

August 1995

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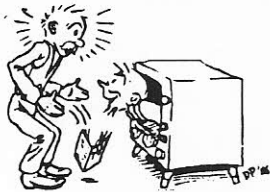
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Yes, right on schedule, we have released the latest volume in our ongoing series of books reprinting the unrecorded *Lum and Abner* scripts of the 1930's. The new volume is *The Lum & Abner Scripts - April 1936: Lum & Abner At The Kentucky Derby*.

When L&A obtain a new fire horse for Pine Ridge and then discover that the beast is a decent runner, they decide to enter him in the famous race at Churchill Downs. But the usual complications ensue: Can Abner stay on a diet long enough to bring himself down to jockey weight? What happens when Lum gets run over by the horse during a trial race with Snake Hogan? How will L&A raise the money to get to Kentucky? Can they depend on the rented truck Squire Skimp provides for them? Will Kentucky horse fancier Colonel Buckingham manage to swindle them out of their entry? This volume also contains a bonus script: a possibly unperformed routine meant to commemorate the changing of Waters, Arkansas, to Pine Ridge on April 26, 1936.

(There is another bonus as well. Due to a printing error, all copies of this volume contain two... count 'em, two... page 37's. Grannies!)

This is the fifth volume in our series of script reprints, and the price remains the same: \$5.00. Two previous volumes, *February 1936: Lum & Abner In New York* and *March 1936: Lum the Champeen*, remain available for \$5.00 each as well. (All earlier volumes are out-of-print.) Send orders to the Executive Secretary at #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062. 11-6-95

The Lum and Abner® Scripts



LUM AND ABNER® AT THE
KENTUCKY DERBY

APRIL 1936

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

August 1995

In This Issue:

THE NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY

Zekatif Ossifers

PRESIDENT

Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT

Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Tim Hollis

Cover: Parley Baer tolerates the antics of the three "Zekatif Ossifers," Singin' Sam Brown, Uncle Donnie Pitchford, and Tim Hollis, during the 1995 NLAS Convention in Mena. (See story, page 7)

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We get a full report, 60 years after the fact!



Parley Baer is reunited with his two old friends Lum and Abner (in the form of mannequins) in the Lum & Abner Museum in Pine Ridge, June 23, 1995.

Parley Baer's Uncommonly Good Career



What does *Lum and Abner* have in common with *Gunsmoke*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and the world of classic advertising characters? Well, if you cheated and looked at the title of this article first, you will realize that all of them are part of the career of talented character actor Parley Baer.

Most people who have an opportunity to ask questions of Parley inevitably start out by wondering about his name. He is quick to explain that at the time he was born his family was living in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the heart of Mormon country. "Parley is an old Mormon name," he says. "One of Brigham Young's right-hand men had the unlikely name of Parley P. Pratt. My father's name was Charles, or Charley, and he had an abhorrence for juniors. So a friend of my mother's said to name me Parley, since it rhymed with Charley." And that is that!

Although Parley worked in radio as early as 1933 on KSI Radio in Salt Lake City, it was actually the circus that brought him into show business. Completely fascinated by the world of the big top, Parley became a circus press agent in 1936, continuing his work until the advent of World War II. During that time he did everything from acting as ringmaster to performing with a wild animal act. While stationed in Florida for officer training, he met his future wife, Ernestine, who was an aerialist and bareback rider with the Cole Brothers Circus. They were married in April 1946.

It was also after the war that Parley began his network radio career. It has been estimated that Parley has appeared in over 15,000 radio broadcasts! A situation comedy called *Those Websters* was one of them; among its other cast members were Willard Waterman and Clarence Hartzell. Waterman would eventually play various roles on *Lum and Abner*; Hartzell, of course, was halfway between his roles of Uncle Fletcher on *Vic and Sade* and Ben Withers of *Lum and Abner*. The cast of *Those Websters* moved to Hollywood late in 1946, open-



ing up new opportunities for everyone.

It is known that *Lum and Abner* became one of the programs to utilize Parley's talents, but details are vague. Parley remembers the program well in its 15-minute daily format, but cannot recall whether he worked with L&A during that period or if it was after the show had gone to its weekly 30-minute format in 1948. We do have in our archives a recording of an audition or "voice test" he recorded for *Lum and Abner* in late 1948: in this test, he voices three different characters. One is a somewhat shady preacher, another a senile old codger who strongly resembles Elmore Vincent's portrayal of Phinus Peabody, and the third a slick horse trader. Any or all of these may have been prospective characters for the show, but we will not know for sure until we can hear more of the 1947-48 programs and the two seasons of half-hour shows. Stay tuned to the *Journal* for further developments!



The cast of the radio version of GUNSMOKE: Howard McNear (Doc Adams), William Conrad (Matt Dillon), Georgia Ellis (Kitty), and Parley Baer as Chester.



Parley tries to sell a sheep to Lucille Ball in an early episode of THE LUCY SHOW, 1962.

(It should be mentioned here that in 1950 Parley was cast in a short-lived summer replacement series called *Granby's Green Acres*. This series was created by former L&A writer Jay Sommers, and would eventually serve as the basis for the better-known *Green Acres* TV series. In the radio version, Parley played the role of handyman Eb... who, in the TV series, bore a striking resemblance to Cedric Weehunt.)

