings that were in the files of the late Jerry Hausner, so we know nothing more about the outcome or what name was eventually chosen as the winner.

It seems that the Laucks and Ameches remained friends as long as the L&A series was based in California. In 1942, Ameche appeared as himself on the L&A broadcast concerning the fictional "premiere" of *The Bashful Bachelor* in Pine Ridge. It is possible that Ameche could have stepped into a couple of other roles in the show: during 1944, Chet took a week off from the program, and the storyline sent Abner and Squire Skimp (both Goff characters) on a business meeting to Ft. Smith. During that sequence there were two characters that may or may not have been voiced by Ameche... one was an irate man who had the misfortune to sit next to Abner on the train trip, and a few days later, Abner and Squire hitchhiked a ride with an argumentative husband and wife who strongly resembled "The Bickersons" (of whom Ameche was the male half). There is no concrete evidence that either of these *Lum and Abner* voices was Ameche, but it

## Contest Entry Blank

Editor,  
Gilmore MIKE:

In accordance with rules of the contest, which I have studied and do hereby agree to follow, I submit the following name for the thoroughbred horse, by Grand Manitou out of Amblesides, owned by Don Ameche and Chet Lauck:

Print Name Plainly

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Write Plainly

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

4

The entry blank for the Gilmore Oil Co.'s "Name Lauck & Ameche's Horse" Contest, 1940

is possible.

In later years the families apparently lost touch with one another. In 1987, Harriet Lauck provided the NLAS with Ameche's address, but said she had not attempted to communicate with him. Several times in the next few years we sent correspondence, *Journals*, and other memorabilia to Ameche, but never received any sort of response or acknowledgement from him. He either never received the material personally, or had no interest in the NLAS and its preservation work.

Admittedly, Ameche's *Lum and Abner* connection was but a footnote in his long and illustrious career, but listeners to the two "lovable old characters from the hill country" will forever be reminded of him every time the Jot 'Em Down Store telephone rings and one of the two old codgers grumbles, "I wish Don Ameche never hadda inna-vented that thing!"

- Tim Hollis



CHET LAUCK, left, is one of the cash prize donors in MIKE's contest to pick a name for the baby race horse owned by LAUCK and Don AMECHE. Helping LAUCK sort the entries for a

suitable nom de turf is his partner of the "Lum and Abner" program, NORRIS GOFF, who is one of the Judges. This is the last week for MIKE readers to enter the \$50.00 cash contest.

Publicity newspaper photo for the horse-naming contest (1940).

# LUM AND ABNER®

## GO TO WAR



Welcome to chapter 14 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.

Punch up the fire, pull up a chair and sit close to the radio; the batteries are low! The fire is warm and so is the Postum, and the kids are sipping their after-dinner cup of hot Horlick's. All are ready to listen to another visit with *Lum and Abner*, coming to us over the ether waves, cutting through the frigid winter air, sailing above the snow-covered pastures and straight down the wire from our aerial. Better have a package of Alka-Seltzer handy in case of an upset stomach; some of the programs this February might make us queasy!

"Lum the Barbarian," Pine Ridge's newest practitioner of the tonsorial arts, is still making a name for himself on the February 1 show. What he needs, he reasons, is a long line of barber shop customers out front, which will impress both townsfolk and his only competition, Mose Moots. Lum sets out to hire a group of "hillbillies" (remember, L&A live "right in downtown Pine Ridge") to pose as customers, at a rate of 25¢ each! The plan backfires at first - far too many mountain men show up; Lum can't afford to pay them all! They are lured away, however, by an advertising sign "toted" by Cedric: "Attention, men! Mose Moots' Barber Shop now gives you the best deal in town - 30¢!"

"From now on, I'm makin' my shop EX-clusive with a capital X!" Lum declares, theorizing he will attract more customers by promoting the idea that his haircuts are difficult to come by (and are actually difficult to endure)! By denying people easy access, Lum feels an "Eddards" haircut will be all the more desired...

**LUM:** Take sump'm away from fokes, an' right away, that's what they want. Well, here, take fer incidence rationin'. Re-collect when coffee wuz rationed?

**ABNER:** Yeah, shore.

**LUM:** Well, we had fokes in hyere buyin' coffee that never even drank it b'fore in their whole lives!

**ABNER:** I re-collect that, Lum.

**LUM:** An' take meat, now! Ol' George Bernard Hinckley... always wuz one o' them vegetable-tarians... 'til meat got scarce! Now, he takes his stamp, an' lines up at th' butcher shop jist 'long with th' rest of us!

...but even Lum's "rationing" of haircuts falls flat!

