

June 1996



THE SEVEN
Lum and Abner®
 MOVIES

are available on video!

*Dreaming Out Loud • The Bashful Bachelor
 Two Weeks To Live • So This Is Washington
 Goin' To Town • Partners In Time
 Lum & Abner Abroad*

\$29.95 each

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

VISIT

**The Jot 'Em Down Store &
 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) 326-4442



LINGERS ON!

In our February 1996 installment of the "Lum & Abner and the Great American Roadside" feature, we reported that the Lum's Restaurant in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, was the last remaining vestige of that chain when it closed sometime within the past ten years. Well, we are pleased to report that you members have come through again, and at least eight Lum's locations have been documented as still in operation! Inasmuch as they appear in small groups, apparently they are the remnants of former franchise areas whose owners continued to operate the eateries after the chain itself had gone bankrupt in 1982 (not 1984, as we originally reported).

In traveling about the country, should any of you wish to visit a Lum's, the known current locations are as follows:

ILLINOIS:

PEORIA - 1621 N. Knoxville Avenue; 603 N. Western;
 4712 N. University
 PEKIN - 3500 Court

NEW YORK:

PLATTSBURGH - 474 Route 3

VERMONT:

SOUTH BURLINGTON - 1705 Williston Road
 RUTLAND - 239 S. Main Street
 SHELBURNE - 1951 Shelburne Road

Our thanks to NLAS members **Robert Olsen** and **Shirley Bentley** for helping us out in our quest for the whole story! Additional thanks go to **Linda Lou Crosby** for identifying the anonymous "Jot 'Em Down Store" photo that appeared in our last issue. Linda tells us that it is indeed a store in Olancho, California, which is still in operation. We will try to have more information on this in our next issue!

The Jot 'Em Down Journal, Volume 12, Number 6 (Whole Number 72), June 1996. Published bi-monthly by the National Lum and Abner Society. Membership, including a subscription to the Journal, is \$10.00 per year. Send editorial and subscription correspondence to the Executive Secretary, Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062.

THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

June 1996

In This Issue:

**THE NATIONAL
LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**

Zekatif Ossifers

PRESIDENT
Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT
Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Tim Hollis

The Timeless Partners In Time	4
A 50th anniversary salute to the last RKO L&A film	
We Say Goodbye	9
Two more L&A associates leave us	
L&A & the Great American Roadside	10
The story of the Lum & Abner Country Stores	
The 1996 NLAS Convention	12
To quote Snuffy Smith, "Time's a-wastin'!"	

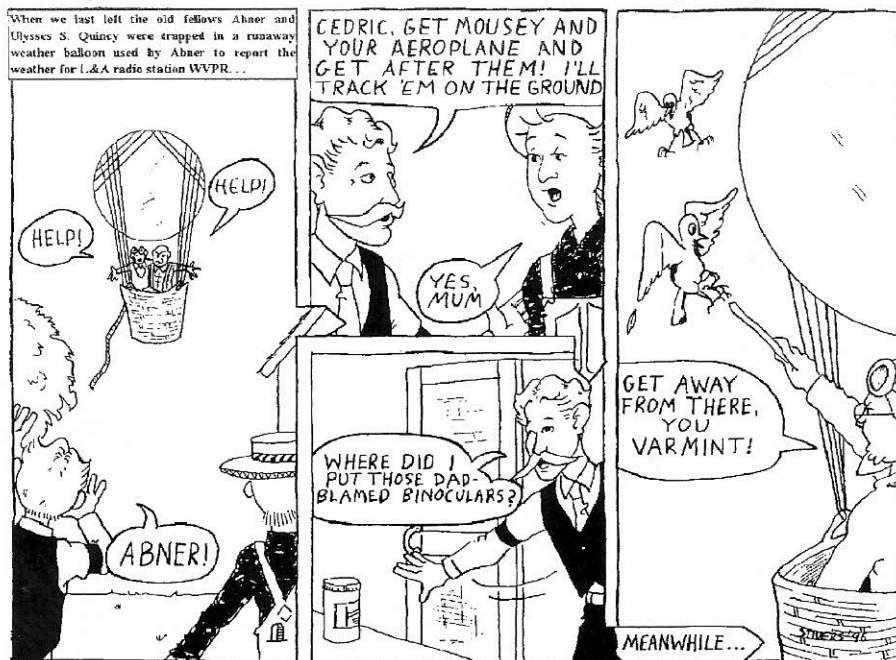
Cover: Lum (Chester Lauck) restrains Abner (Norris Goff) from doing bodily harm to Squire Skimp (Dick Elliott), as crook Charles Jordan looks on, in a tense moment from *Partners In Time* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946).

