

October 1994

*Spend*  
**THANKSGIVING**  
*with*  
**LUM AND ABNER®**

The NLAS has been working to restore an unusual *Lum and Abner* program: a two-hour special entitled *Thanksgiving in Pine Ridge!* Presumably mastered on tape, and probably aired by the ABC Radio Network on Thanksgiving Day of 1953, this show features the Pine Ridge cast gathering at Abner's home for dinner, and enjoying a variety of music on the phonograph. Popular songs as well as classical selections abound, as L&A and friends keep things moving with hilarious dialogue.

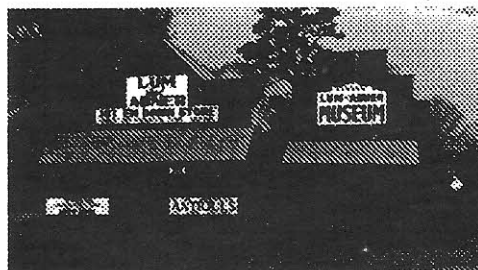
Unfortunately, the only complete recording of this unique broadcast exists on eight sides of four damaged 16" Sonic aluminum/acetate transcription discs. According to the notations on the label area, they were rebroadcast on December 8 (no year indicated). The first third of each of the eight sides is riddled with cracks, and the acetate has separated, revealing the aluminum underneath.

For a special Thanksgiving offering this year, we have been able to restore Part One of *Thanksgiving in Pine Ridge* through tedious tape editing and the substitution of a few of the songs (with the same recordings, taken from different sources). Before we can restore Part Two, we need to appeal to you music collectors out there! Stay tuned! In our next issue, we will tell you what we are looking for! In the meantime, this 60-minute cassette can be ordered from the NLAS Executive Secretary for \$4.00. Send your orders to #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062.

We still have copies of our third volume of *Lum and Abner* script reprints (February 1936) available for \$5.00. As for the volume that preceded it (January 1936), we have a few copies that were printer defects: some of the pages were left blank when the books were printed, but the missing pages have been Xeroxed and stapled into the book. Therefore, the volume is complete, but not as neat looking as it should be. We are selling these copies for the bargain price of \$3.00; if you have not ordered your copy yet, do not delay, as they are going fast!

## VISIT

The Jot 'Em Down Store  
and Lum & Abner® Museum



Located on Highway 88  
(the "Lum & Abner Highway")  
**PINE RIDGE, ARKANSAS**

For further information, contact  
**LON & KATHY STUCKER**  
P.O. BOX 38  
PINE RIDGE, AR 71966  
(501) 396-4442

They'll jes' be proud ta death ta see ya!



## THE SEVEN

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**\$29.95 each**

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**Lum & Abner Associates**  
135 Circle Drive  
Hot Springs, AR 71901

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# THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

## October 1994

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**THE NATIONAL  
LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**

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**PRESIDENT**

*Donnie Pitchford*

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

*Sam Brown*

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

*Tim Hollis*

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**Front Cover:** Squire Skimp (Dick Elliott) threatens Lum and Abner with bodily harm in a scene from *Goin' To Town* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944).

**Back Cover:** L&A seem perfectly happy surrounded by curvaceous cuties in this *Goin' To Town* publicity shot (1944).

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*Miss Abigail (Florence Lake) prevents Lum from making a point the hard way in "Goin' To Town" (1944).*

# LUM and ABNER®

## Go To Town

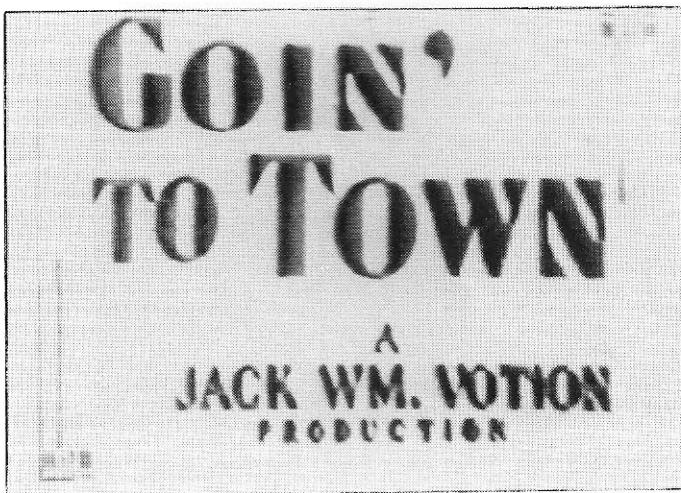
According to the information at our disposal, Lum and Abner's fifth feature film for RKO Radio Pictures, *Goin' To Town*, was released on September 23, 1944. Since we are celebrating this film's 50th anniversary, we thought it would be appropriate to take a second look at it and put it into its proper perspective in L&A history.