Parley's longest-lasting radio role began in 1952. On April 26 of that year (coincidentally, 21 years to the day since the first *Lum and Abner* broadcast), Parley became Chester Proudfoot of the new *Gunsmoke* radio series. Parley's portrayal of Chester differed somewhat from the character who would later be played by Dennis Weaver on the television series: "I would describe Chester as being a dependable non-thinker," says Parley. "Energetic, loyal, at times put upon by everybody but Matt Dillon. There was a pathetic tone written into Chester; he realized his shortcomings. He was simple, but not a simpleton." We might mention that Chester's surname was ad-libbed by Parley during one script, and stuck. However, when the TV *Gunsmoke* was in production, CBS felt that since Parley had "created" the name of Chester Proudfoot, they had better change it to protect themselves. Therefore, on television the character became Chseter Goode.

The other members of the *Gunsmoke* radio cast were among the best in the business. William Conrad, of course, gave voice to Marshal Dillon, while Georgia Ellis played dance-hall girl (and goodness knows what else) Miss Kitty. Doc Adams was hilariously portrayed by Parley's good friend Howard McNear, himself a *Lum and Abner* veteran (McNear had played such widely diverse roles on *L&A* as "Dr. Roller the Pest Controller," "Talbert" the store robber, and

"Detective Wilson" in the Mtn. View Hotel storyline).

Gunsmoke was a unique radio series in many ways, but one of the most unique was the fact that it did not actually "move" from radio to TV; the television version premiered in 1955, but the radio version continued for seven more years after that. Therefore, from 1955 to 1962, audiences could hear one cast of actors performing *Gunsmoke* on the radio, while watching another cast of actors performing *Gunsmoke* on TV. It is not clear why the TV producers never considered casting Parley and his fellow radio stars in their video version, but, as the old saying goes, "That's show biz."

Fortunately, the advent of TV did not leave Parley Baer idle. In fact, today he estimates that he has appeared in approximately 1600 to 1700 TV episodes, both as a regular and as a guest performer. He made several appearances on *I Love Lucy* and *The Lucy Show*, was "Darby" of *Ozzie and Harriet* from 1955 to 1961, and was a semi-regular on *The Addams Family* from 1965-66. But it was as apoplectic "Mayor Stoner" of *The Andy Griffith Show* that he is best known to TV fans of today.

For the first two *Andy Griffith* seasons, Mayberry's chief official was Mayor Pike, played by Dick Elliott (who, coincidentally, had previously been Squire Skimp in the last two L&A movies for RKO). When Elliott passed away, Parley was cast as the new mayor, and made his debut on October 15, 1962. Mayor Stoner was a cranky soul who was continually infuriated by the easy-going way Sheriff Andy ran his jail. In his very first episode, Stoner had a comical run-in with a wild bear; Parley remembers the show well: "A friend of mine named Frank Lamping was the one who had the bear, but when it came time to do the show, instead of a black bear he had brought a Himalayan sun bear! I asked him, 'What in the world is a Himalayan sun bear doing in the mountains of North



Mayor Stoner reacts to the musical ability of the Mayberry town band on THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW.

Carolina?" He whispered, 'Shut up, you fool, the other bear is working!' So that was probably the only time a Himalayan sun bear was ever seen in the North Carolina hills!"

Working on *The Andy Griffith Show* reunited Parley with his old buddy from *Gunsmoke*, Howard McNear (Floyd the Barber), but for some reason the two of them appeared together in only one episode... even then, they just happened to be in the same scene, with no interaction between them. Griffith show historian Richard Kelly has pointed out that economics was the main reason that kept Parley/Mayor Stoner from becoming a regular continuing character. The producers could only afford to put a certain number of actors under contract, and the character of the mayor was one that was expendable.

The rest of the 1960's were not exactly inactive ones for Parley. He continued appearing in every TV series imaginable, and even took time out for a few motion pictures, the most famous of which is probably *Gypsy* (1962), the biography of Gypsy Rose Lee. Other movies to feature his presence were *Air Cadet* (1951), *Drango* (1957), *Bedtime Story* (1964), *Two on a Guillotine* (1965), and *Young Billy Young* (1969). He also loaned his talents to several Disney features of the period, including *Those Calloways* (1965), *The Ugly Dachhund* (1966) and *The Gnome-Mobile* (1967, in which he voiced an animated owl).

In 1969, the Leo Burnett agency was creating a new adver-



Ernie Keebler's original design, 1969.



Today's "modernized" Ernie Keebler.

tising campaign for the Keebler cookie company. The new animated TV commercials would involve the lovable, kind-hearted Ernie Keebler, leader of the elves who lovingly baked cookies in their hollow tree. Parley was called in to audition for the voice of Ernie... for eight months! Finally he got the job, and is currently in his 26th year as Ernie's voice.

More TV shows and movies followed during the 1970's and 1980's. In 1993, he was cast in the daytime soap opera *The*

Young and the Restless in a storyline that was supposed to have run for six months; it was so successful that it ended up running for eight months.

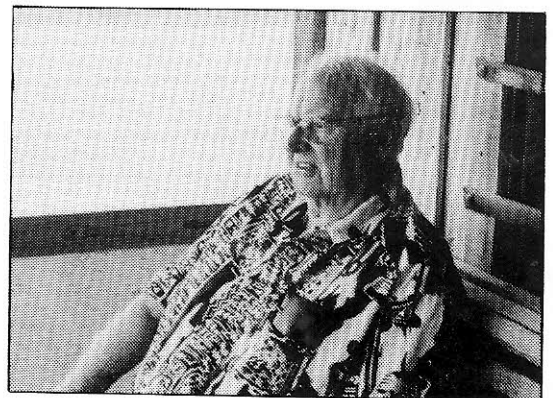
Parley has become a fixture of old-time radio conventions across the country. He was made an Honorary Member of the NLAS in 1988, but it took until this year for things to work out for him to appear in person at our annual convention. After performing in a newly-written script in which Lum dreams of being in Dodge City and helping Chester capture some bank robbers, Parley was presented with the 1995 Lum and Abner Memorial Award, not only for his work with L&A but for his countless other classic performances.