All illustrations are from the NLAS Archives, except as follows. Page 4, center, Page 6, top R: Courtesy of Pamela Blake Canavan. Page 5, top, Page 10, bottom: Courtesy UALR. Page 6, bottom L and R: Courtesy Lum & Abner Museum. Page 9, bottom R: Courtesy Miles Laboratories.

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

The Golden Era

by Gary Stivers



THE TIMELESS PARTNERS IN TIME

In the summer of 1945, Lum & Abner fans in Cleveland, Ohio, were given a sneak peek at what was coming up for the two radio codgers. *Cleveland Press* radio columnist Stanley Anderson interviewed Lauck & Goff's secretary, Velma Hausner, who was in town to visit friends. She gave Anderson a scoop: "The biggest news about Lum and Abner," he wrote, "is that they are about to go into production on their sixth movie. This one really will be different. For the first time, Lum and Abner will appear as themselves. In fact, the picture will be about their rise in the radio world. This movie story should involve Cleveland in some way, for it was here the team worked for three years..."

Well, either Anderson or Velma misunderstood, or some drastic changes took place, because the movie to which they were referring was released in the spring of 1946 as *Partners In Time*. It was indeed a Lum & Abner biography of sorts... but of the fictional characters, not the real-life actors behind them! It was also one of their finest moments on the silver screen.

There is much to be discussed regarding *Partners In Time*, so perhaps the best way to start is with the film's story. This plot was summarized thusly in the movie's original RKO Radio Pictures pressbook:

"Coming down bright and early to open the Jot 'Em Down Store, Lum and Abner (Chester Lauck and Norris Goff) meet pretty Janet Marley (Teala Loring) and her war-veteran fiancé, Tim Matthews (John James). Janet is inclined to call off the engagement and



Chet Lauck, Norris Goff, and Pamela Blake make like a circa 1904 tintype for this publicity shot.

(Pamela Blake), a box social in the old fire hall, the beginning of the partnership with Lum. Finally, as Janet and Tim listen entranced, the old boys find documentary evidence that they are the rightful owners of the store, and the Squire's client is a fraud. But Janet is so impressed by the recital of love and laughter in the Pine Ridge of forty years ago that she decides she'll stay and make a home for Tim after all."

To be perfectly honest, *Partners In Time* is probably the least comedic of any of the L&A features. Its closest competitor in that department would be the first entry in the series, 1940's *Dreaming Out Loud*, but even that film's



decidedly somber plot of a young girl's hit-and-run death is tempered with stock L&A comedy bits. In *Partners In Time*, the comedy that does exist is a low-key, nostalgic type; the main thrust of the picture is a sentimental recounting of Abner's courtship and marriage.

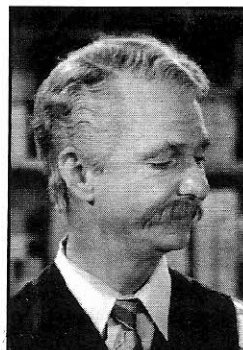
To most viewers, whether they be in 1946 or 1996, the most incredible aspect of this picture is its extended 1904 flashback sequence. To portray the L&A of 40 years earlier, all Chet and Tuffy had to do was appear without their makeup and use their natural speaking voices. Seeing this in conjunction with scenes of the 1946 L&A in full makeup can be quite a jolt. The oddest thing is that the Young Lum and the Young Abner use perfect grammar; it is never explained why their speech deteriorates into hill country dialect as they grow older! (Young Abner: "Elizabeth Meadows and I are to be married next wek." Old Abner: "Yeh, me an' Lizabeth's been married 40 y'ars!") Not only that, but no attempt was made to give the Young L&A any of the personality quirks so familiar to their fans; Young Lum is not egotistical or power-crazy, and Young Abner is a rather dapper fellow who probably never thought of saying "HUH?" in his life.

Like many movies based on preexisting books, *Partners In Time* makes drastic changes in L&A's past as hinted at in the radio programs. Whereas the radio L&A often discussed the times they had growing up in Pine Ridge (undoubtedly based on Lauck & Goff's lifelong friendship), in the movie the pair met while they were both in military service during the Spanish-American War! It is not specified as to what city or state Young Abner hails from, but he expresses a definite apprehension and ignorance about the small-town ways of Pine Ridge.

The revelation that L&A opened their Jot 'Em Down Store in 1904 cannot totally be credited to the screen writers. As we mentioned in the April issue of the *Journal*, the store was actually a late introduction into the radio series, coming into the storyline some two years after the show began on the air. However, within just a few years of that, the radio L&A began treating the mercantile establishment as if it had been in business for decades... obviously counting on the listeners' short memories. (In one of the 1953 radio episodes, the store celebrates its 40th anniversary AGAIN, now having been opened in 1913!)