*Goin' To Town* has perhaps the most complex... bordering on confusing... plot of any L&A screen vehicle. While the two previous L&A films, *Two Weeks To Live* and *So This Is Washington*, both released in 1943, had at least been co-written by L&A's head radio writer Roz Rogers, *Goin' To Town* featured none of their regular radio staff among its credits. This probably accounts for its weaknesses. As for the story, it was best summarized in the film's official pressbook. That version ran this way:

"Parker, a Chicago oil man and a practical joker, plays a joke upon the inhabitants of Pine Ridge, Arkansas. Armed with a machine used in probing for oil, he walks to Lum and Abner's Jot 'Em Down Store and performs mysterious operations. He offers Lum and Abner \$20,000 for the property. Abner is excited at the idea, but Lum turns down the offer, believing that if it is worth that much to Parker it must be worth more to them. Lum telephones everyone in Pine Ridge not to sell their property to anyone; this idea doesn't suit unscrupulous old Squire Skimp who owns most of Pine Ridge and wants the rest.

"Lum is convinced that Parker is after oil, and that the ground under the Jot 'Em Down Store is swimming in oil. Lum organizes the Pine Ridge Oil and Development Company and persuades his friends to mortgage their properties for cash to drill a well. When the well is drilled, nothing comes out except a cloud of dust. Lum borrows money from Widow Abigail, who wants to marry him, and he and Abner leave for Chicago to see Parker and get him to finance further drilling. Parker has just left the city, and the boys tell his secretary of Parker's offer for their land. She is impressed and refers them to his partner. Another oil man gets wind of this, and sensing something big, traces the boys to their hotel. Lum and Abner insist that they only do business in night clubs and arrangements are made to meet at the Sky Hi Club. Lum and Abner have the time of their lives dancing with the beautiful chorus girls, while the two oil men shower bids upon the two boys. When the bidding reaches \$80,000 Lum accepts. Lum and Abner return to Pine Ridge with the money just in time to prevent Squire Skimp from gobbling up the rest of Pine Ridge from the desperate natives."

That pretty well sums up the basic plot of the movie, but neglects to mention some of the trivia associated with it (as if the 1944 pressbook writers didn't even suspect there would eventually be a National Lum & Abner Society!). *Goin' To Town* contains appearances by a record number of characters from the radio



*The movie's Art Deco-styled opening titles were obviously meant to suggest its swanky nightclub sequences.*



*The screen's new Squire Skimp (Dick Elliott) eavesdrops on L&A*



***Cedric (Grady Sutton) and Miss Abigail (Florence Lake) become the first investors in the Pine Ridge Oil and Development Company***



***Lum hands out streamers for the joyous crowd to toss in celebration; Squire Skimp is one of the less joyous of the crowd.***

programs, some in major roles, others in minor cameo appearances. Credited parts include Grady Sutton as Cedric Weehun (he had previously essayed the role in *The Bashful Bachelor*, and had a brief scene in *Two Weeks To Live*) and Danny Duncan as Grandpappy Spears. Duncan (who was heard as Uncle Henry Lunsford on the radio shows) had portrayed Grandpap in *So This Is Washington*, but for this film his physical appearance was altered considerably. The masterpiece of casting was Dick Elliott as Squire Skimp. In Squire's two previous film appearances, he was played by Irish actor Oscar O'Shea; the reason for the change in casting is unknown, but Elliott fits the characterization of Squire perfectly. (TV buffs will recall Elliott as the original mayor of Mayberry on *The Andy Griffith Show*.) Uncredited radio characters are Sister Simpson and Tom Foster. A character played by Sam Flint is referred to as "Doc" all the way through the film, leading one to suspect that this is Doc Miller... however, the cast credits in the pressbook refer to this character as "Dr. Crane." HUH?

While the above plot synopsis calls Lum's romantic interest "Widow Abigail," this name in the film becomes "Miss Abigail." Played by comedienne Florence Lake (sister of Arthur Lake, the famed Dagwood Bumstead of movie and radio fame), the dizzy, scatterbrained Miss Abigail bears little resemblance to any of Lum's radio sweethearts (except, perhaps, Mabel Melrose). Miss Abigail has some fine, funny moments in the movie, but during quieter moments, one wonders whatever happened to Lum's previous film sweetie from *The Bashful Bachelor*, Miss Geraldine (ZaSu Pitts). In one scene, Miss Abigail eavesdrops on Lum's rehearsal of the speech he is to give before the townspeople: Lum continues the radio show's tradition of referring to Pine Ridge being located in Polk County. In actuality, Pine Ridge is located in Montgomery County, Arkansas, but Chet and Tuffy's hometown of Mena was in Polk County, so for these references they always chose loyalty to home over the absolute truth.

One of the most genuinely touching moments in any L&A comedy comes when the townspeople gather around the gigantic "oil derelict" in front of the Jot 'Em Down Store to witness Pine Ridge's first gusher. L&A excitedly distribute raincoats and umbrellas to shield their friends from the showering oil, and Lum hands out confetti and streamers to be thrown in celebration. When

the explosive charge goes off and absolutely nothing happens, L&A's humiliation and heartbreak are truly moving to behold. Surely there is no one out there who has never had the experience of anticipating something great, only to have their plans come crashing around them; that feeling is brought back in a frightening way in this scene. (The same mood was obtained in the 1935 radio episode in which no one shows up for the unveiling of Lum's statue of himself.)