Parley says, "I could count on one hand... and have a few fingers left over... the shows I have NOT enjoyed working on." Everyone who knows Parley will agree that the feeling has been mutual, and that he is undoubtedly one of the most beloved performers of radio and TV history. It is our hope that we may enjoy his performances for many more years... they are uncommonly good!

- Tim Hollis



Parley Baer as he appeared during his successful eight-month run on THE YOUNG & THE RESTLESS, 1993.



Parley relaxes on the front porch of the Jot 'Em Down Store in Pine Ridge during the 1995 NLAS Convention.

LUM AND ABNER®

GO TO WAR



Welcome to the 23rd* and final chapter of this series, designed to chronicle the parallel histories of the *Lum and Abner* radio program and the World War of a half-century ago. (*The numbering of these chapters has been incorrect since April 1994!)

Let's go back to August and September of 1945. The citizens of the U.S.A. had waited long, painful years to hear the news that the war had ended! *Lum and Abner* was off the air for a six-week hiatus. There was a special program to commemorate V-E day (recently released on the NLAS cassette *The Alka-Seltzer Specials*), but no "special" has been found for V-J Day.

A Japanese message suggesting the possibility for negotiations prompted a conference at Potsdam, Germany in which heads of state of the United States, Great Britain and China issued an ultimatum on July 26, 1945 (*the Potsdam Declaration*), which called for unconditional surrender by Japan. Japan ignored these demands, and the United States decided to use the atomic bomb, which would make an invasion of Japan unnecessary. The aircraft "Enola Gay," dropped the first atomic bomb to be used in war on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Nagasaki was bombed three days later.

On August 14 (U.S. time), Japan agreed to accept the Potsdam terms. The surrender agreement was signed aboard the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2 (Tokyo time). President Truman proclaimed September 2 in the United States to be V-J (Victory Over Japan) Day, ending World War II three years, eight months and 22 days after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.

The very next day, Monday, September 3, 1945, *Lum and Abner* returned to the ABC Radio Network! The "Post-War Era" was upon Pine Ridge! An unknown, temporary announcer gets the ball rolling as L&A return from their vacation. Abner and Lizabeth have been visiting her brother Fred (who now lives in Cleburne, Texas instead of Mineola), while Lum is returning from Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin and his Aunt Minnie. Lum has a new business idea, but cannot get a word in edgewise as he competes with Abner, Grandpap and Cedric for "jawin' room:"

CEDRIC: Boy, have I got some news fer you fellers! Guess what, Mr. Lum! Guess what! TH' WAR'S OVER!!!

LUM: Well, that's ol' news by now, Cedric!

CEDRIC: Oh, I know it, but it happened while you fellers wuz gone, an' I wanted ta be th' first ta tell ya!

LUM: Well, I heared about it up in Wisconsin, th' same time you did.

CEDRIC: Well, I'll be doggone! Is it over up thar too? Things shore git around! Too bad you wudden down here fer th' main celebratin', though. Oh, th' town run wild that night! I don't b'lieve things quieted down 'til after 9:00!

GRANDPAP: Too bad you fellers missed out on th' vict'ry celebrate. Ol' Dad Foss blowed th' whistle on his popcorn stand fer two hours hand-runnin'!

Lum explains his "idie" to Abner the next day:

LUM: Ta begin with, th' Post-War World is here.

ABNER: It is, huh? Right here?

LUM: Yessir.

ABNER: 'Culiar, I hadn't noticed it; whur'bouts is it at?

LUM: Hit's ever'whur; 's'all around us!

ABNER: HUH?

LUM: Whut I mean is that th' war's over now...

ABNER: Oh, well, I know that, Lum, I heared that on th' raddio when I wuz down there in Cleburne, Texas! Me an' Fred got a telephone book an' tore it up in little pieces and jist strowed that thing ever'whur!

LUM: Yeah, I know, I know... but whut I mean is that, from now on, ever'thing's gonna be differ'nt. Th' scientifics world's gonna go ahead sump'm wunnerful. We'll live in differ'nt kinds o' houses, eat differ'nt food, use differ'nt kinds o' fuel an' all that.

Lum proceeds to tell Abner of vest-pocket furnaces, automobile tires that will last 25 miles after a puncture before blowing out, transparent "plastical" cars, and other projected inventions that are discounted with Abner's own brand of logic.

Lum finally gets his new business idea across to Abner on Wednesday: the partners will form "the Eddards and Peabody Split Atom Company!" They will package "split atoms" for sale!! Abner wonders as to why Lum wants to sell the split ones - wouldn't whole atoms bring more profit? Lum reminds him that split-pea soup is more expensive because of the effort it takes to split the peas! Abner's confusion over Lum's latest "cutting edge" interest continues, especially when he realizes the recent "anatomic bombs" were made from atoms! "Look whut it done ta them Japanese mans," Abner shouts, "here I been sa feared o' them things I been kiverin' up my head of a night ever' since I heared about 'em, an' I doggies, you wont us ta make th' things!"

Lum eventually convinces his partner that atoms are "th' greatest in-vention since the stereoscope," and can be used to power trains, automobiles, and entire cities!

