

October 1995

In Memory Of
Harriet Lauck
1907 - 1995

The National Lum and Abner Society was saddened by the death of Mrs. Harriet Lauck, widow of Chester "Lum" Lauck, on July 12. Although ill for a number of years, Mrs. Lauck had been an enthusiastic booster for the NLAS ever since its formation in 1984.

Mrs. Lauck is survived by her daughter, Shirley Babcock, and her son, Chester Lauck Jr., along with eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and the legions of Lum and Abner fans who appreciate her family's work.

As Harriet Wood, she was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on December 10, 1907. She married Chester Lauck on September 1, 1926, some five years before the events that would eventually propel them into the world of big time show business when *Lum and Abner* became a network radio offering in 1931.

During the program's run, Harriet became known to the rest of the show business community for her hospitality. A 1949 magazine article about the home life of the Laucks and Goffs commented: "The Laucks do a lot of entertaining in a casual way. Harriet says they tried once or twice to give big parties in the Hollywood manner, and think their guests probably enjoyed themselves. But the Laucks didn't. They didn't have time. So now they have small dinner parties, which they serve buffet style... with no more than ten or twelve people who know one another well and have a lot in

common. If the weather is good, Chet will roll the portable barbecue into the patio and broil a lot of stripper steaks, Harriet mixes an enormous salad, and they both still have time to get in on the good talk."

Listing the friends the Laucks had in Hollywood would fill up pages, but some of their closest associates were Don Ameche, Robert Stack, Clark Gable, Robert Young, and Andy Devine. Harriet became a successful interior decorator, working among these and other friends. For many years the Laucks also maintained a large ranch outside Las Vegas, Nevada; today, the property is preserved as Spring Mountain Ranch State Park.

Harriet and Chet left Hollywood in 1955, eventually settling in Hot Springs, Arkansas, ten years later. In retirement, Chet made many trips as a guest speaker while Harriet continued her interior decorating career. After Chet Lauck's death in February 1980, Harriet slipped into retirement while battling a number of crippling health problems. In 1987, the National Lum and Abner

Society presented her with the Lum and Abner Memorial Award in honor of her contributions to L&A history.

We will certainly miss Harriet Lauck's presence, and extend our deepest condolences to her family. She was a prime example of the old adage that behind every great man is an equally great woman!



LAUCK FAMILY COLLECTION

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

October 1995

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Cover: Harriet and Chet Lauck & Tuffy and Elizabeth Goff arrive for the premiere of an unidentified Hollywood motion picture, circa 1946. Photo by Gene Lester for *Silver Screen* magazine; Courtesy of UALR Dept. of Special Collections.

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SPECIAL NOTE

Due to the special nature of this issue as a tribute to the late Harriet Lauck, our scheduled discussion of *Lum and Abner Abroad* has been delayed until the December issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*.

Harriet Lauck:

HER LEGACY TO THE NLAS

During the first 10 years of the NLAS's existence, Harriet Lauck proved to be one of our most valuable sources for information about the history of *Lum and Abner* and *Chet & Tuffy's* careers. It must be realized that she, along with Elizabeth Goff, was one of the only people still living who could vividly remember the very first broadcast from station KTHS in Hot Springs. She recalled that during the first broadcast, "the station broke down, and they thought that maybe they were so bad the station had just turned them off!"

When asked about the way Lauck and Goff's minds seemed to work together as one, Harriet replied, "It was so spooky. One of them would start a silly conversation, and the other would automatically pick it up. They could talk for hours, really saying nothing, but amusing each other. I can't tell you how many parties they spoiled by doing this... entertaining each other, and everyone else was just sort of there."

She had some interesting comments to make about the way Chet and Tuffy actually thought of the characters of Lum and Abner: "They thought... probably Tuffy did, and I know Chet did... of Lum and Abner as two other people. That was not Chet out there doing that, it was Lum. And I know that, because they would talk about them that way. They were a strange pair; I remember one time after we moved to Texas, a lot of time went by and they didn't see each other. Finally we went out to California, and the first night we were there we were going out to dinner with Tuffy and Liz, and Chet had on a black-and-white checkered sports coat. When we went to their house, Tuffy had on a black-and-white checkered sports coat just like it. Without having seen each other in two years, here they were wearing the same outfit! And that's the way their minds were. They just sort of thought the same."