Recently, the NLAS Ossifers were asked why actress Barbara Hale was given such a big buildup in the publicity for *Goin' To Town* (in fact, she had top billing above all the other cast members except Chet & Tuffy themselves), when her role as Sally, secretary to jokester oilman Parker, is in actuality quite small. The reason is simple: *Goin' To Town* was only the third film to feature Ms. Hale, and, as RKO's newest contract player, the studio was determined to build her into a star. (A similar situation had occurred when 1942 Miss America Rosemary LaPlanche was cast in *Two Weeks To Live*, and had a five-minute role as a nurse, but the publicity for the movie made her out to be a co-star.) For Barbara Hale's own memories on her work in *Goin' To Town*, see the interview elsewhere in this issue.



***L&A encounter secretary Barbara Hale in Parker's office***

The nightclub scenes of *Goin' To Town* were the most highly promoted of any, probably because of the novelty of their being included at all. As was mentioned in our August 1994 issue of the *Journal*, the walk-on part of a cigarette girl in this scene was played by none other than Chet Lauck's own daughter Shirley. She has explained how her dad broke his hand during the filming of *Goin' To Town*, and because she was driving him to the studio each day she was assigned the bit part. However, yet another L&A staffer also made her only on-screen appearance in the Sky Hi Club sequence. Roz Rogers' writing partner, Betty Boyle, has the following story to relate:

"Chet broke his hand, and he showed up for shooting one day with it all bandaged. When they were looking at the rushes that night, the director said, 'Oh, we've got to do something about that hand, because we've got to explain that. What will we do?' So they finally decided that they were going to have Lum put his hat over his hand, and in order to keep it from looking stupid, they decided that he would walk in to this nightclub scene and there would be a hatcheck girl who would say, 'May I check your hat?' This was late at night, and they said, 'Who will we get?' And somebody said, 'Betty will do it!' I said, 'ME?! I won't do it!!' And they said, 'Oh yes, you'll do it, because we don't have time!' So the next day I was in makeup and this little short glittery thing, and when they got through with me I looked so adorable I didn't recognize myself. So that was my debut in motion pictures, and Chet complained because we did it in one take, and he said all he saw was the back of his own head!"

Lum and Abner had other females besides Betty and Shirley to ogle in the Sky Hi Club: on stage, the featured entertainment is billed as "NTG and his Hollywood Beauties." Not much is known about this entourage (apparently they were a hot item in nightclubs in real life), but a few sketchy facts are known about the emcee, Nils T. Granlund. According to reference books, in the mid-1920's Granlund was program director at radio station WHN in New York, and he conceived the idea of broadcasting from nightclubs. Apparently he eventually worked his way up to Broadway, and he was next heard from in 1927 when he and entertainer Harry Richman had a mock "feud" in radio, the precursor to the more famous Jack Benny/Fred Allen battles. The *Goin' To Town* pressbook contained a short blurb

## FULL OF THE OLD NICK!

They're kickin' the traces with a score of cuties... and scandalizing staid Pine Ridge!

**LUM and ABNER**

*Goin' To Town* with **BARBARA HALE FLORENCE LAKE GRADY SUTTON DICK ELLIOTT** and **N.T.G.** with his **Hollywood Beauties**

A JACK WM. VOTION PRODUCTION  
Produced by Frank Melford Directed by Leslie Goodwins  
Original Screen Play by Charles E. Robert and Charles R. Marion

*This newspaper ad gives an indication of the over-hype devoted to the movie's nightclub sequence*

concerning the nightclub sequence:

The 'Coco Bolo,' new Latin-American dance rhythm, is introduced in Lum and Abner's current picture, *Goin' To Town*. The dance features an unusual pattern of hip-weaving, said to have been suggested by the curves of the Amazon River. Paul Oscar adapted the dance for the lavish night club number in which it is shown. This number is the first musical sequence in a Lum and Abner comedy. NTG, Hollywood's night club entertainer, is master of ceremonies in the scene. The chorus is made up of beauties from Broadway and Hollywood musical productions."

The closing scene of *Goin' To Town* is perhaps one of the most satisfying of any L&A picture. L&A have made a frantic trip home from their sojourn in Chicago to deliver the \$80,000 they obtained to pay off the mortgages held by Squire Skimp, just as the old con is about to foreclose. In the excitement, the suitcase containing the money gets switched with that belonging to a traveling salesman. Imagine L&A's surprise when they fling open the suitcase to reveal a wide assortment of ladies' underwear! The indignant salesman shows up to claim his sample case, and angrily throws L&A's trunk at their heads. It hits the ground, spilling its monetary contents and saving the day (as well as L&A's reputations). While Abner scrambles to pick up the money, Squire offers to help, but true to character he can be seen stuffing bundles of the green stuff into his inside coat pockets. Miss Abigail spies this activity, and to the cheers of the theater audience, delivers a resounding kick to Squire's posterior, sending the tubby crook sprawling!

