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**NEW VOLUME OF
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At last we are back on schedule, and a NEW volume is available from our ongoing series of books reprinting the unrecorded *Lum and Abner* scripts of the 1930's! You may now place your orders for *The Lum and Abner Scripts, May 1936: The Perils of Lum*.

The title of this volume is most fitting. During May 1936, our old friend Mr. Eddards undergoes more turmoil than in six other months put together! Trouble begins when he learns that his longtime sweetheart Evalena Schultz is dating a slick stranger named Mr. Whitney. Soon, thanks to Abner's help, Lum finds himself once again engaged to Widder Abernathy. Narrowly escaping that dreadful fate, he discovers that Evalena will no longer have anything to do with him, and before his attempts to win her back are over, he has faked an automobile accident and is being hauled before a court on a charge of insurance fraud!

Besides all of this travail, the scripts in *The Perils of Lum* contain some other noteworthy historic events: we hear L&A's report on their recent (real-life) visit to the Kentucky Derby and Cedric's visit to the Indianapolis 500; witness the beginning of Cedric's romance with Clarabell Seestrunk; learn more about Widder Abernathy's marital history; and see several of the stories that were eventually cobbled together to make the 1942 L&A feature film *The Bashful Bachelor*.

As usual, the price for this volume is \$5.00. As far as previous volumes are concerned, we have only a few copies of *April 1936: Lum & Abner at the Kentucky Derby* left. All others are complete sellouts. While these April 1936 volumes last, they are also \$5.00. Orders should be sent to the Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Boulevard, Dora, AL 35062.

We have finally gotten our act together, and plans are now being laid for future volumes in this series. Our intention is to get back on schedule with a new volume coming out in the February and August issues of the *Journal* each year. (The volume advertised in the August issue traditionally makes its debut at the annual Convention in June.) Stay tuned for the next volume... *The Lum and Abner Scripts, June 1936: The Secret of the Old Trunk!*

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

August 1996

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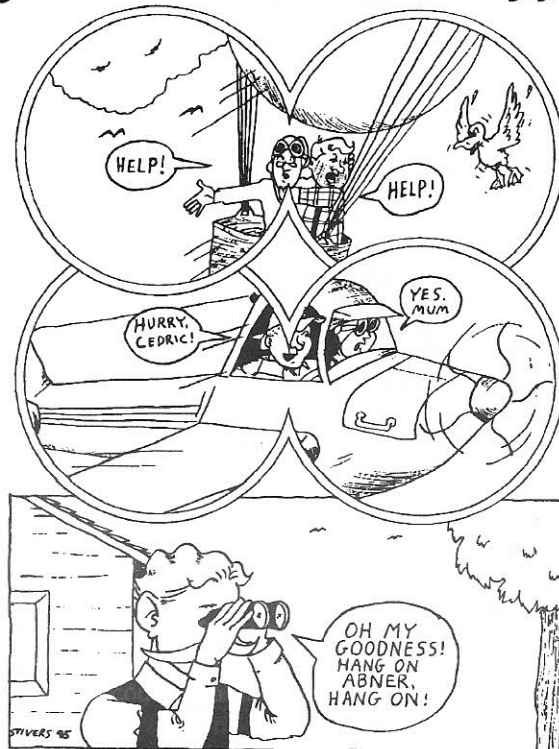
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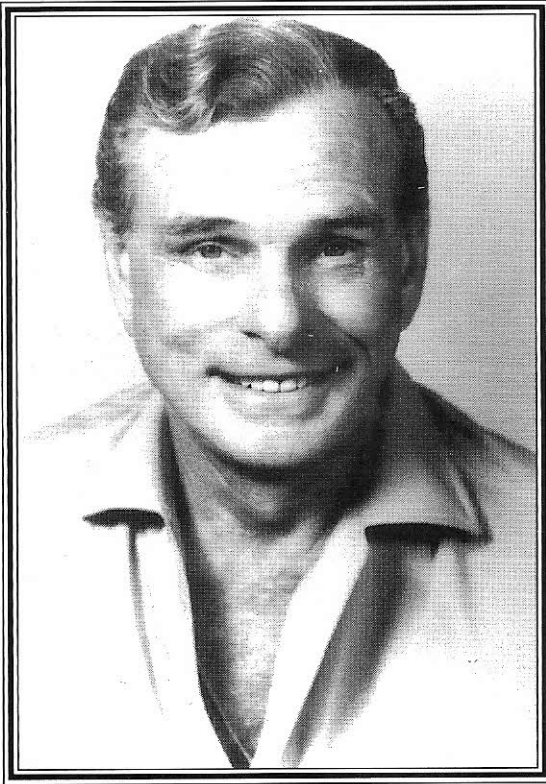
by Gary Stivers

Cover: 1996 Convention guests (l to r) Forrest Owen, Linda Lou Crosby, and Cathy Lee Crosby get into the spirit of things, ignoring the fact that NLAS Ossifers Sam Brown, Tim Hollis, and Donnie Pitchford are lurking behind them!