Of course, it was a big jump when the Laucks and the Goffs uprooted themselves from their comfortable lifestyles in Mena to leap headfirst into the world of network radio in Chicago. But even that was not as drastic a change as when the two couples made the big move to Hollywood in 1937. Harriet explained why their move was so comparatively late in coming: "For a long time, no radio shows originated in Hollywood. Chicago was the farthest west they went. Finally, somehow or another the networks made arrangements to broadcast from Hollywood, and a lot of the shows moved out there. All of the big bands

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left Chicago, and so forth. Amos 'n' Andy went to California, and then we decided to go there too. I guess it was the glamour of living in Hollywood that prompted so many; I know it did us."

As stated elsewhere in this tribute issue, they soon became friendly with many of the other celebrities in the entertainment capital. To hear Harriet tell it, apparently in those days even the biggest movie and radio stars were infinitely more "down-to-earth" than today's celebrities. Hobnobbing with them seemed to be completely natural for these couples from the western Arkansas hills. "Sometimes on weekends, we used to go to what they called 'Deep Well Ranch' in Palm Springs, where they had individual cottages," Harriet said. "There would be three or four of us couples down there, like Andy and Dogy Devine and their two boys, or Tuffy and Liz and Chet and I, or the Ameches, or Jack Benny and Mary... the picture changed from weekend to weekend, because you never knew who all was going to show up."

Even 40 years after the fact, Harriet still took obvious pride in talking about their ranch near Las Vegas. "When we bought it," she said, "there were a lot of little buildings on it, but we built the big main house ourselves. The only hired work done was by a father and son from Italy, who had been shipbuilders. All of the cabinets in the kitchen were built like ships' cabinets, with a small piece of wood along the edge to keep the dishes from sliding off!"



NLAS Vice-Prez Singin' Sam Brown presents Harriet Lauck with the Lum & Abner Memorial Award, June 1987.



Harriet & Chet Lauck in the living room of their mansion in Brentwood. This photo was made for a 1949 magazine spread about the home lives of the Laucks and the Goffs.

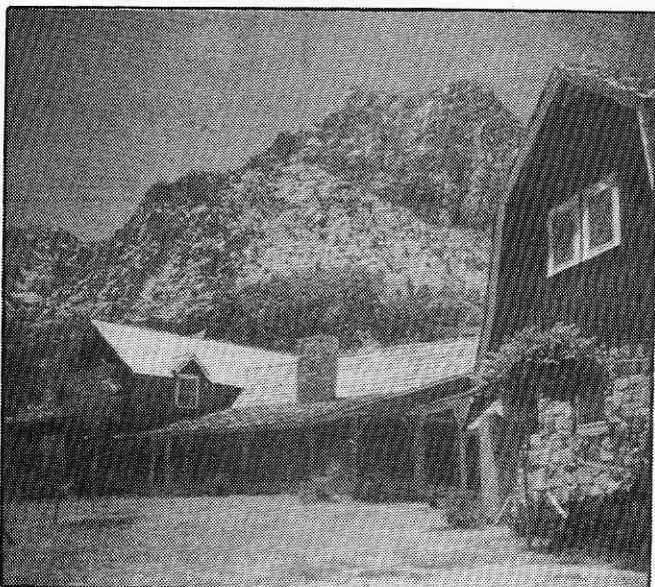
But, she also observed, "It has changed quite a bit since it was ours, and it's not good to go back to something you've put a lot of love into."

She did relate one story about the ranch that seems to have missed its spot in most of the history books. On a January day in 1942, movie star Carole Lombard (Mrs. Clark Gable) was killed when the airplane in which she was riding slammed headfirst into a mountain near Las Vegas. That mountain was located on the Lauck property! Harriet told a group of NLAS Ossifers and friends, "The day it happened, Chet himself was flying to the ranch in a private plane. When people started calling me and asking me if I had heard what happened, I thought something had

happened to Chet's plane! But when he got there, he called me back and told me about Carole Lombard's plane... and Chet was the one who drove Clark Gable to the crash site."

It would be hard to top a story like that, but Harriet Lauck had dozens of them. This brief overview has only scratched the surface, but it gives a good indication of the wealth of information that could be gleaned from talking to her. We were certainly fortunate to have known her and had the opportunity to interview her, and it is certain that her presence will be missed. It is for that reason that we say this issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* is formally dedicated to the memory of a great lady, Harriet Wood Lauck.