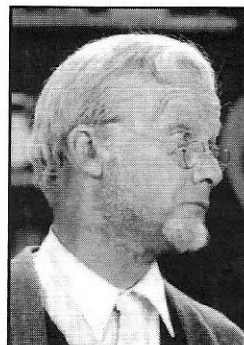
Lum Edwards,
1904



Lum Edwards,
1946



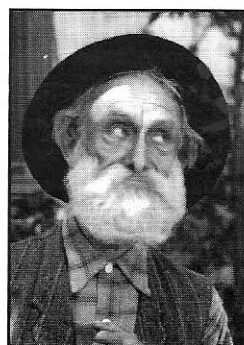
Abner Peabody,
1904



Abner Peabody,
1946



Grandpappy Spears,
1904



Grandpappy Spears,
1946

Perhaps the biggest departure from radio comes when the plot reveals that prior to Young Abner's arrival in town, Elizabeth Meadows was Young Lum's sweet intended. True to his bashful bachelor image, he has been dating her but has never been able to get up the nerve to propose to her. When he introduces her to the Young Abner, he has no idea that a romance is going to ensue. During the store's grand opening ceremonies he plans to present her with an engagement ring... but comes on the scene about 10 seconds too late, as Young Abner makes the joyful announcement that he will be marrying the beautiful young girl next week! Visibly shaken, Lum presents the ring to the happy couple: "I knew Abner wouldn't think about getting one."

The story's emotional high point (or low point, depending on whose view you mean) comes when Young Lum, who is supposed to be best man at the wedding, is called into service as justice of the peace to perform the ceremony, as the regular minister is trapped by a swollen river. Chet Lauck, as Mr. Edwards, chokes back tears as he marries his best friend to his own near-fiancé, adding "May I say that... I've never seen a lovelier bride..."

A few minutes later, this whole sequence of events is thrown into another light as the 1946 Abner comments to Lum, "Doggies, if I hadn'ta known better, I'da thought you was in love with Lizabeth yerself!" "I did lay it on purty thick, didn't I?" chuckes Lum. It is only after Abner and Tim have retreated to the back of the store that a misty-eyed Janet confronts Lum face-to-face: "You loved her yourself... terribly, didn't you,

Uncle Lum?" Lum's only response is to bow his head and put a finger to his lips. It seems amazing that Lum could have managed to keep this emotional scar a secret from his partner for 40-odd years, but that is what we are asked to believe here.

It should be mentioned that the whole Lum-Abner-Elizabeth unrequited love story was itself based on a series of 1937 radio episodes. At that time, Lum was courting the local schoolteacher, Evalena Schultz, when a young city slicker named Spud Gandel breezed into town. (Spud was originally played by Chet & Tuffy's friend Jerry Hausner; the part was later taken over by Goff in a close approximation of Hausner's voice.) Before you can say "If that don't beat the bugs a-fightin'," Spud and Evalena are engaged, and a shaken Lum is having to perform their

wedding. The wedding scene in *Partners In Time* is almost a word-for-word recreation of the August 13, 1937 radio episode (available on Tape #H-35 of the NLAS Tape Library), even down to Lum's "lovelier bride" comment.

The casting in *Partners In Time* is about the best of any of the L&A features. The film's pressbook gives brief biographical information on the major players, which bears repeating here. About Dick Elliott, who was making his second and final appearance as Squire Skimp, it says: "A graduate of M.I.T., he never made use of his sheepskin. He immediately went to work on the stage and toured the country for two years in *Way Down East*. For the last 36 years he has been on the stage or screen. He has played in most of the theatres in the United States, but never on the stage in the town in which he was born, Salem, Massachusetts. He has been in Hollywood pictures for 13 years." We should add that Elliott went on to many television appearances, finally being cast as Mayor Pike of Mayberry during the first season of the *Andy Griffith Show*. He died in 1962.

Another radio character to play a major part in *Partners In Time* was Grandpappy Spears, played for the third time by Danny Duncan, whose voice was already familiar to the radio audience as Pine Ridge's cranky town marshal Uncle Henry Lunsford. As to Duncan's background, the pressbook reads: "Dan Duncan has a Hollywood career that keeps him busy seven nights a week. He is one of the featured comedians in Ken Murray's famed *Blackouts*, which has played at the El Capitan theatre in



The advertising for PARTNERS IN TIME made the common mistake of placing Pine Ridge in the Ozark Mountains, rather than the Ouachitas.