All illustrations are from the NLAS Archives, except as follows. Page 4, top L: Cathy Lee Crosby; Page 4, bottom R: The Panola Watchman Collection, Carthage High School Library; Page 5: Joe Riddle; Page 7, bottom: Forrest Owen; Page 8, top R: Miles Laboratories



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



Life

With Lou

The Lou Crosby Story

and the soap opera *Those We Love*.

Now, just how he got the position as *Lum and Abner* announcer may always remain a mystery, but we at least know why it came about. After nearly four years of wildly successful Horlick's Malted Milk sponsorship, in February 1938 L&A were faced with the prospect of a sponsor change. For those four years, it had been the booming delivery of part-time actor Carlton Brickert that brought audiences into L&A's world, but there was something of which the public had not been made aware. When the series had moved from its home base in Chicago to its new home in Hollywood in January 1937, Brickert had not moved his own residency. For one year and one month, Brickert read his commercials and opening and closing remarks from Chicago, while Lauck and Goff spoke their lines from California. Listeners were unaware that the two elements of the show they were hearing were separated by more than 2000 miles.

When *Lum and Abner* changed sponsors (from Horlick's to Postum) and networks (from NBC to CBS) simultaneously on February 28, 1938, for the first time it was Lou Crosby's rich voice that greeted the listeners:

Over the years, several different mellow-voiced individuals had the distinction of serving as announcer on the *Lum and Abner* show. The original announcer from 1931 was Charles Lyon; he was followed by Del Sharbutt, Gene Hamilton, Carlton Brickert (for Horlick's Malted Milk), Gene Baker, Wendell Niles, and Bill Ewing (during the show's final run). But the announcer's voice most associated with the program was the relaxed, velvety tones of Lou Crosby. Lou held on to his position longer than any of the others... from 1938 to 1944... and he also had the distinction of being the ONLY L&A announcer to span more than one sponsor!

For all his prominence in L&A history, Lou Crosby has managed to remain something of a mystery man. According to his family, he was never prone to reminisce about the past, and since that family was just getting started about the time his *Lum and Abner* stint was ending, that further complicates matters. In fact, the only biographical information we have about Crosby's early career comes from a single interview that was published in *RADIO LIFE*, a West Coast magazine, on July 2, 1944.

Basically, we know that Lou Crosby was born in Oklahoma in 1911. The article next picks Lou up during his college days in Colorado Springs, and reveals that he began working around a radio station at that time because he was "starving to death." The key happening of that period was a National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) convention which met in Colorado Springs, and Lou was chosen to do some news broadcasts for Transradio Press. His ability was apparently impressive enough that he was offered a job at Los Angeles station KNX.

The 1944 article states that Lou's early local radio assignments included stations KFVB, KMTR, KTM, KGFY, and finally, KFI, where he remained for two and a half years. Among his freelance announcing chores were Bob Burns' program, the Joe Penner series, *Hollywood Playhouse* with Tyrone Power, Tommy Dorsey's series for Raleigh cigarettes and Xavier Cugat's Camel cigarettes series, August 1996 - Page 4



This photo, while of extremely poor quality, is the earliest known shot of Lou Crosby (center) after his joining the LUM & ABNER series. Also pictured are Norris Goff (left), Chester Lauck (right), and the show's organist, Sybil Chism (bottom). The photo was syndicated to newspapers in April 1938.

The makers of *Postum*, the favorite mealtime drink in three million American homes, present your favorite radio friends LUM AND ABNER! The makers of *Postum* welcome you to the opening night of a new series of Lum & Abner programs. We want you to know how happy we are to be able to bring you these two lovable radio favorites. We know that, in the years they have been on the air, Lum & Abner have earned a warm place in the hearts of thousands of listeners. That for many of you, they are not only real people but real friends. And we hope that Lum & Abner's new series will bring you the same sincere enjoyment as their previous programs, that they will make even more friends than they have in the past, and that through them many of you will become acquainted or reacquainted with *Postum*.

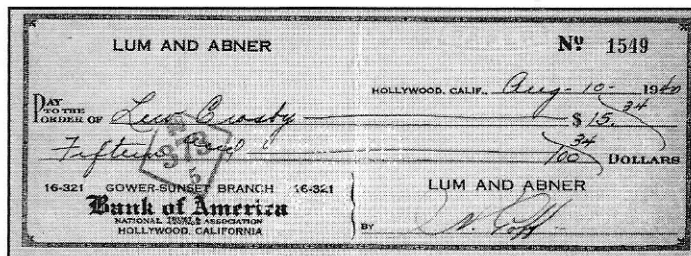
And they were off and running. As the *Postum* series progressed, Lou made a conscious effort to push the register of his voice lower and lower, and by January 1940 he had attained the basic style he would use without change for the rest of his career. It looked like that career might not include *Lum and Abner*, though, because on March 29, 1940, the show left the air for the making of the first L&A movie. Lou delivered a touching farewell, wishing "my two old friends, Lum & Abner" success with their movie. He closed almost in a whisper: "Good night... goodbye... this is the Columbia Broadcasting System."