- Tim Hollis



The Laucks' Bar Nothing Ranch near Las Vegas; today it is known as Spring Mountain Ranch State Park.

For the third annual National Lum and Abner Society convention in 1987, Harriet Lauck recorded a special audio tape to be played during the festivities. The following are her comments on the world of LUM AND ABNER and its enduring popularity.

Since this is the first time the Convention has been held in Mena, I thought I might tell you a little about our Mena days. We lived there about five and a half years, and had built a home... when we left, we had a little girl, Shirley May, two and a half years old. We moved to many places and met lots of wonderful people, but none as nice and gracious as those in Mena.

We are all glad the National Lum and Abner Society has enjoyed so much success. Chet and Tuffy would have been very proud of the enthusiasm you all have shown for the show over the years. I am happy that the Lum and Abner Society continues to gain in membership, and I wish this very special group of people continued success in the future.

LUM and ABNER® IN THE NEWS

REPRINTS OF PAST LUM & ABNER ARTICLES

In searching through the NLAS Archives for material worthy of this issue's tribute to Harriet Lauck, one newspaper article stood out above all the rest. This piece was written by Betty Woods, the Ladies' Editor of the Little Rock *Arkansas Democrat*, and published in that paper on February 4, 1977. It gives us our most comprehensive look at Chet and Harriet Lauck, and presents many of Harriet's views on their life together and their accomplishments. We firmly believe that it is a fitting memorial to this great lady.

LAUCKS CELEBRATE 50 YEARS

Life in Hollywood in its golden years was much like life in Hot Springs today for Harriet and Chet Lauck, who recently celebrated 50 years of marriage.

"It infuriates me when people call Hollywood of that era sinful," Mrs. Lauck said. "People there were just like people here. And in those days... 1937 through 1955... movie

stars could ruin their careers by ruining their reputations. If there was any hanky-panky it was most discreet."

The Laucks had their circle of friends in California as they do now in Hot Springs, and the entertaining was the same.

"We got together at small dinner parties for eight or ten. But, of course, there were times when we attended the big bashes, what I call 'stand up and yell at each other' parties."

Harriet and Chet said that the divorce rate in Hollywood was no higher than the divorce rate anywhere else. "And among our friends, it was low. Many are still married to their



UALR ARCHIVES

Chet and Harriet Lauck on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary, 1976.

first mates."

Their intimate friends in the movie capital included Betty and Bob Young, Clark Gable, Gail Patrick, Tyrone Power, Don Ameche, Loretta Young, Ray Milland, Mary and Jack Benny, Gracie and George Burns, Dogy and Andy Devine, Barbara Stanwyck and Bob Taylor, Delores and Bob Hope, and Marian and Jim Jordan (Fibber McGee and Molly).

And how did a guy from Mena and a girl from Hot Springs end up in Hollywood? Through the popular radio comedy team of Lum and Abner.

Lauck is Lum, and Abner is Norris Goff, who is now retired and living in

Palm Desert, California, with his wife. The two couples keep in touch.

Chester H. Lauck was born in Alleene, Ark. You know where that is. If you don't, he'll tell you: "One mile from Ashdown, six miles from Arden, and eight miles from Mineral Wells."

The family moved to Mena when Chet was six. After graduation from the University of

Arkansas at Fayetteville with a degree in art and graduate work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago, he returned to Mena, where he went into the finance business.

In 1931 Chet and Norris ("Tuffy," Chet calls him), friends since childhood, hit upon the idea of a comedy act with country store characters. They tried it out on a Hot Springs radio station, where it was a popular program with much fan mail.

Encouraged, the pair went to Chicago, where a big sponsor... Quaker Oats... grabbed them immediately. *Lum and Abner* was on the air until 1955, when Chet and Tuffy



UALR ARCHIVES

Harriet & Chet Lauck, Tuffy & Elizabeth Goff visit with Mr. & Mrs. Don Ameche, circa 1937.

closed their Jot 'Em Down Store.

The comedians were called to Hollywood to make seven films while originating their show from the coast. They still receive residuals when these relics play on the late show.

When the act first was formed, did it make the young partners nervous? "We didn't have sense enough to be scared," Chet laughed.

Harriet and Chet were married before his show business career began. They tell how they met:

"I went to Fayetteville one weekend with Ham McRae of Helena. Finals were over and everyone was letting down. It seemed a good time for a post-graduate visit. One of my fraternity brothers at the Sigma Chi house became ill and asked us to pick up his date, Harriet Wood, at the Pi Beta Phi house and take her to the dance that night."