On February 3, we learn the name of one of Grandpappy Spears' sons - Hillary! (How many remember the name of another son, mentioned some nine years earlier? The first five people to submit correct answers will win a year's supply of invisible Skimpoline, the miracle fuel that does nothing!) Our old friend Grandpap, who has just dreamed his son Hillary returned home after a long absence, uses Lum's "barbarian" chair to continue his nap. His scissor-fingers itchy, barber Lum sets about to practice on his unknowing "cus-

tomor" by trimming his beard. A little snip here and there, and presto! Poor Grandpap is beardless!! Upon awaking, Grandpap mistakes his reflection in the mirror as his "prodigal son" Hillary!!!

The second week of February finds Lum a hunted man (get that Alka-Seltzer!), pursued by a smooth-faced, dimple-chinned, angry-as-a-spaven-legged-knock-kneed-son-of-a-pigeon-toed-monkey's uncle, Grandpappy Spears!! They come to blows on February 7, with neither the victor; thereafter Grandpap begins "packin' a gun!!" (We realize this is comedy, but the thought of these characters actually gunning for each other has been a bit unsettling to some listeners!) Lum has a bit of trouble securing a weapon for his own defense. True, there is no Brady Bill in 1944, but neither is there enough cash in Lum's pocket!

Lum, in disguise, poses as "Killer Smith," a fighter, and hires himself out to Grandpap, his mission being to "beat up Lum Eddards!!" With the \$15 payment in hand, Lum buys a gun! Even old friends Cedric and Mousey take sides in the argument, as Grandpap's anger over losing his beard grows.

## ENLIST IN THE WAVES

ASK FOR BOOKLET

*The Story of You in Navy Blue*

AT ANY NAVY RECRUITING STATION OR  
OFFICE OF NAVAL OFFICER PROCUREMENT

Lum's barber shop business at a standstill, L&A take a "patriotics" break on Thursday, February 10 to discuss *The Story of You in Navy Blue*, a recruiting article. Perhaps, Lum decides, he should join the navy to escape Grandpap's wrath. He feels he will be in less danger, since the branch of the navy he is considering does not serve in combat - it's the WAVES!! He figures he can sneak in

as an "ossifer," since their age requirements are "20 to 49 year ol'!" Says Lum, "if I trim up my mustache an' dye it a little, I can pass fer 45 anywhurs." "Yeah," Abner agrees, "if somebody's nearsighted, and it's a awful dark night!" Lum knows he can handle any job the WAVES has to offer, especially that of radio operator: "I kin set over thar at my place of a evenin' an' run that radio o' mine with both eyes ties behin' my back!" He boasts he can "set about eny station you mention on it - Shreveport, Shenandoah, Ioway... I kin git 'em all! ...a batch o' sailors might be homesick, an' wanna lissen ta th' radio. More'n likely, they'd wanna lissen ta their hometown station, so natural, they gotta have a feller aroun' that knows how ta tune in them stations!"

Lum mentions a free booklet that can be had by writing to "the WAVES, Washin'ton 25, D.C." He is excited about the salary - with room and board plus medical expenses, it amounts to between \$150 and \$235 a month! Especially attractive is the description of the uniforms, "style'd to flatter ever figger!" Lum eventually realizes there's only one little problem in his becoming a WAVE...



Without a break to celebrate Valentine's Day, Lum launches into the invention of a quick-grow hair tonic, in a desperate attempt to replenish bald-faced Grandpap's missing chin-spinach. After little Clarence Bates gets into the tonic, Lum is surprised to see him walking past the store with a long beard! Hastily, "innaventor Eddards" phones gun-toting Grandpap, offering a bet: he guarantees to grow a new beard on Grandpap's face within 24 hours, or else

he will allow himself to be shot!

Guess what - Clarence's beard was the same set of false whiskers worn by Lum while pretending to be "Killer Smith!!" The following day, a fuming Grandpap, gun in hand, confronts a trembling Lum, who convinces the old codger that he accidentally used a slower-acting formula, the evidence being the natural stubble that was beginning to appear on his much-hated dimpled chin! But, what's this? L&A soon spot seven boys, all with long gray beards! Surely the formula really works!! The old boys begin frantically mixing new bottles of formula, and are too busy pasting labels on the bottles to attend a school play being held at the lodge hall, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*!! "Th' kids actin' in it went over thar jist a little bit ago," announces Cedric!

A frustrating gap in recorded programs begins with the episode of Wednesday, February 16, 1944, continuing through the month of March. We are forever grateful to Roswell ("Roz") Rogers, the brilliant writer of this era of *Lum and Abner* programs, who provided us with plot synopses of these shows, based on his original scripts. These were originally published seven years ago, in the February 1987 issue of the *Jot 'Em Down Journal*, but are being presented here with the dates attached for the first time. We can only hope that the *Lum and Abner* transcription disc collection currently housed in the National Museum of Communications in Irving, Texas may yield recordings of some of these missing programs. Until then, I give you Mr. Roz Rogers:

"Wednesday, February 16, 1944: Script missing. Evidently Grandpap does come back to the store, but has a change of heart about shooting Lum, and they make up.