Hollywood continuously for the last seven years. Paducah, Kentucky, is the birthplace of Duncan, who started his stage career as a kid doing specialties on the showboats that plied the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers. From there he went into vaudeville. He is 49 years old and has never appeared on the screen in any picture but a Lum and Abner."

(Due to that last sentence, let's get off the track for a moment and do a little arithmetic. Apparently, even without makeup, in the 1904 sequences Lauck, Goff, and Duncan were playing roles much younger than they really were. Think about it: in 1946, Chet Lauck was 44 years old, Tuffy Goff was 40, and Danny Duncan was 49. Adding 40 years to those ages would make the 1946 Lum 84, Abner 80, and Grandpappy Spears 89. These ages seem a little advanced for the characters, don't they?)

The third radio character... sort of... to play a pivotal role in *Partners In Time* is Elizabeth Peabody herself. The reason we say "sort of" is that the portrayal of Elizabeth by the beautiful Pamela Blake is quite hard to reconcile with her (offstage) radio characterization of a dour farm woman.

This schizophrenic interpretation of the character extends into the movie itself; in the 1904 scenes, Young Elizabeth is presented as a dainty, demure Southern belle... five minutes later, in a 1946 sequence, Abner decides to call her on the phone as "she's bound to be done plowin' by now." (In this movie, Elizabeth's maiden name is given as Meadows. In radio shows of the early 1930's it



"You ain't done married, air ye?" wonders Abner as Lum tries to stop another Tim/Janet quarrel.
June 1996 - Page 6



Janet (Teala Loring) is ready to pack her bags and leave that hick town Pine Ridge!



Over "sanriches and cocoa," Lum & Abner spin the scenario of their first meeting for Tim & Janet.

was given as Grump, but that had been long forgotten by the time this movie was filmed.)

The pressbook said of Pamela Blake: "After a year of dramatic school in San Francisco, she appeared in amateur theatricals in the bay city. In 1938 Pamela worked in dramatic skits on KYA radio in San Francisco before going to Hollywood, where she made a test for the Alan Ladd picture *Gun For Hire* and won the part. She was then put under term contract to RKO and worked in two pictures. In 1940 Pamela worked in *Slightly Dangerous* for MGM. Her last picture was *Why Girls Leave Home*, in which she played the lead."

Today, Pamela Blake has nothing but fond memories of working with Lauck and Goff. Besides that, she has her own anecdote as to what happened after the picture was finished: "I loved working with Chet & Tuffy, and we became good friends. After we made the picture, Chet took me in to see the head of RKO, Charles Koerner. Chet had praised my work, and Mr.



Abner and Elizabeth share a box lunch at the sociable in the Pine Ridge fire hall.

Koerner had seen the picture. While we were in his office, he called the Casting Director and told him he wanted to put me under contract... and for A pictures! Unfortunately, Mr. Koerner was ill and went into the hospital a day later. We were unaware of it at the time, but he had leukemia, and he died shortly thereafter. It was so sad. After that the studio went into a change. I didn't know the Casting Director, and he could have cared less, so my almost contract went down the drain. I did several pictures after this, but mainly freelancing." We thank Ms. Blake for her willingness to share her memories with us; she is currently experiencing some health problems, and we all wish her a speedy recovery!

The advertising for *Partners In Time* was about the most misleading of any motion picture, even for the unrestrained puffery days of 1946. While the movie had very few comic scenes, and could even leave particularly sentimental audiences



There seems to be an oversupply of beaux and an undersupply of belles in this romantic scene.



According to Justice of the Peace Lum Edwards, "I've never seen a lovelier bride."

awash in tears, the slogans coined by RKO's publicity department played up its nonexistent hilarity: "Rocking with Rural Roars!" "By crickety, it's their funniest picture ever!" "By gum, it's fun!" "Laughs enough to bust a bustle!" and other inane claims. The stunts suggested to theatre owners to help drag patrons in off the sidewalk were also less than dignified. They included a plot to "Fashion a large alarm clock out of heavy cardboard to enclose a ballyhoo man. Tour the man through town. The man can carry an alarm clock within the frame and cause it to ring at intervals." (*Partners In Time*, get it?) A similar stunt: "Hitch a mule to a two-seated buggy and have it driven through town by a man and woman dressed country style. Copy on the side of the buggy to read, 'We are partners since 1890, going to see Lum and Abner in *Partners In Time* at the Palace Theatre.'"

Other suggestions were for an old car contest, in honor of Young Abner entering Pine Ridge for the first time in a 1906 Flanders automobile. (That's pretty good on Abner's part, inasmuch as the picture is set in 1904. That must make him the George Jetson of the hill country set.) There was an idea to contact all local businesses that had been operating since 1904, and have each provide photos of what they looked like in those early days. (As any archivist knows, this would have been much easier to accomplish in 1946 than it would today.)