If you have not had the opportunity to view *Goin' To Town* for yourself, remember that it (and the other L&A features) are available on videocassette from Lum & Abner Associates, 135 Circle Drive, Hot Springs, AR 71901. See the ad on the inside front cover of this issue for price and ordering details.

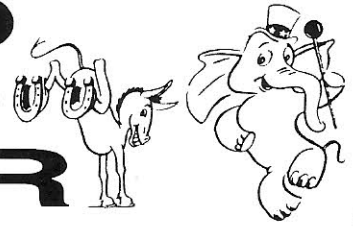
- Tim Hollis



*Look closely at Lum's right hand in this publicity shot, and you can probably see the bandage that caused so much scrambling on the set*

# LUM AND ABNER®

# GO TO WAR



Welcome to chapter 17 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. In this installment, we take a fond look back at the months of October and November of 1944.

"Ain't got none," Abner briskly barks at the telephoning customers, "don'tcha know there's a war goin' on?"

"I'm gittin' tared o' hearin' you say 'don'tcha know there's a war goin' on,'" scolds Lum, "special ta Miz Barton, too; she's got a boy an' a son-in-law in th' service!" The "Keep Smilin' Policy" will be in effect at the store from now on! It sounds good, but their "spaven-legged jack-o-lantern grins" are more than Grandpappy Spears can bear. "Don'tcha know there's a war goin' on?" the old fellow bellows, as he hot-foots it out of the store!

"Them is 80 points," Abner informs "Miz" Pomeroy over the phone, assuring her "the O. P. an' A." assigns these rationing values. He feels she should have canned her own peaches, as did Lizabeth. "Th' reason she never canned none herself," Abner tells Lum, "wuz 'cause she thought th' war would be over by now." Lum interrupts this line of discussion, announcing to Abner his "reluctant" candidacy for the office of school board president, claiming the public demands his service. Abner is impressed when he learns of a number of petitions being circulated which demand "Eddards" for "prez" - that is, until Will Spencer calls Abner to inform him that Lum's bill for printing the petitions is \$4.92!!

Lum is indeed elected the following day, and Abner and Grandpap feign disinterest in the matter as a joke on Lum, who is bursting with pride, which is only barely held back by false modesty. They "git Lum's goat," sending him out of the store in a huff! (War Report: During October 1944, Finland surrendered to the Russians, and declared war on Germany.)

Lum the playwright conducts a rehearsal on October 5. His new "patriotics" play was written to aid the campaign for Merchant Marine recruitment. According to Lum, 43,000 experienced seamen are needed! "They got ta haul 'gargoes' practical all over th' world," Lum explains, "got ta git th' stuff ta our sol'jers wherever they're fightin' at!" Lum casts himself as "Captain Admiral Larkspur of the S.S.S. Galliant," with Abner as the Assistant Captain, Cedric as Head Telegrapher Adams, Grandpap as a recruiter, and Mousey as the "big, husky, rough, tough, feller named Ironsides Olsen," needed as an oiler on the ship. Unfortunately, Mrs. Ironsides (Mousey's wife Gussie) calls in the middle of rehearsal; she needs the "rough, tough oiler" to finish sewing her dress!!

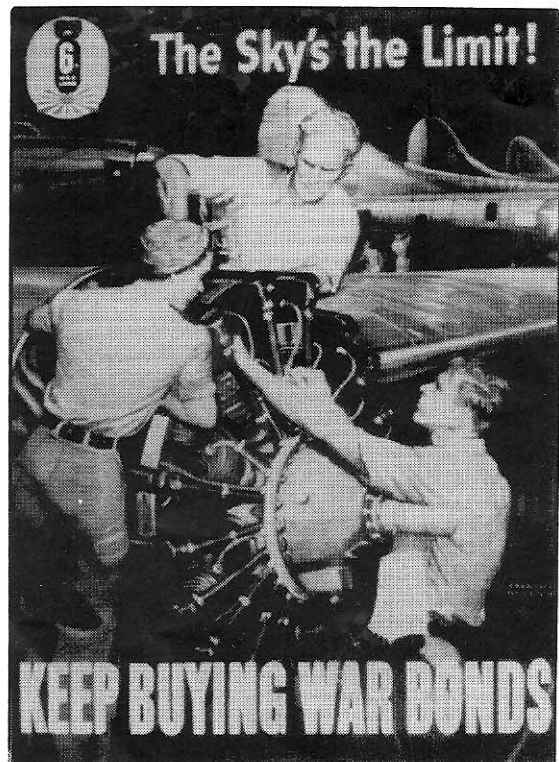
"Prezi-dint Eddards" first unpleasant school board "du-tee" is to fire Professor Sloane. It seems the teacher is practically "iggnorin' th' scholars." Lum plays "ring-around-the-party line," purposely calling places where the professor isn't, all the while pretending to be "trackin' 'im down!" Unexpectedly, he reaches the prof,

who informs Lum that he is resigning to take a better job!