"Thursday, February 17: Lum tells Abner he is still going to leave town, look for greener pastures. Actually what he wants is for Abner to take him back into the store as a partner. But Abner says the kind of partner he needs is one with money — and Lum hardly fits that bill.

"Lum asks Abner to write him a letter of recommendation, but it is such a short, unflattering letter that Lum writes it himself. When Abner reads it, it is so glowing that he forgets it is about Lum and decides he would take that man as a partner even without money! So, Lum is back in.

"Monday, February 21: Now that Lum is a partner again, he hints that Abner should put on a big banquet welcoming the new partner. Abner never catches on, so Lum has to come right out and tell him to do it. It turns out that Lum has already made all the arrangements for the banquet, decorations, newspaper publicity, etc. — and making Abner think he is the one who has made all these arrangements. Abner decides he had better go home and rest up as long as he has been so busy doing all those things.

"Tuesday, February 22: The banquet. Everyone is so busy eating they hardly listen to Abner's introduction of the guest of honor — Lum. And as they all have excuses to leave, Lum winds up delivering his speech in the kitchen to Gomer Bates, who was hired to wash the dishes.

"Wednesday, February 23: Lum, after listening to *Dunninger* on the radio, decides to take up mind reading. He tries it on Abner but fails, figuring Abner's mind is too weak to be read. Either that or Lum's mind is too strong to ever make it a blank. Abner says that if it takes a blank mind, Cedric ought to make a first rate mind reader.

"Lum scoffs at this, but later Cedric is able to read a whole grocery list someone has dropped on the floor... without ever looking at the list. Lum becomes convinced they have a mind



**Roz Rogers, head writer on "Lum and Abner" during the war years and beyond.**

reading genius on their hands, and he immediately becomes Cedric's manager.

"Thursday, February 24: Abner and Grandpap decide that they should only think good thoughts when Cedric is around if it is true he can read their minds. Lum arranges for Cedric to put on a demonstration at the local lodge hall. Cedric thinks they want him to do his usual specialty... bird calls... not mind reading.

"Monday, February 28: Lum and Abner talk about getting Cedric's mind insured. Abner asks what it is they are insuring his mind against? Lum decides it must be against his learning anything. His one great asset is his blank mind. Lum gives Cedric a lecture about not spoiling his chances for success by sneaking off to school and getting educated.

"Tuesday, February 29: Squire Skimp becomes convinced that Cedric is indeed a mind reader and tricks him into signing a management contract.

"Wednesday, March 1: Lum is mad at Abner for letting Mind Reader Cedric slip out of their hands and sign a contract with Squire. Then they realize that because Cedric's birthday comes on February 29, he only has a birthday every four years and thus is only six years old. This makes him a minor and any contract he signs is no good. Squire agrees that is true, so he gets Cedric's papa to sign the contract.

"Thursday, March 2: Lum receives many replies from radio station managers to his invitation to hear Cedric read minds, but he can no longer deliver Cedric the Great. Lum tries to buy Cedric's contract from Squire but no luck. Later Squire offers to sell half of Cedric for \$500, but that's too high for Lum.

Abner suspects that Cedric can't read minds anymore. Squire disproves that by calling in Cedric and they put on a mind reading act. And Squire no longer wants to sell.

February 1994 - Page 6

"Monday, March 6: Lum finally signs a \$500 note and buys back Cedric's contract. Then they find out that Cedric can't read minds at all. What to do about all those radio commitments? They finally decide (because Cedric is only six) to bill him as the biggest, most overgrown QUIZ KID.

"Thursday, March 7: L&A desperately try to teach Cedric a lot of facts out of the Almanac for his first performance as a Quiz Kid that evening, but he is hopeless. Lum tries to talk Abner into shaving his beard and putting on a little Fauntleroy suit, but Abner wisely refuses. Lum finally calls Ezra Seastrunk at the lodge hall and calls the whole thing off.

"Wednesday, March 8: Lum tries to figure out what his assets are: one barber chair — worthless; one \$500 contract covering Cedric's talents, equally worthless. He tries to sell the contract to Abner for a few dollars, but Abner isn't buying.

"Squire comes in and Lum is going to tell him off, but Squire takes the wind out of his sails by handing him the \$500 note, now torn in half. He says he sees the error of his ways and intends to turn over a new leaf. Lum and Abner suspect this is some new scheme and they wind up taping the note back together and stuffing it into Squire's pocket.