The most appropriate publicity was reserved for L&A's network radio broadcasts themselves. On three separate occasions, the old characters returned to the microphone after Gene Baker's closing Alka-Seltzer commercial to personally promote the movie. The first time was on April 17, 1946, and went like this:

LUM: Fokes, me an' Abner's jes' finished our newest pitcher, *Partners In Time*. We think this is by fer the best'un yet. We're anxious fer you ta see it an' let us know what you think of it.

ABNER: Yeh, hit'll give ye an idee 'bout how me an' Lum looked 'bout 30 year ago! How come me ta move ta Pine Ridge, an' how I courted my worman Lizabeth, an' how come Lum an' me ta start the Jot 'Em Down Store...

LUM: Well wait a minit Abner, don't tell the fokes the whole pitcher! Leave sompin' fer a sprise!

ABNER: Yeah...

LUM: Anyway, me an' Abner want ya ta be shore an' see *Partners In Time*!

The next day's broadcast featured a promotional announcement by Pamela Blake herself (who was today surprised to hear herself

appearing on their radio show!). On April 30, L&A returned:

LUM: Ladies an' gentlemen, we wanna thank ye fer the splendid way you're receivin' our latest pitcher, *Partners In Time*. We're anxious fer ever one of our listeners ta see it...

ABNER: Yeh, 'cause this is the first time me an' Lum's ever 'peered like we really look! An' hit shows how the Jot 'Em Down Store got started, an'...

LUM: Fokes, call yer local theatre manager an' ast him when *Partners In Time* will be in yer locality, an' let us know what you think about it. Thankee!

(These radio spots can be heard on Tapes #200 and #201 in the NLAS Tape Library.)

According to Pamela Blake, the picture was quite a success and received good reviews, as least as far as a B picture was

concerned. So, why was it the end of the RKO L&A series? That is a hard question. In 1942, while promoting *The Bashful Bachelor*, Chet stated that they were to make six more pictures for RKO, which would have put their final total at eight. Ms. Blake's story about the unexpected death of RKO studio chief Charles Koerner probably gives us our best clue. Studio histories confirm the fact that Koerner was highly interested in films with large audience appeal, but his successors were less enthusiastic about such "lowbrow" entertainment. It is highly likely that had Koerner remained in position, we might have had



at least two more L&A epics to enjoy.

As it is, our last glimpse of our old friends in a Hollywood motion picture is at least an upbeat one. With Squire Skimp defeated (temporarily) and quarreling lovers Janet and Tim headed for the altar (hopefully for the only time), Pine Ridge is once again at peace with the world. "Well, here we er, still in the same ol' rut," Lum comments. "Rut?! This ain't no rut! We're in the groove, you ol' hep cat!" crows Abner, as the theme music... a lush orchestral version of their radio theme *Evalena*... swells to a triumphant close.

Remember that *Partners In Time* will be shown in all its big-screen glory at this year's NLAS Convention in Mena, Arkansas! If you can't get there for that event, it can be ordered on video for \$29.95 from Lum & Abner Associates, 135 Circle Drive, Hot Springs, AR 71901.

- Tim Hollis

"We Say Goodbye..."

In recent months, we have lost two more individuals who were associated with *Lum and Abner*, even though it might have been in a more "background" type of capacity.

Linda Crosby Walker passed away on December 19, 1995. She was the former wife of famed L&A announcer Lou Crosby, whom she married in 1941 during his tenure with the show. (Tuffy Goff served as best man at that wedding, and his wife Liz was matron of honor.) Under her maiden name, Linda Hayes, she had begun a career in movies in the late 1930's, toiling for several years at RKO Radio Pictures. Around the time of her marriage to Lou, she was cast in several of Roy Rogers' films for Republic Pictures, and it is for these Westerns that she is best remembered by nostalgic movie buffs.

Linda and Lou had three daughters: their first child carried both of their names, Linda Lou! Another daughter, Cathy Lee, became a star in her own right; in a 1986 interview, Mrs. Crosby joked that it was quite disconcerting to be known primarily as "Cathy Lee Crosby's mother!" A third, Lucinda Sue, made her belated appearance a few years later. (As you will see on our back cover, Linda Lou and Cathy Lee plan to be at this year's NLAS convention in Mena on June 22.)

The Crosbys were divorced in the late 1960's, Lou

subsequently moving to Australia, where he passed away in 1983. Mrs. Crosby remarried, and at the time of her death was living near Palm Springs, close to her good friend Elizabeth Goff. She had been an Honorary Member of the NLAS since 1988.