Lum writes the "givermint war dee-partmint" to find out where to obtain "unsplit" atoms, and is soon visited by a gentleman from the "F, B an' I" who is determined to investigate this odd scheme. This leads to the program of Thursday, September 6, which has become a classic among L&A fans, sometimes nicknamed "The Crackup Show." Lauck and Goff get so tickled that there are periods of downright giggling and obvious ad-libbing. Just what caused this infamous "crackup" episode? Asked in 1985, writer Roz Rogers

recalled an incident in which the sound effects door toppled over after Lauck gave the rope attached to it a mighty tug; more than likely this was that very occasion! This is the most extreme case of giggles that exists in recorded form on the *Lum and Abner* program, and is always a delight to hear.

The end of the war brings about a change in job description for our old friend Cedric, who excitedly bounds into the store on September 10:

ABNER: Have you been give some new job over at th' war plant?

CEDRIC: New job? Ha! I practical taken over, I think!

ABNER: Well (laughs).

LUM: Yeah, I heared that Walt wuz plannin' ta take some changes over there at th' plant, since th' war's over, but I never 'lowed he'd make that much of a change!

Cedric brags that Mr. Bates had a talk with him, and paid him three times his normal salary! He then relates that Bates told him he was being... now, what was the word? Oh yes, Cedric finally gets it... reconverted! Lum informs the lad that this means his wartime job is over, and the extra money was his severance pay!

Work continues on the "Split Atom" endeavor, as Lum adds nitroglycerin to a mixture of heated water and dirt that he feels certain contains "u-ranium atoms." As you might imagine, the boiling mixture explodes in their faces! Learning that nitro is "fulla energy," Cedric, who is anxious to build himself up physically to "jine" the merchant marines, drinks a stiff slug of the potent chemical! Abner runs to fetch Lum, but in Cedric's place is a large, "Sam Bernard" dog, sitting near Cedric's cap!

Believe it or not, Abner is convinced that Cedric has been transformed into a dog by the nitro!! After all, the canine does resemble Cedric... he carries his cap around... Cedric (the "humming") is nowhere to be found around town... and Cedric (the dog) just loves peanut butter "sandridges"... chunk style!! Abner even takes the dog to Luke Spears' Lunchroom to try out the pinball machine! The dog leans on the machine and "tilts" it! Finally, the St. Bernard samples the nitro mixture, and Abner finds the "real" Cedric in his place!

Dashing away from the store, Abner doesn't take the time to learn the truth: Cedric left for Mena hurriedly (after drinking the nitro) on Wednesday the 12th; he had to rush to catch the mail hack. The dog simply wandered in, and Cedric returned coincidentally on Monday the 18th, just as the dog rushed from the store with the awful taste of nitroglycerin in his mouth!

Abner still isn't convinced of the truth, and Lum and Cedric have a little fun with him (Cedric starts barking!). Problems arise when the real dog returns, and runs off with the bottle of nitro! A mad search around Pine Ridge ensues, before the bottle is finally tracked down to a delivery truck which has returned to the Bentley-Starbuck Wholesale Co. in Mena! When Grandpap enters the store to tell L&A of a "big blowout at th' County Seat," Lum fears the nitro has exploded! It's a false alarm; Grandpap was only referring to a big celebration, the Polk County Cotton Festival!

The failures of his "Split Atom" experiments lead Lum to a pretended "narvis breakdown." Not even the return of announcer Gene Baker to the microphone on Monday, September 24 cheers him! We find Lum reclining on a counter in the store, moaning and groaning, taking a variety of patent medicines to soothe his "narves." (This routine was lifted from the script of Wednesday, April 15,

1936, which, coincidentally, is now available in our new volume, *The Lum and Abner Scripts: April 1936!*.)

Inflation and the economy are still major worries in the early Post-War World. On Wednesday, September 26, Grandpap expresses his fears of another Great Depression:

GRANDPAP: I'll never fergit th' De-pression after th' last war. Wiped me out overnight! Lost ever'thing.

ABNER: You never had nothin' ta lose, Gran'pap!

GRANDPAP: No, but if I hadda had, I'd o' lost it! Hate ta see th' country runnin' inta th' same spaven-legged thing, too.

LUM: Well, I ain't sa sure that we're goin' to, Gran'pap.

GRANDPAP: I don't know what'll ever stop it!

LUM: I'll tell ya what'll stop it: Me an' you, an' Abner here...

ABNER: HUH?

LUM: ...all of us - if we jist spend our money sensible, not go out and throw it away on stuff we don't need! Jist stick by all th' price con-trols 'til it's safe ta do without 'em. If we keep on savin' our money, and keep buyin' Vict'ry Bonds - if we jist do them few things, we'd be going a long way toward helpin' ta keep down inna-fla-tion! ...this is a more dangerous time fer inna-fla-tion than during th' war!

Lum's love life becomes the focus of the remainder of the month. Finding out that the school teacher, Miss Emaline Platt, has been dating his worst rival, Frank Foster, Lum makes an amazing recovery from his "breakdown!" Crashing a PTA social, Lum makes three a crowd as he horns in on Miss Emaline's latest outing with Foster. In a battle of brags, Lum boasts that he was a schoolmate of "Mr. Atchison," the president of the "Atchison, Toe-peek-oh and Santa Fee" railroad line! This backfires, as Miss Platt calls upon Lum to help her get a train ticket (still tough to obtain, since the war has so recently ended) to travel to her sister's wedding.

Lum's efforts to get a ticket fail dismally. He admits to Abner that he does not know a railroad president, and that he is "in love" with Miss Emaline (as if we didn't know)! As the *Lum and Abner* program airs its final broadcast for the month (Thursday, September 27, 1945), Lum has garnered enough courage to tell Miss Platt the truth, and returns to the store a broken man: she is extremely angry at the old fellow, and decides to resign her teaching job and leave Pine Ridge forever!