"Thursday, March 9: War message, Cedric collecting for the Red Cross. L&A find out Squire gave \$150 to the Red Cross. This increases their suspicions regarding Squire. Later they find out that Squire told one of his renters, the Widder Jessup, to forget last month's rent — which she couldn't pay. Now they are sure Squire is up to some terrible thing.

"Monday, March 13: As more reports come in of Squire's good deeds, L&A become more and more suspicious. They hire Mousey as a detective to shadow Squire and find out what he is up to, but they learn nothing from Mousey's report.

"Tuesday, March 14: Lum does his own detective work, dresses like a tramp. A dog bites out the seat of his pants and he is trapped in a phone booth. He calls Abner to rescue him, but Abner and Grandpap are more interested in their checker game, even though they fully intend to go to Lum's rescue — after one more move. Sister Simpson breaks into the phone booth and knocks Lum out with her umbrella.

"Wednesday, March 15: Everyone is talking about Squire's good deeds, and as a result no one trusts him at all. Lum talks to Doc Miller, and Doc thinks Squire may be mentally ill. He brings a friend, an amateur psychiatrist from Fort Smith, to examine Squire. L&A discuss the fine line between being sane and insane.

"Thursday, March 16: Prof. Bisbee, the amateur psychiatrist, arrives; however he thinks Cedric is the intended patient. By the time Lum straightens him out on that, the Prof. begins to wonder about Lum. By the time Lum and Cedric try to explain about Cedric's bird calls, the Prof. decides he'd better get the heck out of there. Lum and Cedric think he must be crazy.

"Monday, March 20: Squire asks Lum to come to his office in the evening to discuss something. Squire is baffled. He really has been trying to turn over a new leaf and be honest and good etc., but this only makes people distrust him more than ever. Lum explains that his conduct is so unnatural that it makes people uneasy and suspicious. If Squire wants to regain his good name and standing he will have to start gypping people a little bit again, then they will believe him. Lum suggests he try a possible buried treasure scheme. Squire thinks this is preposterous but he does remember that he has an old fake treasure map. Lum asks if he ever tried digging there.



Squire says no — it's a fake. Lum leaves. Abner has been waiting for him. Lum asks Abner to lend him some money — he might know a good deal concerning some buried rubies, etc.

"Tuesday, March 21, 1944: L&A discuss the buried treasure idea for Squire to regain his standing in the community. We can see that Lum is actually interested in the treasure even though he knows the map is a fake.

"Grandpap comes in with some secret news about a buried treasure expedition Squire is getting up. It's all over town. Abner tells Grandpap not to put any money in it because it's a fake. Grandpap hasn't, but only because there is such a big line-up outside Squire's office.

"When Squire tells everyone it's a bad risk, this only makes them more eager to get in on it. And pretty soon both Grandpap and Lum are in that line-up. Abner, stuck at the store, uses the phone to try to get in on the deal.

"Wednesday, March 22: L&A try to figure a way to get Squire to let them invest in the Buried Treasure Expedition. They wish they could buy the map and start their own expedition.

"They try to use psychology on Squire and make him think they are not interested. Squire says the more he tries to discourage people, the more they put pressure on him to let them in on the deal. Using their negative approach, they suggest that Squire throw the map away, etc. Squire says they are right; he'll abandon the idea — even though he had considered taking L&A in as partners on the Expedition. Now L&A quickly switch and join with Squire.

"Thursday, March 23: War message. Obeying all the regulations on ration points and ceiling prices. Grandpap signs a pledge to live up to these rules and regulations.

"Monday, March 27: Lum reports to Abner on a hunch he and Squire had to launch the Buried Treasure Expedition. They designed a form for investors to fill out. It includes a clause stating that there might not be any treasure, and they are investing at their own risk.

"Abner wants to know when the election of officers will be held. It was already held. Abner hits the ceiling. Lum finally calms him down by telling him he was elected to an office — something called 'Officer in Charge Of.' Furthermore he was the one elected unanimously!

"Squire was elected to some little old office — some sort of thing like — Secretary-Treasurer and Field Director.

"Abner feels sorry Lum got left out. But it finally comes out that Lum got some little old no-count job like —uh— President of the Company. Abner hits the ceiling again.

"Tuesday, March 28: L&A are gearing up for the big crowd of those clamoring to invest in the Buried Treasure Expedition. They see their first customer approaching — Cedric. Lum reminds Abner that (to keep from getting sued) they must not talk anyone into investing; it must be their own free will, etc.

"Lum tells Abner to make Cedric get an appointment with him (Lum) to discuss his investment. After a long, complicated rigmarole with the appointment idea, Cedric finally gets in to see Lum, but all he wants is a jar of peanut butter.