While searching their mail for replacement teacher "applicacions," L&A take the opportunity to plug the premiere of *The National Barn Dance*, a "pitcher show" advertised on a post card. Ad-libbing, Lauck and Goff poke fun at *Barn Dance* radio regular and pal Pat Buttram, calling him "country," "backwoodsy," and a "hillbilly!" (As emcee, Buttram would get a chance to rib L&A in 1966 when Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff were honored by the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters.)

Lum is expecting a reply from the area teacher placement bureau, but it seems a number of teachers have gone into defense plant work. Lum feels a "womern" teacher would be superior to a man this time around. In no time, he has created a fantasy beauty with "dainty feet, soft white hands and golden yaller curls."

Finally, "applicacions" arrive on October 12. Due to wartime travel restrictions and gasoline shortages, the placement bureau is asking school board representatives to travel to the county seat to interview prospective teachers, rather than having them visit each school. Lum feels this is absurd, until photos of two of the more attractive ladies catch his eye!



Lum's absence the following day is filled by Papa Peabody's insistence that Abner stock a supply of birdbaths in the store. Abner tells his father that he would have to give each customer a pound of butter and a pair of shoes with each birdbath as an incentive, but that wouldn't be practical due to ration points. The arguing continues until Dick Huddleston phones with the news that a large C.O.D. shipment has arrived for Abner - guess what it is!

*Photographed in 1985, this birdbath once belonged to the Goff family in Mena. Could this be one of the many ordered by Phinus Peabody?*



An excited Lum returns, having just hired Miss Emaline Platt as the new school marm! Lum brags to Abner and Grandpap on Miss Platt's "qualifin-cations," but then cannot remember exactly what they are, even though he claims to have studied her records thoroughly while in Mena. Suddenly, Abner finds an envelope Lum left behind - it's Miss Platt's documents! "Doggies," Abner says in amazement, "you shore must have good eyesight if you could set in there at th' county seat an' read this clean out here in Pine Ridge!" Sure enough, Lum has hired her solely on her beauty!!

Lum plans to paint the schoolhouse walls baby blue, and the chalkboards red!! His reverie is interrupted by a visit from Squire Skimp, who asks him to attend an important meeting in Fort Smith concerning the War Chest, whose officials have invited area businessmen to outline plans for a massive campaign. Naturally, Lum wants to stay in Pine Ridge to prepare everything for Miss Platt, so he suggests Abner for the trip. Skimp is less than thrilled, but agrees to the substitution. (War Report: On October 20, U.S. Army forces landed on Leyte, and between the 23rd and 26th, the U.S. Pacific Fleet defeated the Japanese fleet in the Battle for Leyte Gulf. This was the largest naval engagement in history, from the standpoint of naval tonnage, consisting of action in the areas of the Sibuyan Sea, Surigao Strait, Samar and Cape Engano. Japanese Kamikaze pilots began striking in desperate suicide attempts on October 25.)

Chet Lauck was obviously on vacation, for the listeners follow Squire and Abner to Fort Smith and back during the week of October 23. Some additional actors come on board to assist as well. Monday finds Squire and Abner on a crowded wartime train, as Abner annoys a gentleman with his incessant ramblings about boiled eggs and sweet potatoes. (We once thought the annoyed fellow was Les Tremayne, but that distinguished thespian told us it just wasn't so!) Tuesday's visit to a department store features *Lum and Abner* veteran Lurene Tuttle in female roles, and Jack Benny's favorite nemesis, Frank Nelson as a floorwalker! The tables are turned on Nelson, as poor Abner, embarrassed to buy a new corset for Lizabeth, frustrates him to no end!

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Nelson plays another familiar role, although in an altered voice, that of a train station clerk at the Fort Smith depot. Their tickets lost, Squire and Abner attempt to trick their way onto the train, but fail miserably. Thursday finds them "hike-hitching" with an argumentative couple, which gets them nowhere. It is only after their exhausting return home that Abner finds the tickets, hidden in his new wallet!

By Monday, October 30, Lauck and Goff are reunited (briefly), as Lum spends most of his time interrupting Miss Platt's progress in her new position, claiming he is dealing with school board duties. A full day is wasted as he tinkers with the pipes at the schoolhouse, stealing admiring glances at the pretty new school mistress. Abner blows his "kiver" when he finds out that the particular pipes Lum is laboring over have been disconnected for years!!

The episode of Tuesday, October 31, 1944 is an especially memorable one for me; it was the first 15-minute Lum and Abner program I ever heard! I will never forget sitting in my dorm room at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches ("full of roaches," as Groucho Marx said), Texas on the evening of Friday, October 31, 1980, eagerly taping the special Halloween programs from the campus FM radio station. I thought this L&A show a bit odd, since it was not a half-hour, and had no audience laughing it up! Instead, it featured "Deputy Town Marshal Abner" and Lum discussing the pranks they once played on Halloweens of years gone by. It is one of the great L&A "reminiscing" programs, which infuse the series with its own special richness and sense of history.