The two young men reported to the house, called for Harriet, and cooled their heels. "I crept down the stairway, looked at the two young men and decided I didn't know either of them, so I went back to my room," Harriet remembered.

Finally, they were able to convince her to let them escort her. And for a while that was the end of that.

Harriet was home in Hot Springs. One of her friends was going with Tuffy. He was driving up from Mena but didn't want to go alone, so he called his girl and asked her to get a date for Chet with Harriet.

"I had a date that night with a guy from Little Rock, but it was no big deal so I canceled it." Harriet stopped

for a moment. "Funny... he never called me again."

Tuffy and Harriet's friend broke up. Their double-dating friends were married September 1, 1926.

The Laucks had three children. Their daughter, Shirley Babcock, lives with her husband Dwight, a building contractor now semi-retired, and their three daughters in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. Their son, Chester Jr., lives in Hot Springs and is associated with John Cooper Co. at Hot Springs Village. He has a son, Chet III, now 3. The Laucks lost their other daughter, Nancy, in an automobile accident in 1954.

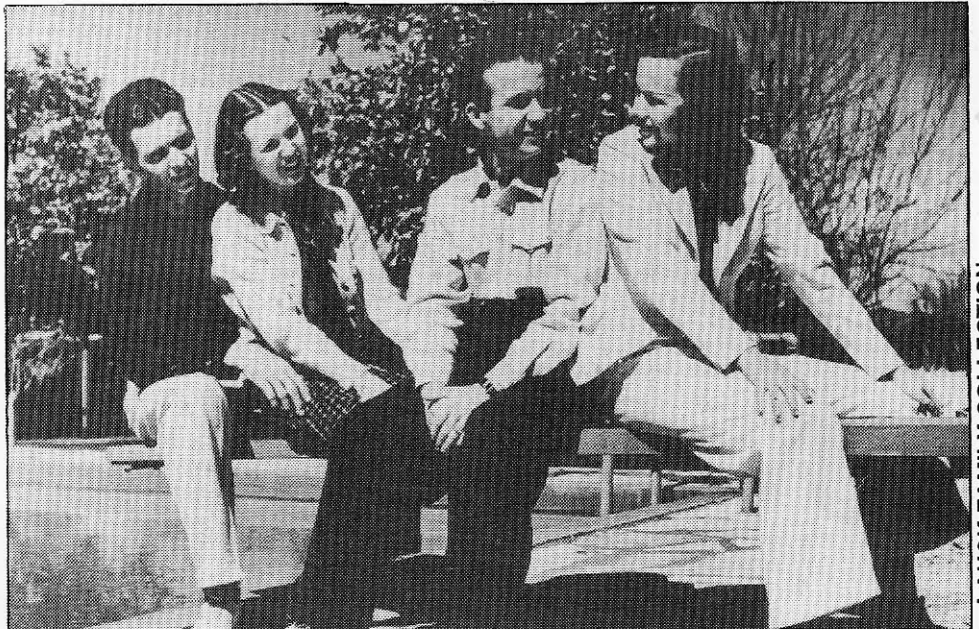
Nancy's son, Mike Mertens, was reared by Harriet and Chet from the age of 2. He is now married and farming near St. Rose, Canada.

But the children grew up in Hollywood and on the 256,000-acre ranch Chet bought 25 miles from Las Vegas. What did he raise on the ranch?

"Cattle, no crops. The land was so poor you couldn't raise a fuss on it."

Although their official residence was in Hollywood, the Laucks spent every available moment on the ranch and actually lived there for a year and a half.

"It was wonderful for all of us,"



LAUCK FAMILY COLLECTION

The Laucks and the Goffs cavort in a typical pose for the Hollywood celebrity magazines, circa 1940.

Harriet said. "We had a large house with five bedrooms. The living room was 60 feet long, and we had a total of 6,600 square feet in our home."

In 1955, the ranch that had been home for 16 years was sold when Chet retired from the movies and became an executive with Continental Oil Co. at Houston, Tex. The buyer was Vera Krupp, later divorced but then the wife of Alfred Krupp, the German munitions magnate.