What a dismal situation to leave poor Lum in as we conclude both this article and this series! But cheer up, L&A fans, Lum's situation "im-proves sump'm wunnerful" in October 1945, as his romance with Miss Emaline really gets underway!

The programs discussed this time around are available on NLAS Cassette Library Tapes #180 - 182, and the \$4 cassette *The Alka-Seltzer Specials*.

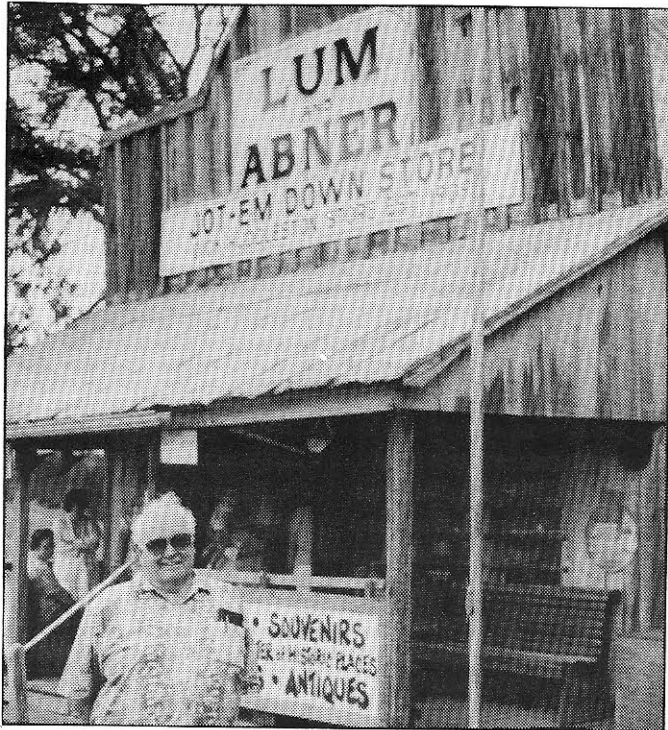
As *Lum and Abner Go to War* ends, allow me to thank some fine folks who have shared their memories and materials: Rev. Harold and Audrey Jones for the loan of World War II books, artist Harold Petersen for his excellent illustrations, Rex Riffle for a variety of World War II memorabilia, those in the NLAS who wrote in with corrections and comments, and Tim Hollis for writing the April 1993 chapter while I was hospitalized. I hope you have enjoyed this wartime visit to Pine Ridge, and stay tuned for a special Post-War story discovered (and illustrated) by member Kurt Jensen next issue! God bless you ...

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

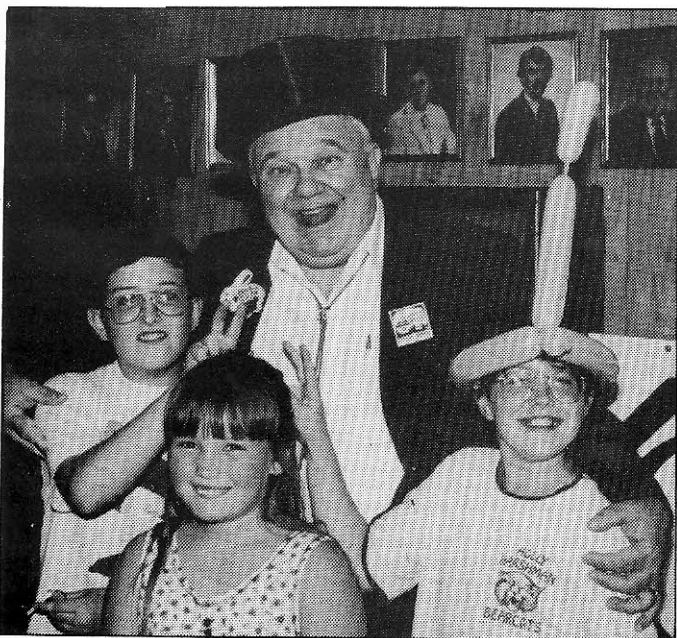


NLAS CONVENTION #11

with Special Guest Star **PARLEY BAER**
Saturday, June 24, 1995



*Parley Baer revisits Pine Ridge
for the first time! (Huh?)*



"Cousin Cliff" and some young assistants!

The 1995 NLAS Convention, while one of the most successful ever, was actually put together at the last minute, due to two family tragedies affecting the officers.

Exactly one month prior to the convention (May 24), Mr. Lynn Hollis passed away, after a brave five-year battle with cancer. Mr. Hollis was a guiding force in the formation of the NLAS, and assisted his son Tim in many aspects of the organization's daily operations. Due to Mr. Hollis' illness during the spring, the family doubted they would be able to attend, but in the weeks following his passing, Tim and his mother made the decision to travel to Mena, for which we were all happy. Mr. Hollis was something of a "dad" to the other "ossifiers," and was much loved and respected.

Exactly three weeks after Mr. Hollis' death, Frances Pearson, mother to Laura Pitchford, passed away following heart surgery. This tragedy occurred just over a week before the NLAS Convention, and Donnie's preparations were by no means complete. Days before the Mena event, the couple decided to attend.

Many thanks to those in the NLAS for extending their prayers and sympathy at this difficult time. The 1995 Convention was a great reunion for us all, in light of the sad events preceding it.