"Now L&A have the problem of trying to talk Cedric into investing without actually doing it. Cedric finally agrees to invest but only because that's the only way he can get his peanut butter. They reason that he wanted the peanut butter of his own free will, so that gets them off the hook.

"Wednesday, March 29: L&A get the treasure map from Squire to help promote investments. Grandpap calls that he and Charlie Redfield are coming to the store to see the map. (The treasure is supposed to be near the town of Covington, Tennessee. It was buried there by La Salle to keep the Indians from stealing it.)

"It sounds as though Grandpap and Charlie are going to invest at least a thousand dollars apiece, but it turns out they just want to settle a \$2 bet over whether Covington is in Tennessee or Arkansas."

Mr. Rogers' script for March 30 is missing, but don't you be missing next issue, when the month of April 1944 is revealed (talk about buried treasure)!!

The programs discussed this time around (from February 1-15, 1944 only) are available on NLAS Cassette Library Tapes #125 - 126.

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford and Roswell B. Rogers



## To Do My Part On The Home Front

... To help distribute rationed goods fairly.  
... To help hold down the cost of living.  
... To help eliminate black markets.  
... To bring violations to the attention of  
my War Price and Rationing Board.

★ ★ ★

**I make the following pledge:**


★ I will pay no more  
than Top Legal Prices.

★ I will accept no Rationed Goods  
without giving up Ration Stamps.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by the Office of Price Administration





---

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

To be filed at the War Price and Rationing Board



# BIG BLOWOUT at the COUNTY SEAT

As we reported briefly in our December 1993 issue, Lauck and Goff's hometown of Mena, Arkansas, was heavily damaged by a tornado on the night of November 13. Since that time we have been attempting to collect information about this disaster, and thanks to several of our friends in Mena we are now able to give you a more complete report on what transpired there.

Perhaps the most basic information comes from the local newspaper, *The Mena Star*, which, on Monday, November 15, headlined its front page "WHAT A MESS." The following is a condensed version of the newspaper's account of the storm:

Two massive tornadoes slammed into Mena Saturday afternoon with little warning, leveling trees, downing power lines, destroying homes and businesses, and literally demolishing the town's centerpiece, Janssen Park. [Note: Janssen Park is the site of the

Lum & Abner Memorial that was dedicated in 1979... fortunately, the stone monument was unharmed by the storm.]

As devastating as the damage was, it could have been worse. Mute testimony to the storm's potential destructive power can be witnessed north and east of Hatfield, where a tornado cut a four-mile long and quarter-mile wide swath through the countryside as it headed for Mena. Fortunately, the area was sparsely populated, but everything that was in its path was literally torn apart.

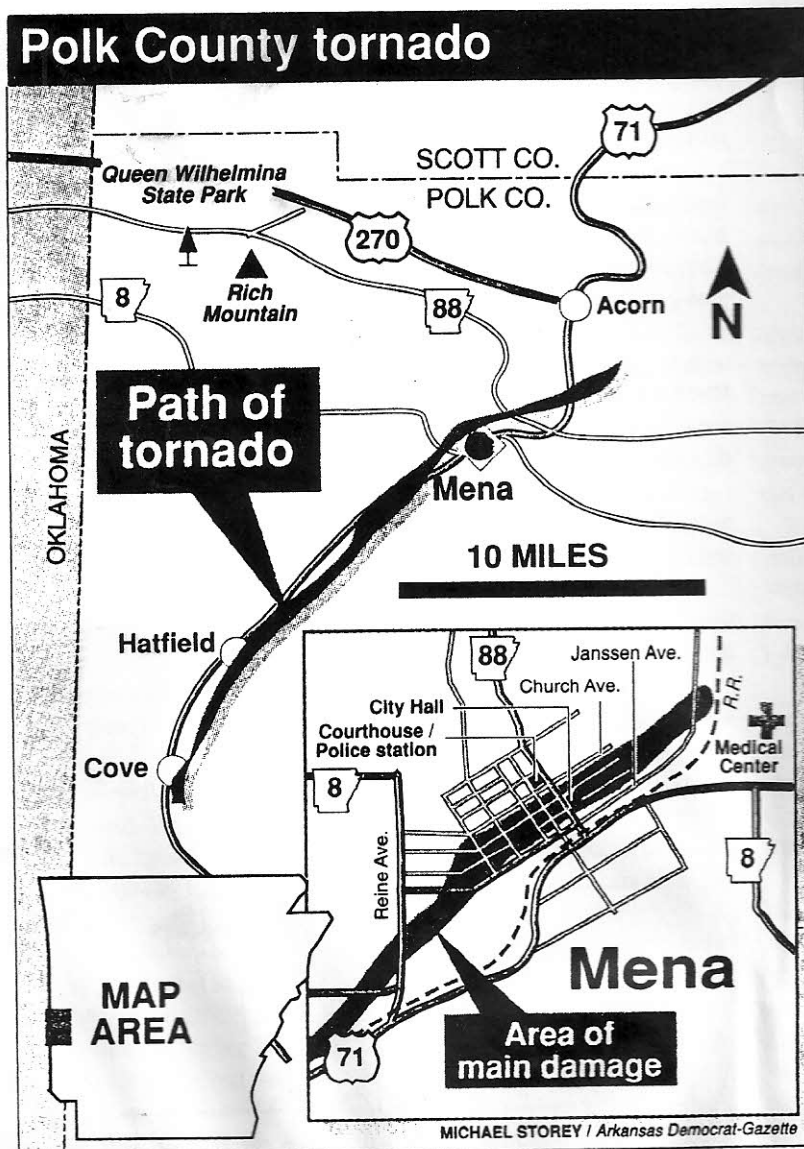
The fast-moving storm front entered Polk County just south of Highway 4 west of Cove, near the Oklahoma border. Three houses were destroyed in Cove, while four other homes and two businesses received heavy to minor damage. The storm picked up steam as it headed northeast, cleaving a path almost directly on the same route as Highway 71. [Regular listeners of Lum and Abner will recall their many references to the town of Hatfield; Cove was the birthplace of Norris "Abner" Goff.] For its size, Hatfield was probably the worst hit town in the county. Some 27 homes and four businesses were destroyed and a number of other homes received damage.