Mrs. Krupp later sold the ranch to Howard Hughes and his wife, Jean Peters, who lived there for some time before selling it to a man in Los Angeles who wanted to develop the property for condominiums. The state of Nevada intervened, buying the land and home for a state park. It is now being restored to the home that Harriet and Chet lived in.

During their film career, Chet and Tuffy were sent to Zagreb, Yugoslavia, to make a picture. Arriving ten days early, they went to the resort coastal town of Opatija with the film's writer. "I always like to be able to speak the language wherever I am," Chet said. "So we got a young lady who tutored children to teach us a few basic phrases."

Chet and the writer were having dinner at the hotel when they saw their young teacher at another table. "I walked over and in my best Serbian asked how she was. Everyone at the table collapsed in laughter. I couldn't understand why until the next morning when I picked up the Zagreb newspaper. There on the front page was a picture of me and a story about my previous evening's conversation. It seems that what I had said to the lady was I

am a chicken soup."

Harriet remembers Chet's European work well. "He left for six weeks and they kept him for three months. Every bit of our mail was censored, and a great deal of it didn't get through. I had only three or four letters the whole time."

While the Laucks were still in Houston, they bought a home on Lake Hamilton in 1966, spending weekends and holidays there. In 1967 Chet retired and the lake house became home.



Harriet Lauck and Elizabeth Goff pose with their famous husbands for a radio fan magazine article in 1936.

L&A MUSEUM

After Mike grew up and left his grandparents, the four-bedroom house became too large. "We rattled like two peas in a bucket," Chet said.

The Laucks sold their large home to Harry Leggett of Little Rock and built a smaller home two doors down. Between Chet's home and the Leggett home is the residence of Chet's brother, Dudley. Their sister, Ellen Boswell, and her husband Garland live in Hot Springs too. "It's the first time we've all landed in one place since we were children."

Chet still travels quite a bit as a professional after-dinner speaker and in interest of the syndication of the old *Lum and Abner* tapes. But Harriet is too busy to accompany him. She has her own interior design business, working by appointment only. She is

a member, the only one in Hot Springs, of the American Society of Interior Designers.

She started her career in California in 1950. When they moved to Texas, she thought she had retired. "But one of my friends wanted me to decorate her home. Then her friend wanted me to decorate her home... you know how it goes. The same thing happened here. It's just like eating popcorn. Once you start, you can't stop. But my work is fascinating. I'm always learning from my clients."

So what do the Laucks do now in their leisure time?

"We stay home a lot," Harriet said. "We are real television fans." What are their favorite programs?

Chet answered that one. "*The Waltons* and *Family Affair*." Harriet laughed. "Chet nearly died when *Bonanza* was canceled."

They also are avid sports fans, watching

football and golf on television. Harriet enjoys the sports programs, too. Said Chet: "It's a good thing she does. This marriage wouldn't have made it 50 years if she didn't."

Chet Lauck recently resigned after three years as chairman of the Arkansas Racing Commission. He has been a member of the commission for five years, a political appointment.

These former residents of Hollywood... are they movie fans today?

"We haven't seen a movie since *Patton*," Chet said. "But there are a few I'd like to see: *Jaws*, *King Kong*, and *Noah's Ark*. But let's face it... I'm still big on *The Perils of Pauline*."

LUM and ABNER[®]

Mind Somebody Else's Business PART ONE

During the 1930's and 1940's, most of the leading radio-related magazines featured, in addition to their usual line of articles and photo features about radio performers, original short stories that were concocted strictly for magazine publication. These stories would be based on various radio series, but for the most part had nothing to do with any actual plotline that had been used on the air. That is the case with this *Lum and Abner* short story, which was published in *Radio Mirror* in December 1945. We are reprinting it in two parts over this and the next issue of the *Journal*, as its postwar theme goes hand-in-hand with the conclusion of our "Lum & Abner Go To War" series. Our thanks to NLAS member Kurt Jensen for discovering and donating this story, and for providing the illustrations that accompany it.

Things had been very quiet all day at Lum & Abner's Jot 'em Down Store and Library. The party line phone had rung three times for Mrs. Ward, down the street, but the first two times it had just been Mrs. Ward's eldest daughter, Annie Miller, asking her mother what to do about the new Miller baby's habit of sucking his thumb. The third time, Abner didn't even bother to listen in. Lum was checking over the store's stock in an aimless sort of way, and Abner was thumbing through a new batch of books they'd gotten in for the library from the auction up at the old Sumner place.