Parley Baer, NLAS Vice-President "Singin' Sam" Brown, "Zekatif Seckaterry" Tim Hollis, Tim's mother Kathleen Hollis, and TV entertainer "Cousin Cliff" Holman arrived at the old Dick Huddleston / Jot 'Em Down Store / Lum and Abner Museum in Pine Ridge, Arkansas on the afternoon of Friday, June 23, for the customary tour hosted by curators Lon and Kathy Stucker.

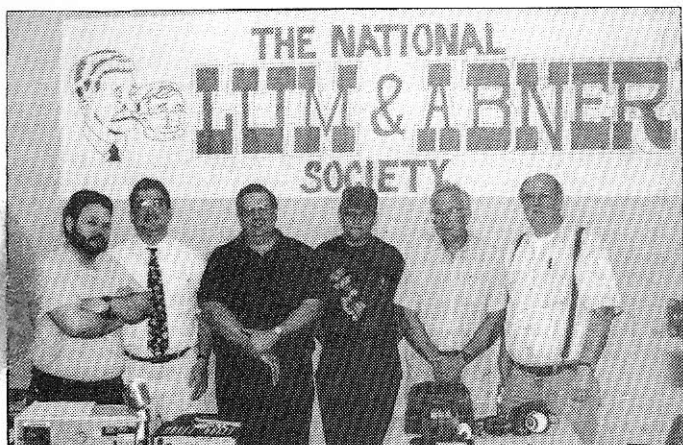
"Uncle Donnie" and "Aunt Laura" joined the group Friday evening after supper for a rehearsal of "Smokin' Guns," a new *Lum and Abner* script written "solo" by Tim Hollis.

Immediately thereafter, it was time for our precision-tuned set-up crew to begin work! (See the photo on page 8 - perhaps we should nickname them "the MACK-Millan Boys and Mother," or "Walt Bates's Sawmill Crew!") In record time, the meeting room of the Mena Best Western Lime Tree Inn was ready for NLAS activities! Greeting the conventioners Saturday at the sign-in table were Ted Theodore, Laura Pitchford and Debbie Brooks. Mike Brooks assisted with videotaping, as he has since 1990. We are thankful to these fine folks who volunteer their time and "muskles."

The "Morning Matinee" program was kicked off by the return of Alabama entertainer and children's TV pioneer "Cousin Cliff" Holman, whose first NLAS appearance was at our 1992 convention. Cliff performed an assortment of magic tricks using youngsters from the packed audience, and concluded his segment with his "assistant," Parley Baer, becoming his subject in a "mind reading" trick.

A surprise guest was Scott Lauck, a grandson of Chet "Lum" Lauck, who also joined us in 1985 and 1993. Thanks, Scott, for your enthusiasm!

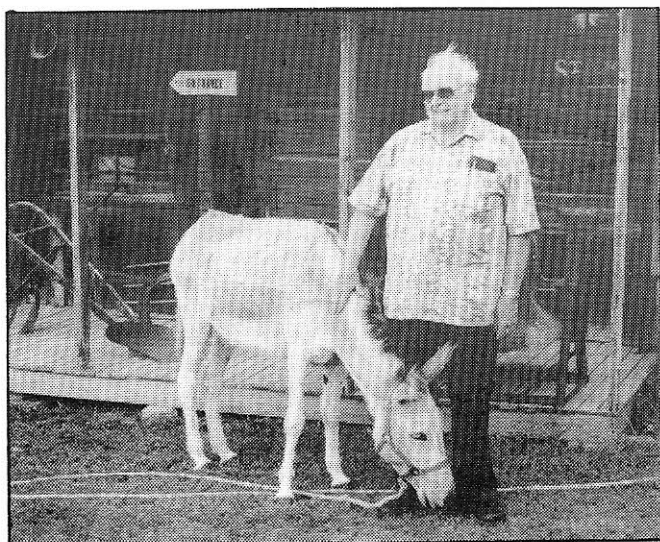
Every good "pitcher show" needs a cartoon, and this year we spotlighted the MGM production *Tom Turkey and his Harmonica Humdingers* (see the June 1995 issue of the *Journal* for a compari-



The NLAS "Set-Up Crew," left-to-right: Mike Brooks, Leonard Kohl, Jim Temple, Lewis Temple, Charles Thurman and Jim Adams.



"Hey, Parley," says "Cousin Cliff," "watch me pull Ernie Keebler outta my hat!"



Deputy Chester Proudfoot, ready to mount up and ride with Marshal Dillon!

son of this delightful animated short with the *Lum and Abner* program). "Singin' Sam" Brown arranged for us to have a huge "big screen" TV this year, since all our offerings were on videotape.

Next on the bill was a travelogue recently titled *So This is Hot Springs*, produced circa 1970, narrated by Chet Lauck, and made available to us by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Department of Special Collections.

Since next year's convention will celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Partners in Time*, L&A's sixth film, the NLAS produced a new, entertaining "trailer" for the movie, using the humorous slogans coined by the RKO publicity department for their press book. Who better to deliver lines like, "Lum and Abner come through superbly with a heartwarming gem of sentiment" and "rockin' with rural ROARS!" than actor Les Tremayne? Les recorded these lines for us, and everything came together beautifully in the editing process. Thank you, Les and Joan Tremayne!

And what a feature film the NLAS presented! It was film number seven for L&A, which proves once and for all that seven is not always lucky! While it has its good moments, *Lum and Abner Abroad* is certainly not the "best" of Lum and Abner, but for L&A fans, it is still interesting. Sorta. I think. (In our October issue, we will present an updated look at this production.)