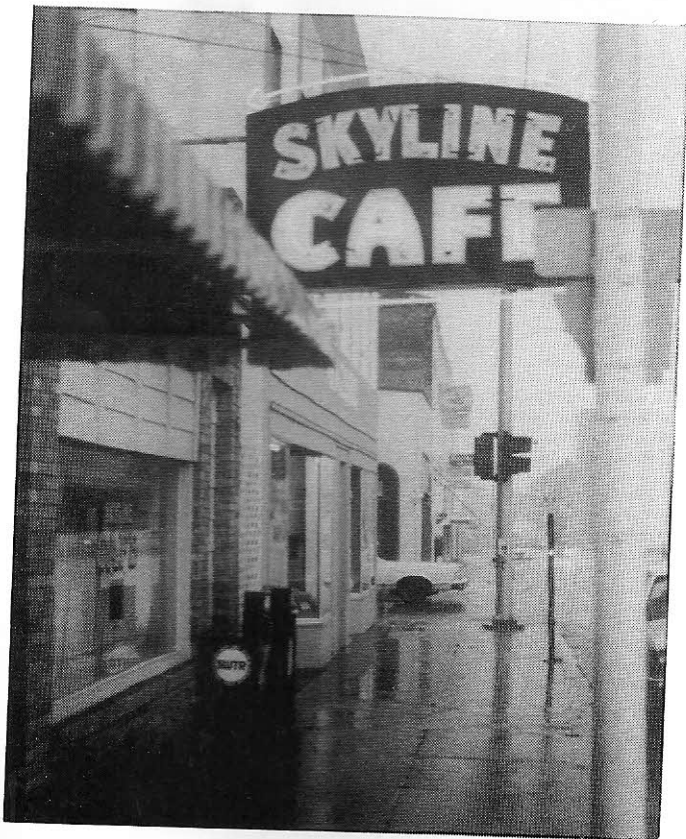
Injuries were more prevalent in Mena, where 11 people visited the emergency room at Mena Medical Center. Most of the injuries were superficial, but three people were checked into the hospital with more serious wounds.

The newspaper went on to say that the national news media made at least one mistake by reporting that a disc jockey at radio station KENA was killed when the radio tower fell onto the studio. In fact, the tower did not fall, and no one connected with the station was injured.

It was the main downtown business district of Mena that suffered the most damage. The tornado tore directly down the path of the street, and was apparently traveling some distance off the ground, as it was the upper portions of most buildings that received the heaviest damage. The greatest loss as far as Lum & Abner's history is concerned was the destruction of the Ouachita Little Theater building. In its heyday, this former movie theater was known as the Lyric, and was mentioned often in the L&A radio shows. In 1940, it became the site of the premiere of the first L&A motion picture, *Dreaming Out Loud*. The theater was not totally demolished by the tornado, but the back portion of the building and its roof received sufficient damage that it had to be condemned and slated for eventual razing.