"Here's one looks pretty good, Lum," he announced, holding up a brightly colored book. "Still got the paper cover onto it, too. Called *Sink or Swim— Or, Never Too Late To Learn.*"

"Uhuh," said Lum from behind a shelf. "Who wrote it?"

"How do I know? Oh, yeah... it says right here. Feller by the name of Alger... Horatio Alger. You know him?"

"I heard tell of him. Pretty good writer. Likely the young folks will enjoy the book. Put it out in front."

"Yep, I'll do that," said Abner, and went on sorting books.

It was about that time that the front door opened and a young man walked in a little uncertainly. Abner put the books down and whispered hoarsely to Lum.

"Psssst! Lum! Cash customer!"

Lum hurriedly made a check mark in his inventory book, indicating that the store was down to its last two bags of rock salt, and joined Abner in staring at the newcomer. Then he straightened up and began to smile.

"By grannies, Abner," he said, "that ain't no customer... that's Harry Johnson, home from the war. How you doin', Harry?"

The young man's handsome face brightened, and he stepped toward them with his hand outstretched. "For a minute there I was afraid you didn't know me," he grinned, showing a dimple in his left cheek. "I'm fine. How're you?"

"Tolable, Harry," said Lum, taking his hand and pumping it vigorously, "right tolable. I swan to goodness... it's fine to see you."

"I guess we kinda expected to see you in one of them there Major's uniforms," said Abner, reaching out his own hand.

"Oh, I got rid of that, first thing," said young Harry.

"You ain't even wearin' a discharge button," said Abner, looking him over closely. "I thought you had to."

"Nope," said Harry. "I'm out of the Army, the war's over, and nothing's required any more. The discharge button went into the ashcan along with the uniform. And good riddance, too. No more of that military junk for me. From now on, I'm just plain Harry Johnson... and darn glad of it."



"Yeah," said Abner, puzzled, "but how about all them medals... that DFC and the Silver Star we heard about, and all them locust leaf clusters? Ain't you goin' to wear 'em?"

"Oak leaf clusters," amended Lum and then, as he noticed the dark grimness that was gathering on the young man's face, he went on hurriedly. "Leave him be, Abner. Maybe he don't want to talk about it. Maybe he's just glad to be home."

The dark look lifted from Harry's face, and he turned to Lum gratefully. "That's right, Lum. I'm just glad to be home. I never want to hear about the war again... it was enough to last me for two lifetimes." His voice thickened. "And, most of all, I want to quit remembering those empty beds in the barracks after a mission." He turned his head away for a moment, and his throat worked oddly.

"We know what you mean, Harry," said Lum softly, "and I can't say as we blame you. Well, the mill will likely be glad to have you back. They been short handed ever since the war started. You ought to be able to get a right good job over there now."

"My old job is good enough. In fact, it's got to be the old job or none at all. I want it to be like it was only yesterday that I left."

"But, Jimineties, Harry," objected Abner, "your old job didn't amount to a row o' pins. Pushin' carts and stuff around! Anybody could do that. It was all right for a young kid just startin' out, but you been gone four years now and you're growed up. You oughta get somethin' better."

Harry's jaw tightened, and the lines that appeared in his young face gave him a strangely old and weary look. "It's those four years I want to forget about," he said sharply. "I want to wipe 'em right out. And the only way I can do it is to pretend they never happened. I want to pick up at the mill right where I left off... as though there hadn't been any time in between. Can't you understand that?"

Lum motioned Abner to be quiet and hurriedly cut in. "We understand, Harry. Course you'll probably find there've been some changes out at the mill... but everybody's got to do things their own way. And you sure earned the right to do things your way for a while."

Harry relaxed. "Thanks, fellas. And... let's change the subject. What's been going on down here lately?"

Abner looked at Lum, and Lum nodded imperceptibly. "Well," he began cautiously, "Annie Miller's got a new baby. I hear it's takin' to chewin' on its thumb all the time, but likely it'll get over that.

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And Squire Skimp's finally puttin' some new shingles on his roof. And Mose Moots is usin' some new-fangled kind of bay-rum a drummer sold him a few weeks back. Gettin' so everybody has a haircut these days comes out smellin' like Granny Masters' lilac bush. What else, Lum?"