While NLAS members jumped aboard the mail hack to visit Pine Ridge Saturday afternoon, the "ossifers" and "crew" assembled in the meeting room with Parley Baer to woodshed the script in a "tech" rehearsal to tune up the timing and sound effects.

At 7:00 p.m., the final program was underway. SPERDVAC's Ted Theodore set the mood with his guitar and vocal performance of the classic *Martins and the Coys* song. In addition to SPERDVAC (the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy, P. O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 90409-7177) other nostalgia and OTR organizations were represented: Jim Adams of the Chattanooga Old Time Radio Club (832 Kay Circle, Chattanooga, TN 37421), Mike and Debbie Brooks and Leonard Kohl of the Popeye Fan Club (1001 State St., Chester IL 62233), and Bill Bragg, founder and curator of the National Museum of Communications, and the president of the Yesterday USA Radio Network, which celebrated its annual Family Reunion by including the NLAS Convention as part of its activities! (Write to Yesterday USA, 2001 Plymouth Rock, Richardson, TX 75081)

Guest of honor Parley Baer made some opening remarks, after which the audience was treated to a classic *Gunsmoke* clip, courtesy of Leonard Kohl. This led directly into a "radio first" of sorts: "Smokin' Guns," or "Lum and Abner Meet Chester!" Like all episodes of *Lum and Abner*, this one had a sponsor - the NLAS itself! Parley Baer was cast as "Charley Ware," a poor soul who cannot sleep, not even with the help of the products from previous L&A sponsors: Postum, Horlick's Malted Milk and Alka-Seltzer! Only the "in-depth, scholarly articles" of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* put poor Charley to sleep! "Uncle Donnie" served as announcer in this spot, followed by "Singin' Sam's" impersonation of good ol' Dick Huddleston, setting the stage for the program.

Lum (Tim Hollis) arrives at the store just in time for Abner (Donnie Pitchford) to tune in a *Gunsmoke* episode on the radio. Lum drifts off to sleep, to discover he and Abner have been transported back to the days of the Old West, where they meet Chester Proudfoot (Parley Baer), deputy to Marshal Dillon! Without divulging too many of the gags, let me reveal that these three heroes face the notorious gang of "Sidewinder" Skimp (old "Uncle Donnie" again)

without the help of either Matt Dillon (Tim) or "Doc" (Donnie), but with the assistance of "Singin' Sam" Brown's live sound effects, and Tim's recorded ones!

A closing NLAS commercial (featuring Parley, with Tim as announcer) poked hilarious fun at SPERDVAC, the Popeye Fan Club, YUSA and the NLAS. The glorious Mighty Wurlitzer rendition of the L&A theme song *Eleanor* (recorded in 1988 at the Alabama Theatre) closed this "new" episode of *Lum and Abner*. What fun!

Bob Flood of YUSA wrote a special poem for Parley, who read it for everyone in his distinctive voice. A beautiful composition conjuring visions of Dodge City and its citizens, it left everyone misty-eyed.

The TV career of Parley Baer was sampled via video clips from episodes of *I Love Lucy*, *The Lucy Show*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Addams Family*, *Quantum Leap*, *The Young and the Restless*, the Walt Disney animated classic *Paul Bunyan* and the theatrical film *Dave*. Parley told wonderful anecdotes about each during pauses, and answered questions from the audience afterward. Of course, there were samples of Parley's Keebler commercials, and "Aunt Laura" and Debbie Brooks supplied the audience with plenty of Keebler cookies and milk - "uncommonly good" refreshments!! Just ask "Ernie Keebler" himself! (Incidentally, on the Monday morning following his return to California, Parley was back in the recording studio as Ernie again, joined by country music singer Clint Black for a series of Keebler radio spots!)

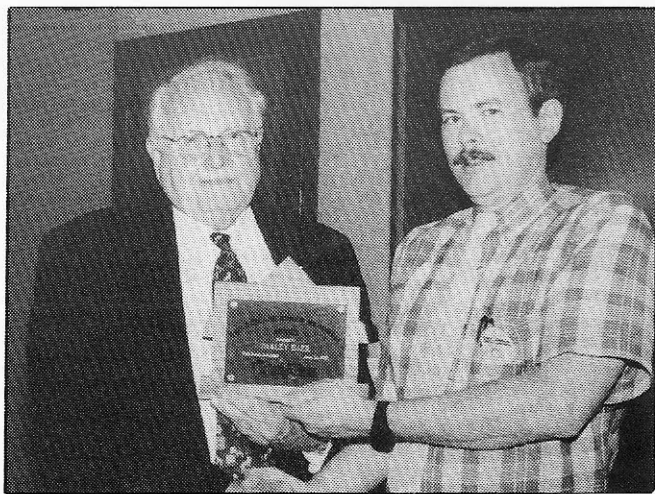
Awards time! Parley Baer joined the distinguished list of recipients of the Lum and Abner Memorial Award (first presented 10 years ago to actor Clarence Hartzell and writer Roz Rogers), while Cliff Caplinger (for the second year in a row) won the award for the NLAS member who traveled the greatest distance to attend - all the way from Inyokern, California. His father was Warren "Cap" Caplinger, leader of the "Pine Ridge String Band" on the old "Friday Night Sociable" editions of *Lum and Abner*. (Stewart Park, who was not an NLAS member, came to Mena from Canada - he joined after the awards were given - maybe he'll be back next year to try again!)

As all NLAS conventions must, the 1995 edition came to an end. As our own "Pine Ridge String Band" assembled, fiddle-player Troy Boyd quipped, "after you hear this, you'll know why they put us at the tail-end of it!" Accompanied by Ted Theodore on guitar, Mr. Boyd fiddled the opening strains of *They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree* (as he has done for us since 1989) and the roomful of conventioners joined in for the traditional sing-along!