Another downtown Mena landmark with a slightly more esoteric connection with L&A was the Skyline Cafe. Regular listeners of L&A can recall many occasions on which the two old fellows would be visiting the "county seat," and would take a break from their project to have a bite to eat (usually the





*Mena's classic Skyline Cafe as photographed by Uncle Donnie Pitchford, June 1993.*

"businessman's special"). While the restaurant they ate at was never given a name to our knowledge, the age and location of the Skyline seems to make it pretty obvious that this was the small eatery they had in mind. The tornado caved in the roof of the cafe, wiping out one more link to the past.

As stated earlier, Janssen Park, home of the L&A memorial, was devastated by the storm. According to officials, at least 85% of the trees in the heavily-wooded park were destroyed, leaving an arid expanse of stumps. (It is said that a falling tree missed smashing into the L&A monument by about 12 inches.) The historic 1851 log cabin in the park lost its roof during the storm and received other damage.

All of the damage in Mena seemed to be confined to the western edge of town. The Best Western Lime Tree Inn, site of the annual NLAS Convention each June, sits on the very eastern edge of town and was untouched, as was the famous Queen Wilhelmina State Park north of town.

There was one aspect of the storm that captured the attention of the media, and it speaks well for the hometown of Chet Lauck and Norris Goff. We will close by letting an editorial from one of the Arkansas newspapers explain it to you:

*If a wave of looting had swept through Mena right after tornadoes struck the town, it would have been big but all too familiar news... shocking but not surprising. Just one more symptom of the social disorder that now passes for normalcy. Instead, as everybody who is familiar with Mena and its people knew would happen, folks there turned out, all right, but to help and comfort one another. When gas leaks had to be capped to avoid explosions, hundreds of*



*The former Lyric Theater in Mena as it appeared in 1987.*

houses were evacuated and left abandoned in the dark for five hours or more. Not a one was vandalized; not a thing was reported stolen.

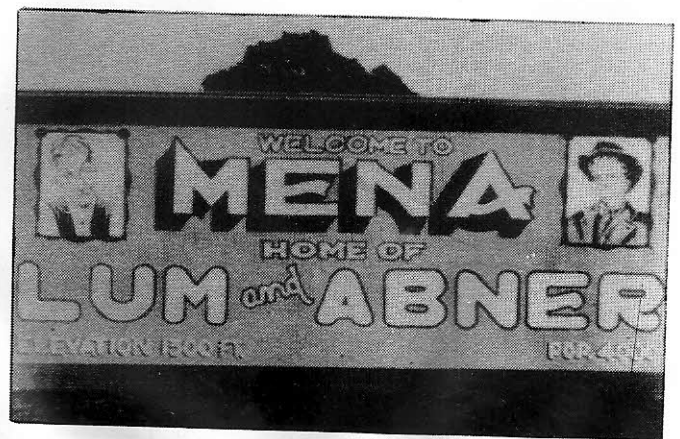
It's an index of how inured the American consciousness has become to violence, theft, and social disorganization in general: When nothing terrible happened at Mena after the storms knocked out the lights and left whole neighborhoods vacant and vulnerable, this non-event in Mena was described in one news story as an "oddy."

That was the extraordinary news out of Mena. Presumably the ordinary sequence of events in American culture whenever the lights go out has become predictable: "Quick, let's loot!" But in the midst of its hurt, Mena stood out like a return to reason. Its people declined to add human folly to nature's cruel blow.

If there had been looting at Mena, the story would have been big news. There would have been weeping, wailing, gnashing of the teeth, and lots of head-shaking over what it the world was happening to the country. When nothing untoward happened, the good news got the headlines in last week's paper, and well it should. The good news out of Mena deserves at least as much attention and comment as bad news would have gotten.

So thank you, Mena. And thanks to the Menas everywhere. It's good to know you're still there. We all need you.

- Compiled by Tim Hollis  
from reports from Mr. & Mrs. Doy Grubbs  
and Dorothy Woodson of Mena



# PINE RIDGE LIBRARY BOOKSHELF

by Lum Edwards, Head Librarian

## SOUND: FIRE ALARM RING ON TELEPHONE

Heighdy, everbody, thar ain't no fire... this here's jes' Lum Eddards agin, head librarian o' th' Pine Ridge Public Library, an' I got another uncommonly fine book ta tell ya 'bout.

You'll recollect that in th' last issue o' this here *Jot 'Em Down Journal*, I tole ya 'bout a coupla books a young lady had brung to mah 'tention... well, after I give that littul talk, another feller decided ta put his two cents worth in. Feller's name iz Bob Bowman, an' he lives way down thar in Lufkin, Texas. Ole Bob's a writer, and he jes' now got out a brand spankin' new book called *I'm Meeting Myself Coming Back From Where I've Been*. Ain't that title a humdinger? Ennyhow, Bob spends a whole chapter in hiz book tellin' how much he thinks o' me an' Abner an' th' NLA&S.