Harry was smiling delightedly now, so Lum joined in. "The County put in a new bridge over the Mill River and now there ain't no place for the kids to sit when they go fishin'. They're mighty upset about it. Oh yes, the young Sumner boy got a good job out in Denver, so the Sumners had an auction couple weeks ago and moved up to Denver, lock, stock an' barrel."

"Yeah," interrupted Abner eagerly. "And we got a bunch of new books for the library from the auction. Maybe you'd like to read one of 'em, Harry... looks like a humdinger to me... called *Sink or Swim*. Brand new author feller, too. Lum says he's pretty good." He held the book out to Harry, who looked at it and tucked it under his arm, his eyes twinkling.

"It sure is good to be back," he said. "And now I guess I better be shoving off. Got to get out to the mill and see about my job and then find out if my old work clothes still fit. Be seeing you."

He opened the door. Lum and Abner said goodbye and watched him as he closed it softly behind him and walked off.

With Harry a safe distance away, Abner shook his head and sighed. "What do you s'pose is eatin' on him?"

Lum shrugged his shoulders. "Seems plain enough," he answered. "He just got too much of the war and now he wants to forget it. Can't blame him for that, can

you?"

Abner sighed again. "I guess not. But he's goin' to have his troubles. Folks are goin' to want him to tell about all those German planes he shot down, and they ain't goin' to understand about him goin' back to work at the mill in his old job. Gee whilikers, Lum, that boy's a hero! He's been writ up in the newspapers. They said he was an Ace. He was the leader of his whole squadron. He can't just throw all that in the junk heap and go back to bein' a mill-hand."

"Well, that's what he's plannin' on," said Lum, "and I guess folks'll have to take it, whether they understand it or not." Then his eyes narrowed and he looked at Abner speculatively. "Say, Abner, ain't Betty Holden workin' up to the mill now?"

"Yeah," said Abner, "she's doin' secretary work for the manager. What's that got to do with it?" Suddenly, his face lighted up. "Say, that's right, Lum. Harry used to be sweet on her, didn't he? D'you reckon she'll be able to talk some sense into him?"

Lum got out the inventory book again. "You can never tell," he said.

But the reports that came into the Jot 'Em Down Store and Library during the next few weeks about Harry Johnson weren't any too good. Folks said he'd gone queer-like. They said he got a blank look on his face when they talked to him, and wouldn't answer questions. They said he'd lost all his ambition and would probably end up as nothing but an unskilled mill-hand till the day he died. They said they were beginning not to respect him any more.



One day Betty Holden came in for a library book. There wasn't anybody else in the store, so Lum edged over and started talking to her.

"How're things out to the mill, Betty?" he asked casually.

"Pretty good, Mr. Edwards," she replied. "We've still got so many orders we can't fill them, but we're doing the best we can."

"I hear young Harry Johnson got back his old job."

"Yes," she said, and slid a look at him out of the corner of her eyes.

"How's he makin' out?"

Her pert little nose twitched ever so slightly. "I really wouldn't know, Mr. Edwards."

Lum had expected something like this. "Now, Betty, you don't need to get on your high horse with me. I've known you ever since you were knee-high to a grass-hopper. And I know how you and Harry used to feel about each other before the war. Betty, I'm worried about that boy. Both Abner and me are worried. I thought you might be able to help us figure out what to do about him."

She looked straight at him then, and the pert little nose wasn't twitching now. Instead, the corners of her mouth had turned down despondently and a quick moisture gleamed in her eyes. "Oh, Mr. Edwards," she said, "I wish I knew what the matter was. He hasn't been out to our house even once since he got back. I tried to ask him about it one day... jokingly, you know... and he said that I'd gone up in the world so much, being Mr. Ellis' secretary and all, that I was too good for a mill-hand any more... that I'd changed so much he'd never catch up with me."

"Well, this is the way we figured it, Betty," said Lum slowly. "He wanted things to be just exactly the way they were before he went away. He thinks he can be the same person he was four years ago, and I guess it bothers him because other people ain't exactly the same. He's tryin' so hard to forget those four years that he don't want to admit to himself that other people have been livin' right on through them. He's kinda like that old king in the fairy story that tried to hold back the tide just by holdin' up his hand."

"I guess so," Betty nodded miserably. "It's sort of like that combat fatigue you read about in the papers all the time. Lots of times they don't even know they've got it. It just gives them peculiar ideas, and they think it's all very reasonable. I think the worst of it all is Al Middleton."

"What about Al Middleton?"