Of course, no one in the entertainment world could overlook the passing of century-old **George Burns**. While he never seems to have entered directly into the world of L&A, newspaper articles do place him and his wife Gracie among Chet and Tuffy's close personal friends.

Around the time the *Lum and Abner* recordings began to be syndicated in the late 1960's, an interviewer asked Chet Lauck about the possibility of recordings of other such radio series having been preserved. Chet replied by stating that he had just recently spoken to George Burns on the phone about that very subject, and that Burns had told him he had kept all of his radio recordings. Obviously, then, the two of them had kept up some sort of communication even after the Laucks' departure from show business.

It is certain that both Linda Hayes Crosby and George Burns will be missed by their friends and family, and the entertainment industry in general. Our deepest sympathy is extended to all.



Linda Hayes Crosby in a TV interview with Roy Rogers, 1986.



George Burns and Chet Lauck share a story or two, circa 1947.



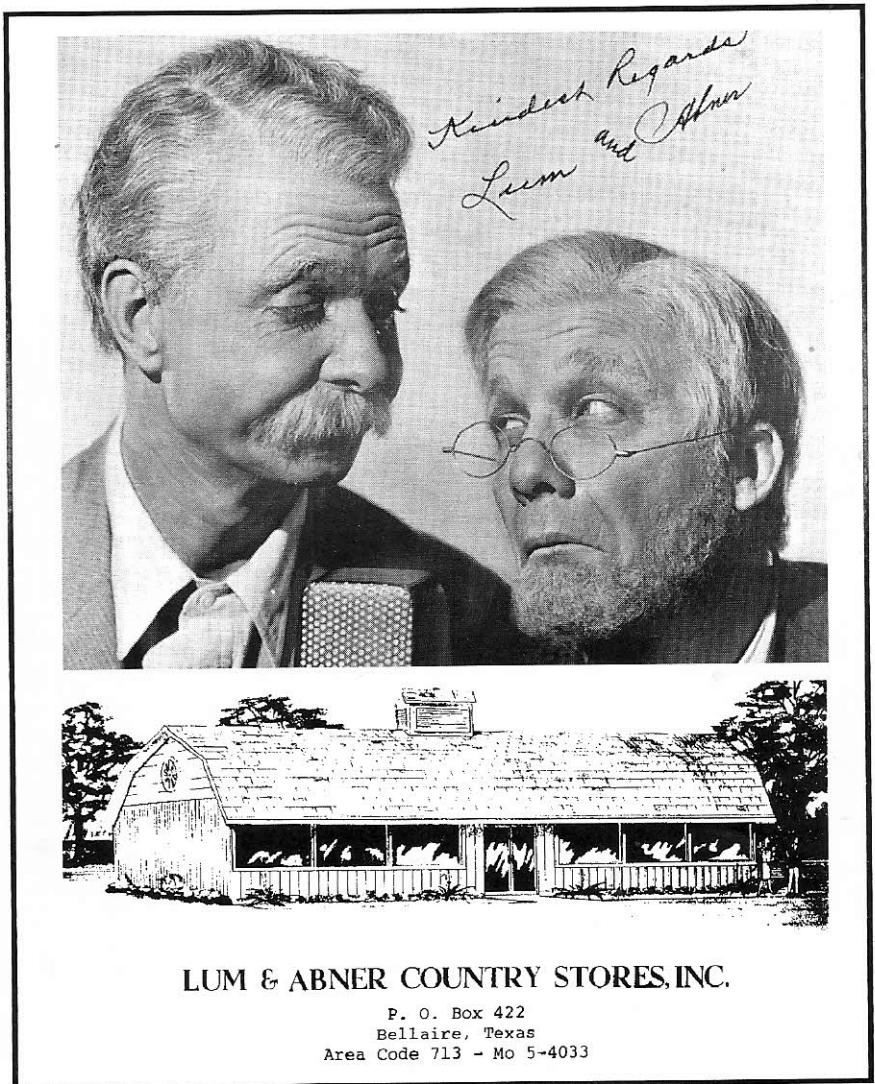
This is the third installment of our ongoing series documenting the roadside businesses that were connected with or inspired by L&A over the years. Last time, we examined the various versions of the Jot 'Em Down Store that were opened by individuals across the country; this time, we look at an idea of somewhat grander scale, as plans were laid for a nationwide chain of such stores.

This idea seems to have germinated in the early part of 1966. On February 3 of that year, a pair of businessmen named A.A. Peeters and Warren G. Wells sent Norris "Abner" Goff an air mail letter that explained what had been going on up to that point: "Yesterday, we talked with your partner, Mr. Lauck, here in Houston relative to our plans for a 'Lum and Abner Country Store' chain," they began. "Mr. Lauck said to write you and then he would contact you.