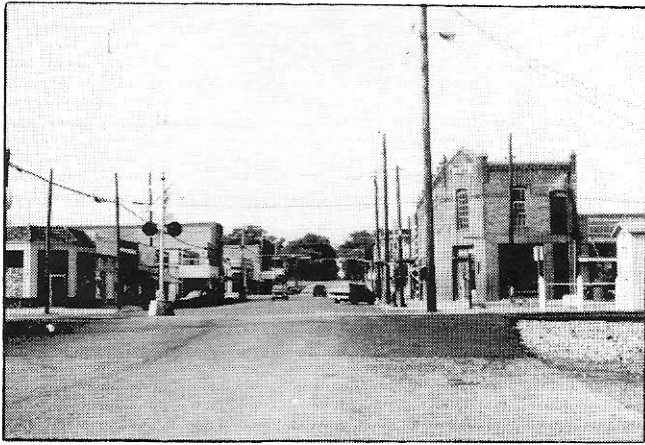


### *Thomas E. Dewey and Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Election Day 1944 fell on Tuesday, November 7, and in the world of Pine Ridge, it is Cedric's first opportunity to vote (which would make him at least 21 by the standards of the day). New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey is challenging the incumbent Franklin D. Roosevelt for the office of president, as Cedric enters the Jot 'Em Down Store, groomed to perfection. "I'm a voter!" he proudly proclaims. Informed that Dewey and Roosevelt are running, the young man decides he'll vote for both of them! After being informed that he must choose between the two, Cedric dallies around until the polls are closed! Disappointed, young Mr. Weehunt cheerfully notes that he can spend the next four years making up his mind about Dewey and Roosevelt!! (Roosevelt won his fourth term, by the way!) Interestingly, this version of the program features Lou Crosby as announcer, which means it was prerecorded for the transcribed Keystone Network before Gene Baker replaced him.

The last two days of the week are used to set up a device that will allow Tuffy Goff to take a two-week "vacate" from the show. Lizabeth demands a trip to Mineola, Texas (the home of her brother Fred) to meet "Aint Agathy." Unfortunately, Mrs. Peabody has led her aunt to believe that Abner is a famous trombone player!! Lizabeth insists Abner learn the instrument: she has procured one from the McMillans (it was Ernest's before he "jined" the army)!





### *Mineola, Texas as it looks today*

The Peabodies depart on Monday, November 13, riding the mail hack to the county seat. Lum discovers a valise in the store - Abner left it behind! Hurriedly, he phones ahead for the Johnson family to flag down the mail hack. Lum discovers the piece of luggage is empty - it is not Abner's, but one of Lum's! It's too late; the mailman has become disgusted with the bickering Peabodies, and has deposited them on the Johnson lawn!

Lum receives a "long-distance Mineoly" phone call from Abner the following day, and assumes they got to the Mena depot after all. He is stunned when an upset Gus Johnson confronts him with the startling news that Mr. and Mrs. Peabody are still at his farm! Johnson explains that Abner was too embarrassed to admit they hadn't left town after all their "big talk," plus the mail hack driver refuses to stop for them! To make matters worse, Doc Miller informs them that the youngest Johnson child has contracted the measles, and the entire house full of folks is quarantined!!

Soon, nearly everyone in town receives "long-distance" calls from Abner, intent on continuing the charade. The bickering between Abner and Lizabeth, plus Abner's trombone honking, are more than the Johnsons can handle: Abner finds himself with a trombone slide wrapped around his head! As if this isn't too much, Abner becomes infected with measles as well!! The quarantine lengthened, Abner takes to playing checkers with Grandpap by telephone, which results in a jammed party line, as listeners jump verbally into the resulting arguments over who cheated whom!

In the meantime, the store is visited by a Mr. Dennison, a county school official, who is shocked when Cedric claims to be one of Miss Platt's "leadin' scholars." (By the way, Cedric, who decided to try school again, was demoted from high school to the fourth grade!) Dennison threatens to have Lum's new "flame" suspended and replaced, but some fast-talking on Lum's part rectifies the situation. Cedric's intellect, however, interests a Mr. Clark W. Fulton (Frank Nelson), a psychologist who wishes to interview young Mr. Weehunt for an "abnormal psychology" book. He asks Cedric to take a special test. Cedric's imagination gets the best of everyone! (This is one of those episodes you have to hear to understand!)

Lum has no place to go for Thanksgiving dinner (Thursday, November 23), so he works on Phinus Peabody for an "in-vite." Actor Elmore Vincent appeared a number of times during this two-week period to help fill in the enormous gap left by Tuffy Goff. In fact, during our 1988 NLAS Convention, Vincent stated that one of the reasons he was hired was to provide an extra character, enabling

Lauck and Goff to take some needed vacation time.

Finally recovered, Abner returns to the store on Monday, November 27. (The episode opens with Lum discussing rationing points, and stamps which are good up to "Q.") Abner now has "trouble in the home;" Lizabeth is accusing him of catching the measles "a-purpose," just to avoid having to meet "Aint Agathy!" Kicked out of his home, Abner resorts to writing to a "love ad-vice colyum" edited by a "Miss Lovelace." As Grandpap helps write the note, Cedric sits nearby, scribbling it down word-for-word as Abner reads it back. Thinking the young man is working on an original composition for school, they do not realize he is going to read the contents of Abner's letter (signed "Anxious Abner Peabody") aloud to the entire class! Imagine Abner's embarrassment when he begins receiving letters of advice from Cedric's little schoolmates!!