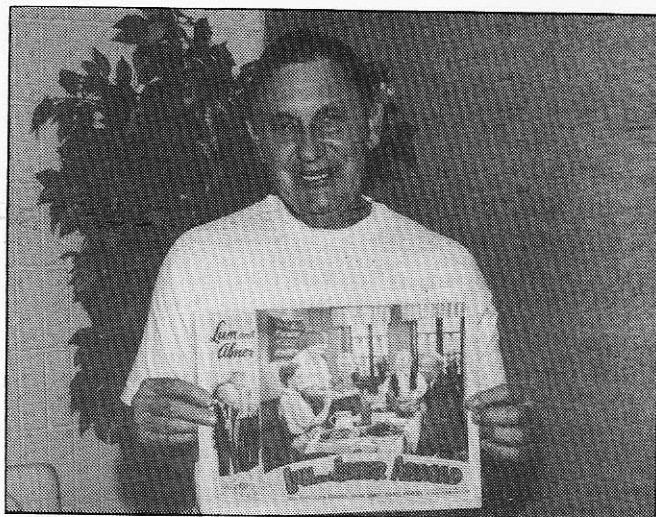
There was time afterward for visiting and autographs - lots of autographs! Many thanks are due to the folks at Keebler for supplying us with colorful Ernie Keebler key-chains.

And afterwards? You've not lived until you've sat in a hot, noisy, crowded Mena Pizza Hut with a group of NLAS "ossifers" and friends, eating pizza (that took much too long to prepare), and listening to a great collection of show-biz stories related by Ernie Keebler himself, who paused long enough to sign autographs for the waitresses. "You don't even know who I am!" Parley teased a young lady. "Sure I do," she replied, "you're Ernie Keebler!" ...and he sure is! Thanks, Parley - and thanks Mrs. Baer, for letting Parley come "play!" We're sorry Mrs. Baer couldn't be with us - maybe next time! And thanks to all of you who attended! Join us again next year, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Partners in Time*!

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford



Parley Baer (the young guy on the left!) receiving the "Lum and Abner Memorial Award."



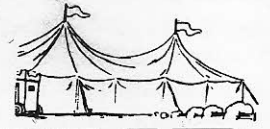
Cliff Caplinger wins again! His prize was a selection of lobby cards from "Lum and Abner Abroad."



Ted Theodore and Troy Boyd saw down that "Ol' Pine Tree" one more time!



Lum and Abner® at the



INDIANA STATE FAIR



At the Indiana State Fair, August 1935: Norris "Abner" Goff and Chet "Lum" Lauck appear at second and fourth from the right, respectively. At far right is their longtime friend Jerry Hausner, who served as emcee for their State Fair appearance and provided us with this rare photo.

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Sixty years ago this month, Lum and Abner were featured headliners at the annual Indiana State Fair in Indianapolis. Very little exists to document this appearance, but the September 4, 1935, issue of THE MENA STAR did contain the following eyewitness report on their act, submitted by former Mena denizen Goldie Ratliff.

Saturday, August 31, was the beginning of the Indiana State Fair, and was also quite a gala night for two boys from Mena.

The Indianapolis Star and the State Board of Agriculture sponsored an amateur contest, to be held in the Coliseum at the fairgrounds. And out of the world of headline radio stars, Lum and Abner were the unanimous choice to act as masters of ceremony. There they were, keeping the audience laughing and applauding from beginning to end.

Lum said he felt just like Major Bowes; and Major Bowes, with all his experience, couldn't have carried an amateur contest off with more poise or ease, or have conducted a more successful one. They had all of the "hand-slapping"

(as the Pine Ridge two express it) that a most exacting favorite could have desired, from the time they were drawn up to the stage in a little covered wagon pulled by two big black oxen. They were then Lum and Abner in all their regalia. At the last of the show, they finally came out on the stage as Chester Lauck and Norris Goff, two nice-looking young fellows from Arkansas.

All during the show, Abner was trying to enter the contest and sing *Just a Bird in a Gilded Cage*. Lum would keep stopping him. He would leave the mike, but would each time come back in a new and funnier disguise. Once he was a little old lady in a big red plaid dress and sunbonnet. The audience cheered wildly as he sang almost through *The Bird in a Gilded Cage*, before Lum got a chance to take off the poke bonnet and prove to himself that it was really Abner. Next, he came back as an admiral of the Navy, with a Durante nose, funny blue uniform, big plumed hat, saber and all. He kept Lum at his distance with drawn sword until he sang most of his song again. The winner of the amateur contest was to be the one who received the most applause. Abner the songbird

got that, but since he wasn't a contestant, the cheering had to signify a very successful master of ceremonies.

It is a wonder the boys do not get writer's cramp from doing so much autographing. The show was to have been over at 10, but it was after 12 before we left. Chet and Tuffy both said they were awfully tired, but they looked extremely happy, too. One of our papers here has this to say of them:

"In the space of four short years, Lum and Abner have emerged from the practical obscurity of a small Arkansas town to join the ranks of the highest-salaried stars in the radio world today. They are rated one of the best backwoods philosophy bets on the air. Not bad for the Mena lads, not bad at all; and they are also putting that small Arkansas town on the map."

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HELP! Can any of our Indiana members locate any more information on this State Fair appearance by L&A? Check your local libraries for microfilm of newspaper coverage, etc. Let us know of anything you find!
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