"We have had the country store idea for some time, and need a nationally-known, respected, and appropriate name to compliment it. We believe that 'Lum and Abner' fills the bill without possible question. The stores are to be located along well-traveled highways in a manner similar to the Stuckey's stores. [Editor's Note: Anyone who did any amount of traveling some 20 to 30 years ago will be familiar with the famous Stuckey's chain of gift and candy shops.] They are to be operated by individual franchisees who will purchase from a central supply source we operate. Your partner has suggested certain 'Lum and Abner' brands of merchandise which we believe will be ideal. Eyes brighten whenever we talk to anyone of the idea, and people immediately start talking of what they would like to buy."

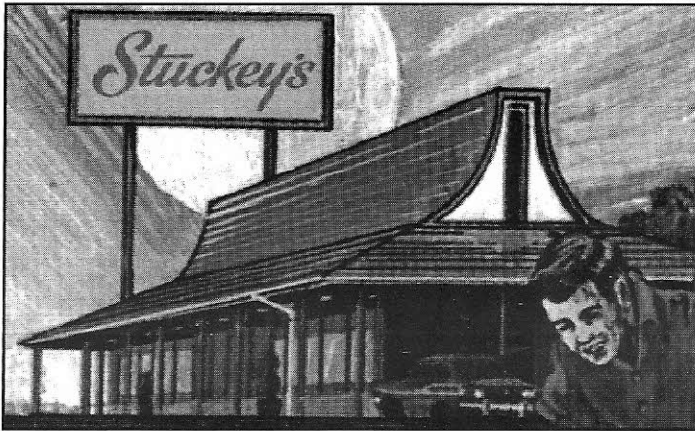
Wells and Peeters enclosed with their letter a draft of a proposed agreement for Tuffy to sign: "In

consideration of your promise to pay us three percent of your annual gross profit in your activity as 'Lum and Abner Country Stores,' we agree, within the limits of our ownership, to permit you to use the name 'Lum and Abner.' Furthermore, we agree to permit you



LUM & ABNER COUNTRY STORES, INC.

P. O. Box 422
 Bellaire, Texas
 Area Code 713 - Mo 5-4033



The Stuckey's chain was the admitted model for the proposed L&A Country Stores.

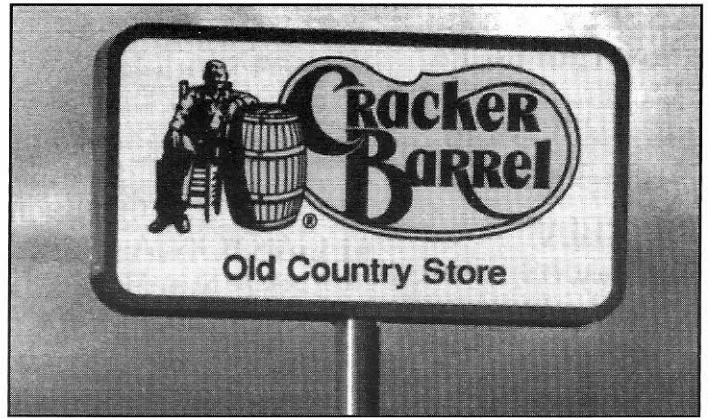
to use and to reproduce for your use in connection with your 'Lum and Abner Country Stores' program such recordings and pictures we own. We also agree to make a reasonable number of new recordings to assist you in your program. We agree to make a reasonable number of personal appearances to promote the program, and to perform other actions in good faith that will promote the activity of 'Lum and Abner Country Stores.'"

Apparently these plans sounded good to both Lauck and Goff, because on February 22 they signed the agreement that had been presented to them. Proving that in real life they were considerably more savvy than their radio counterparts, they added their own clause to the existing contract: "Inasmuch as we have no stock in the corporation 'Lum and Abner Country Stores, Inc.' we are not responsible for any of its debts or obligations." Smart thinkin' there, fellers!

Wells and Peeters got right down to work and produced a promotional booklet for prospective franchisees. It started off by stating that the company was to "develop a prototype of a typical country store designed to sell staples and novelty items ranging from 'gourmet vittles' to novelties, curios, and hardware, and to create a brand name Lum and Abner line of merchandise which would include food, novelties, ceramics, and hardware."

For some eight gray pages the booklet droned on, giving all of the pertinent financial information a person would need before sinking their bucks into the venture. They had great plans of tying the stores in with Conoco service stations (by virtue of Chet Lauck's position with the company) and Rodeway Inn motels. They stated that they were under contract to establish a minimum of 200 such L&A stores within the first two years of operation, but that the total goal was to eventually operate some 2000 locations.