"Well, he's just back from overseas, too, you know, and he's foreman at the mill now. He was a Corporal in the Infantry,

and according to him the Infantry didn't think much of the Air Force... especially Air Force officers. He says they were a bunch of 'Glamor Boys.' Anyway, he makes fun of Harry all the time, and pushes him around every chance he gets. He says Harry may have been a fighter pilot and a Major and all that, but the war's over and now he's back where he belongs... working in a

mill as a day-laborer. And the horrible thing about it is that Harry seems to agree with him. He never talks back. He just shrugs his shoulders and does everything Al tells him to."

She choked back a sob at this. "It just makes me kind of sick to my stomach, Mr. Edwards... it really does. Harry is a lot smarter than Al will ever be. But you'd never know it out at the mill these days. He's like a zombie, that's what he's like... a zombie!"

Lum patted her on the shoulder sympathetically. "I can see how it'd be kinda hard for you, Betty. But I don't think we can do much about it for a while. Just wait and see what happens. What is it they say in the Army... 'sweat it out'?"

After Betty had gone, Lum sat down and tried to figure it out, but the more he thought, the more mixed-up the whole thing got. It just didn't make sense. There was Harry... as bright a boy as Pine Ridge had ever turned out. The Army had recognized that, and had promoted him as fast as they could... had given him a lot of responsibility and a big job to do. And then there was Al Middleton. He'd never been very long on brains or ability. He was no master mind, and evidently the Army had recognized that too. He hadn't gotten any farther than Corporal.

But now, suddenly Al was Harry's boss



and was gloating over it. And Harry accepted the whole thing as right and natural. Just because Al had quit school in the eighth grade and had gone to work in the mill instead of going on to high school, he had reached a higher position there than Harry could in the short time he had put in at the mill. But did that make Al smarter or more able than Harry, just because he had a better job? Lum didn't think so.

Harry was a better man than Al Middleton, any day in the week. He'd bet his right arm on that. But if Harry didn't think so, how could it ever be proved? Lum sighed, and went to get the broom to sweep off the front sidewalk. Folks sure could get their lives mixed up, he decided.

He didn't have any occasion to change his mind about that, either, during the next few weeks. From all he and Abner could find out, Harry was still behaving just the way he had when he'd first come home... going to work doggedly every day, doing his job... no more and no less... and taking orders from Al, no matter how insulting or inefficient those orders might seem. Everybody in town was beginning to accept the fact that the Army had ruined Harry. Everybody but Betty and the proprietors of the Jot 'Em Down Store and Library.

(TO BE CORN-TINUED!!)

Phil Harris, 1904 - 1995

Musician, comedian, and broadcasting legend Phil Harris passed away on August 11, 1995, at the age of 91. While most of his obituaries concentrated on his many years of work with Jack Benny and his later fame as the voice of several Disney animated characters, it is true that he was also a good friend of Chet Lauck and Norris Goff. Harris had been an Honorary Member of the NLAS since 1986.

Harris's association with L&A was more on a personal level than a professional one. As far as actual appearances with them, he had only one cameo role in their first feature film, *Dreaming Out Loud* (1940), in which he played a fast-talking bath salts salesman. The part was so minor that, when asked about it years later, Harris had only the vaguest memory of even doing it. On November 4, 1951, Norris Goff appeared solo as Abner on Harris's radio program, *The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show*. The NLAS has the script for this broadcast, but no recording has surfaced as yet.

In an interview, Harris explained how he got to know Lauck & Goff: "I met them first in Chicago," he said, "I was playing theaters

at that time during the summer while we were off the [Jack Benny] show, and they happened to be playing at the same theater. This was way back in the 1930's. Then they came out here to California to do their show, and Tuffy and I both built houses in Encino, even using the same architect! We were very close; Tuffy and Andy Devine and Clark Gable and I all lived within a radius of about two miles of each other, and we all had horses and liked to ride."



"We were all pretty busy in those days," Harris continued. "When we did get together, we'd go to each other's home for dinner. We'd go to Andy's one night, go to Tuffy's one night, go to Clark's one night, come to my house one night... When we got a chance, we'd look forward to quail season or duck season or fishing."

Harris concluded his reminiscing by remarking, "I still miss them both, especially Tuffy, because we lived so near to each other. I just look around sometimes and think he's still there." We are sure the same can be said for Phil Harris himself; our sympathy is with his wife Alice Faye and their whole family.

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