Bob has a real innerestin' story ta tell 'bout a feller named Chet Lauck. You recollect ole Chet... he's the actor feller that played me on the raddio. I allus thought he made me sound kinda like a country hayseed, but I reckon a feller cain't hep the way he talks. Ennyhow, after Chet and that partner o' his got thru playin' like they was me an' Abner, it looks like ole Chet made a purty good livin' fer hissef goin' 'round doin' fancy out-loud talkin' an' sich. Well, that there

is where he comes into Bob Bowman's story, 'cause Bob hadda chance ta meet with Chet back thar in th' 1960's when Bob was a reporter fer the *Houston Chronicle* newspaper. He... jist a minnit... what, Abner? No, I don't know whether he wants to come to work fer the *Pine Ridge News* er not... now hesh up, lemme tell these fokes 'bout hiz book fore they hang up.

What I was startin' to say was that Bob give ole Chet a ride back ta the airport in hiz own car, an' hit sounds like they had a right nice visit there. Bob brags on the raddio program an' the NLA&S right smart... I'da been blushin' if hit hadn't all been true. Ennyway, iff in th' rest o' Bob's book iz ennything like his chapter on me an' Abner, I know hit must make fer some awful fine bedtime readin'.

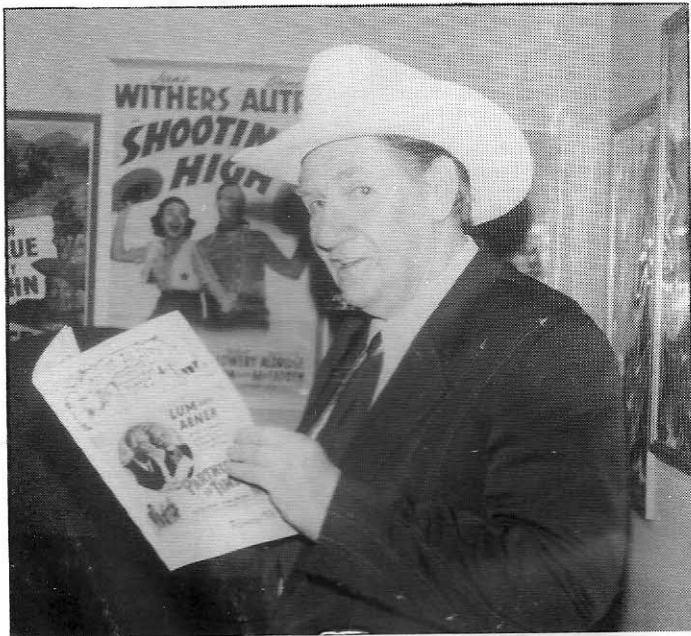
If yo're innerested in gettin' a copy o' Bob's book, an' ya cain't git down here ta our free public library ta check hit out, ya kin order it di-rect from th' publisher. The price on it is \$17.95, an' ya need ta send yer orders ta Epigram Press, P.O. Box 1647, Lufkin, TX 75901. They'll resh a copy right off to ya.

Well, fokes, that's 'bout all fer now. Be lissenin' fer th' fire alarm ring on yer party line, an' I'll let ya know 'bout enny more importance books we runn crosst down here. Wonderful world!!

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## PAT BUTTRAM, 1917-1994



Pat Buttram enjoying a copy of "The Jot 'Em Down Journal" in March 1986.

NLAS Honorary Member and comedy legend Pat Buttram passed away on January 8 at the age of either 76 or 78, depending upon which source you consult.

Buttram is best known today for his long-running role as Gene Autry's sidekick in radio and motion pictures, and for his characterization of Mr. Haney (a thinly disguised Squire Skimp) in the TV series *Green Acres*. But his connection with Lum & Abner dates back to an earlier time than either of those appearances.

Starting in the mid-1930's, Buttram was the featured comedian on *The National Barn Dance*, originating at WLS in Chicago. In time, the *Barn Dance* and *Lum & Abner* both came under the sponsorship of Miles Laboratories, which resulted in some mutual promotion. Lum & Abner appeared on the *Barn Dance* several times over the years, and promoted these guest shots on their own program; Abner frequently referred to his admiration for Buttram, but felt Buttram was "the most country feller I ever heerd." Lum opined that Buttram was "a hillbilly, I think."

L&A were reunited with Buttram in 1966 when they were invited to speak to the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters in Los Angeles. Buttram, as master of ceremonies, presented L&A with a hilarious introduction full of good-natured ribbing (this speech can be heard on NLAS Tape Library cassette #271). Buttram became an Honorary Member of the NLAS in 1986; his unique style of rural comedy will indeed be missed by all.