As the month of November concludes on Thursday the 30th, Lum is advising Abner to be seen in the company of other women, in order to make Lizabeth "jellyous!" To Abner's disgust, Lum can only suggest such single ladies as Sister Simpson and the "Widder" Abernathy! Abner would like to walk perky Miss Emaline home from school; that would get Lizabeth's attention! Love-stuck Lum vetoes that "sug-jest" immediately, but sees a new possibility: Grandpap is approaching with a very attractive young lady. Perhaps Abner can take her for a walk about town! Who can she be? Why, it's the great actress Barbara Stanwyck, making her second visit to the Jot 'Em Down Store!! (Her first was on April 2, 1943 - amazingly, neither Lum nor Abner seem to remember that occasion!) Miss Stanwyck again uses the party line to make an impassioned plea for the purchase of war bonds and stamps in support of the 6th War Loan. Following her outstanding performance, awe-struck Abner can only ask if he may purchase a bond from her! "Why, shore!" Miss Stanwyck drawls! Lum will have to think up another strategy to reunite Mr. and Mrs. Peabody! And that he will, next week, and next month for him, but next issue in two months for us, as winter's nip spans the half-century, when we turn back to December 1944 and January 1945. I hope "yule" join us!

The 1944 programs discussed this issue are available on NLAS Cassette Library Tapes #153 - 159.

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford



*Is this an actual photo of Barbara Stanwyck making her bond pitch on the party line? No, it's a still from her classic film, "Sorry, Wrong Number" (1948).*

# Barbara Hale

## on Goin' To Town

*Of all the performers in Lum and Abner's 1944 motion picture "Goin' To Town," the most familiar to today's audiences would unquestionably be actress Barbara Hale. Unfortunately, the NLAS has had very little success in establishing any sort of direct communication with Ms. Hale. At one time we obtained a post office box number for her, and mailed the Journal and other correspondence, but after a couple of years she chose to discontinue that box and leave no forwarding address. We have no idea whether she ever actually saw any of our material.*

*The only comprehensive interview with Ms. Hale concerning her appearance with L&A was conducted by Walt Lowe of the Arkansas Educational TV Network (AETN) in 1986 for the documentary "Lum & Abner: Laughter Never Dies." We herewith present the interview as it was conducted.*

**HALE:** This all happened many, many years ago, but it is a very dear memory for me. I was very young, needless to say, but it was when I first started at RKO. I had the opportunity to work with Lum and Abner... or Chet and Tuffy. Oh, what a glorious experience that was! They had the wildest sense of humor, but most important, they were so dear to me. I was so frightened; it was all a new adventure to me. When I was a young girl in Rockford, I used to listen to their show so much... my mother and dad loved it, and they were from Kentucky, so we have a little southern background too. But [making the movie] was a glorious experience. The boys were absolutely beautiful to me, and I'll never forget them.

**AETN:** Can you remember any details about the plot of *Goin' To Town*?

**HALE:** Well, I was, needless to say, a secretary. Not unlike the secretary I do now, the "Della Street" type of secretary. But this time, my bosses were swindlers; they were not good people. And Lum and Abner, poor souls, came in to check them out. And Innocent Nell here, I didn't realize that my bosses were the "heavies," or bad people. That truly is all that I remember.

**AETN:** What was movie making like for you when you started?

**HALE:** Well, when I first started, a long time ago, it was very different than it is now. People were closer; today, when we're working, the pace is faster, due to our economy and the material and the needs of the producers in the studios. It's a different world. You don't have the time to "love your neighbor." That sounds a little trite, but very honestly that's the way it is. Today, you're there on business; there's more of a push now than there was then. I think that's true of our entire world today, when it comes to our years now and the years then.

**AETN:** I understand that at one time you visited Lum & Abner on Chet's ranch in Las Vegas.

**HALE:** Oh, I'll never forget that. My husband Bill and I made a trip to Las Vegas... we had to go down there on business... and Chet and his wife and family lived there at the time. So, we were invited out to their home for dinner. They had a ranch, which was just beautiful; sprawling hills and roads on the outskirts of Las Vegas. Of course, dinner was great, and we had many stories and a great deal of fun

talking. But the thing I will never forget is that Chet decided to show us his ranch, so we walked and we walked and we walked. And we ended up guess where? In the pig pen! Because it was time to slop the hogs, and Chet said, "What good is life if you can't have a few hogs and have your sloppin' time?" It just tickled me to death!

**AETN:** Everyone says that Chet and Tuffy had a sort of secret language between each other, where one could start a sentence and the other could finish it. Do you remember that?

**HALE:** Oh, they always knew what the other person was saying! If you asked them a question, possibly Chet would start answering it and Tuffy would finish it. But it was without thinking about it; their minds seemed to work right together. They were like brothers, in my estimation. It was like one family.

**AETN:** Can you remember any ways their kindness manifested itself toward you? They were not experienced movie makers themselves!