Well, it is ironic that usually the businesses that begin with such grandiose planning are the ones that fall flat on their faces. Apparently by April 18, 1968, Lauck and Goff could see that this idea was going nowhere fast. On that date, they prepared a new letter to Wells and Peeters: "On February 22, 1966, Norris Goff and Chester Lauck entered into an agreement with you conveying the right to the use of the name Lum and Abner to be used in connection with the company you were forming... Since you have failed to perform, we are exercising our right to cancel this agreement." This stern letter was sent by registered mail, and guess what? It came back to Lauck, marked ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN. And that was the end of that.



Today's Cracker Barrel chain even features a Lum Edwards lookalike on their sign!

But perhaps not quite. As late as 1972, in various interviews Chet maintained that he still thought the idea of a national chain of L&A stores had merit. His idea was that the stores could be combined with a restaurant, for double appeal. Sadly, this never came to pass.

Today, however, there is a wildly successful chain of restaurants known as "Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores" that follow exactly the same concept that Chet tried to promote! In fact, part of Cracker Barrel's publicity reads, "Stepping into a Cracker Barrel is like traveling back to an era when stopping on the road for a meal was special. Out front there's a welcoming front porch with cozy rocking chairs. Pass through our wooden doors and walk into a real country store and restaurant. At every turn, there's something new and old to behold: hand-blown glassware and cast iron cookware; aromatic smoked meats; old-fashioned crockery from your grandmother's table; handcrafted figurines; classic children's toys; and genuine antiques and memorabilia hanging from the ceiling." Sound familiar? It looks like Chet and his ideas were just about 20 years ahead of their time!

In our next installment, we will look at miscellaneous other L&A roadside enterprises that did and did not take shape, including plans to bring the old fellows to the world of the motel. Don't be caught sleeping when we get into that story!

- Tim Hollis



In 1990, NLAS Prez Donnie Pitchford and Exec. Sec. Tim Hollis found this 'Got 'Em Down' antique store on I-20, just east of Dallas, Texas.

June 1996 - Page 11

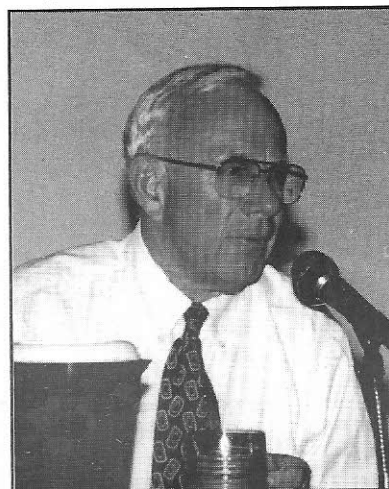
Don't You Dare Miss
The 12th Annual National Lum and Abner® Society
CONVENTION

June 22, 1996 • Mena, Arkansas

SPECIAL GUESTS:

Lou Crosby's Daughters

L&A Producer, 1946-48



Linda Lou Crosby

Cathy Lee Crosby

Forrest Owen

I grannies, folks, if you EVER in your life even THOUGHT about attending an NLAS convention in Mena, Arkansas, THIS is the year to do it! Although in our April issue we announced that we had rescheduled actress Jean ("Wilma Flintstone") VanderPyl, we have since learned that Ms. VanderPyl's health will not permit her to make the trip. Meanwhile, we have scheduled other guests, whom you see pictured above.

Lou Crosby was with the *Lum and Abner* series longer than any other announcer (1938 to 1944), and was a good friend to the Laucks and Goffs personally. His two oldest daughters, **Linda Lou** and **Cathy Lee** (of TV and movie fame), are planning to be with us to help share memories of their dad and his association with L&A. Also coming is **Forrest Owen**, an executive with the advertising agency that handled the Miles Laboratories account, and who began serving as producer of the L&A series in 1946. All of these good friends of ours will have much to share, and you will enjoy meeting all of them!

As we mentioned last time, also planning to be with us are **Harlan Hobbs** and **Ben Combs**, two of Chet Lauck's associates from his post-radio career in advertising. Mr. Hobbs was also instrumental in organizing the 1936 ceremony changing the town of Waters to Pine Ridge, and Mr. Combs was responsible for some of Chet's television work in the 1960's and 1970's.

Since scheduling of all these events is still underway, all we can tell you at this point is that activities will kick off at the **Best Western Lime Tree Inn** at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 22, probably with the big-screen 50th anniversary showing of L&A's final RKO motion picture, *Partners in Time*. After that, NLAS programs will be continuing off and on throughout the day. A final schedule will be available at the convention itself.

FOR ROOM RESERVATIONS: Call (501) 394-6350!! See you on June 22!