**HALE:** But they were experienced in what they did. They had played the characters for so long. I think they knew the characters they were playing, so I don't think "acting" was any problem for them.

**AETN:** Of course, they were much younger than the characters they were playing; Lum and Abner were supposed to be older men.

**HALE:** Oh, I was so shocked when I saw them, because I had heard them on the radio when I was a child... and when I saw Chet, he was SO handsome! What a beautiful man, and Tuffy too! I expected to see two little old people walking in and say [Ms. Hale imitates a senior citizen] "Hello, Barbara, how are ya?" No way!! They were very young, aggressive men who assumed that character.

**AETN:** Do you have any closing remarks to make?

**HALE:** I do want to say that I miss their kindness dearly, and I would give my soul to be able to go back and slop those hogs for just a minute!



*Barbara Hale poses for a "Goin' To Town" publicity shot with Lum and Abner*

# “AND NOW...”

...let's see what's going on today in the world of *Lum and Abner*. Wellll, as we look in on the states of Arkansas and Alabama, we find a few new developments.



The NLAS was pleased to receive a telephone call recently from Chet Lauck Jr. of Hot Springs, Arkansas, who informed us that his father, half of the *Lum and Abner* team, had been posthumously awarded a prestigious honor.



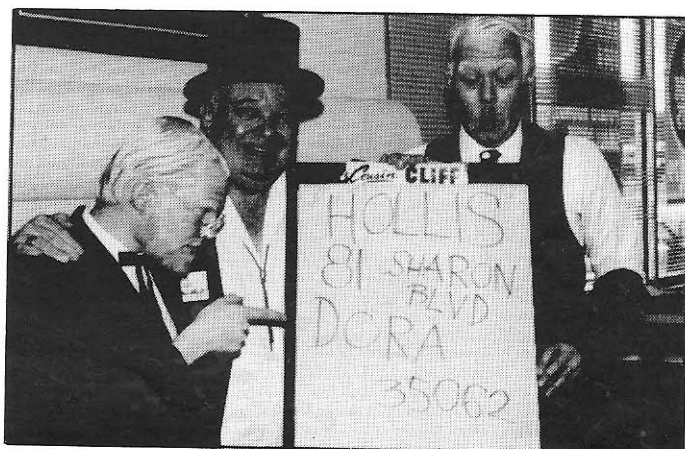
Chet Lauck Sr. was recognized by the Hot Springs Rotary Club this past summer for his years of effort in that organization's behalf. Chet Jr. participated in a ceremony dedicating a Paul Harris Fellowship in his father's honor. The honor is named for Paul P. Harris (1868-1947), a Chicago lawyer who organized the first Rotary Club in 1905. The fellowship represents grants which Rotary makes available for a variety of good works. Rotarians take part in community welfare, foster good citizenship, promote high business and professional standards, improve rural-urban understanding, and advance international peace, understanding and good will. Each year, the Rotary Foundation makes grants that give more than 500 young people an opportunity to study in other countries.

Our deepest congratulations to Mrs. Harriet Lauck, Chet Lauck Jr., Shirley Lauck Babcock, and the grandchildren and other family of the late Chester H. Lauck.

In a lighter vein, the characters of Lum and Abner - or an unreasonable facsimile thereof - have popped up on television in Alabama recently, to promote the NLAS!

Masquerading as L&A, "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford and Tim Hollis were invited to be the guests on four installments of *The Cousin Cliff Show*, each broadcast weekly during the month of August 1994.

Longtime readers of the *Journal* may recall that children's TV pioneer "Cousin Cliff" Holman is one of our charter members, and has promoted the NLAS repeatedly on his television program since 1984. It has long been his desire to have these "bogus" L&A impersonators on his program, so the two NLAS "ossifers" accepted his invitation, managing to (1) repay "Cousin Cliff's" generosity for his 1992 performance at our convention, and (2) promote the NLAS on his programs, which reach a state-wide audience through the Alabama Cable Network.



## "Cousin Cliff" Holman and the "Bogus Lum and Abner"

We are happy to report that Cliff survived a frightening accident that occurred during the taping of one program! "Let's bring Lum and Abner out," Cliff announced, but as Tim and Donnie made their way across the set, Cliff became tangled in microphone cables, spun about, and fell face-first into the hearth of a nearby fireplace, his props flying in all directions! "The next thing I remembered, it looked like an old man was trying to help me up!" (It was "Uncle Donnie" in his "Lum" makeup!!) After several tense moments, a slightly scuffed "Cousin Cliff" made it to his feet to complete that program and two others! "Boy howdy, it's a good thing I didn't fall in the other direction," Cliff quipped, "I'd have landed on the kids!" (Cliff's shows always have a "peanut gallery" on the set!) Tim, who authored a book on Cliff's career in 1991 (*Cousin Cliff - 40 Magical Years in Television*), had to wince when Donnie quipped, "your next book can be titled *The Rise and Fall of Cousin Cliff!*"

The NLAS thanks Cliff Holman for the privilege of appearing on his programs, and we deeply appreciate his generous promotion of the Society! And Cliff... watch those mic cables next time!

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