During the ensuing year, L&A and Lou Crosby would be seeing more of each other than one might think. In July 1940, the pair began thinking seriously about getting back on the air, and they brought in Lou to narrate their audition recording. Their idea was to switch to a 30-minute format, but not like the 30-minute format they would employ in 1948-50. This concept would basically have been two 15-minute episodes put together, but even Lou's quality announcing didn't help sell it. (The disc of this recording exists, but it needs so much restoration to make it listenable that, as yet, it has not been released.)

His next appearance with L&A occurred on Christmas Day, when Lauck and Goff, still off the air, made a guest appearance on CBS's "Christmas Caravan" special. They performed their traditional Christmas script, aided by Lou's sterling voice. After the climax of the story, L&A and Lou returned to the microphone to wish everyone a merry Christmas. "I know we're all anxiously waiting for you to get that Jot 'Em Down Store open for business again," Lou remarked.

The trio tried to do just that again in February 1941. This time L&A recorded two different 15-minute auditions to play for prospective sponsors. Lou, back at the microphone, gave one of his most persuasive spiels:

You know, it's pretty hard to give you a true picture of Lum and Abner in one or even a half dozen 15-minute episodes. Lum & Abner are not just a radio program that you can listen to, enjoy, and forget. They have become an institution, and their listeners have learned to look forward to their daily episodes like a visit with old friends. They share the joys and the sorrows of these old fellows as though they were a part of their own family. The old Jot 'Em Down Store, where millions of American people from the children right up to the grandmothers and grandfathers, have gathered around the cracker



Chet Lauck wrote this check to Lou on August 10, 1940; notice Norris Goff's distinctive signature at the bottom.

barrel for years, has been temporarily closed. As we look in on the little community today, we find Lum & Abner having opened and are just entering the front door. Listen...

(The complete recordings of these two 1941 auditions can be heard on the newly-released NLAS cassette *Behind the Scenes With Lum & Abner*.)

This time it worked! Miles Laboratories bought the show, and Lou resumed his daily announcing duties on May 26, 1941. At first, Alka-Seltzer sponsored the show only over NBC stations of the West Coast (sometimes known as the "Pacific Network"), finally going national on September 29. Lou was back in fine form, but the earliest Alka-Seltzer commercials placed him in a somewhat different context than any he had done previously. Now, the copywriters made him a personal acquaintance of the Pine Ridge denizens: "You know," Lou would drawl in his most laid-back manner, "I was talking to Aunt Charity Spears the other day, and she was telling me all about how she uses Alka-Seltzer..."

There was another big change in Lou Crosby's life in 1941: he married a beautiful RKO Radio Pictures contract player named Linda Hayes. She had appeared in quite a string of pictures by the time of their wedding, and afterward played the leading lady in several Roy Rogers "oaters" for Republic Pictures. The Crosbys' wedding was L&A through and through; Norris (Abner) Goff was best man, while his wife Elizabeth served as matron of honor.

Lou did indeed have a life outside radio, however. The *RADIO LIFE* article put it this way: "He's the kind of man who will turn down a weekend announcing assignment if it interferes with his fishing. Lou is an enthusiastic angler and hunter, and likes nothing better than to sneak away and outwit a few finny specimen." True, the Crosby couple did have a passion for outdoor sports, and their three daughters would later all take up the same love. Their first daughter was named after both of them... Linda Lou... and was born almost exactly one year before Lou's long run with L&A finally came to a permanent end.

For years, we could never learn just why Lou left his lengthy tenure with the Pine Ridge pair. Finally, Wade Advertising producer Forrest Owen explained it to us. The agency, which handled the Miles Laboratories account, decided that they wanted only their staff announcers doing commercials on the shows they sponsored. Lou was, and had always been, a freelancer, so the agency decided to replace him with one of their own, Gene Baker. In this instance, neither L&A nor Lou had any choice in the matter. He delivered his final L&A signoff on September 21, 1944.

Linda Lou Crosby recalls that immediately after the termination of his L&A employment, her father left to go overseas to entertain the World War II troops. After the war's end, he returned to continue his announcing work. During the late 1940's Lou was probably most known for his work on Gene Autry's *Melody Ranch* radio series, in which he was called upon to revive his natural Oklahoma accent. In his trademark slow and relaxed manner, Lou promoted the benefits of Wrigley's Spearmint Gum "for pure.... chewing.... satisfaction."

Also during this period, Lou found himself cast in a few minor movie roles. Actually, "roles" might not be the appropriate term,



Lou Crosby as he appeared on THE LAWRENCE WELK SHOW, 1955-60.

because in one of them, the 1947 Gene Autry picture *The Last Roundup*, he appeared only briefly, playing himself: Lou Crosby, announcer. His other known film appearance was a low-grade Monogram release,

neglected, sometimes being cast in the commercials with their dad, or more often, being seen dancing in the audience during musical numbers. The Welk job ended in 1960.

Not too long after that, Lou fell in love with the country of Australia while performing in a series of cigarette commercials there. He decided to call Australia his new home, and, divorcing Linda Hayes, moved there to live out the remaining years of his life. Lou Crosby passed away in 1983.

What about the rest of the family? Well, Linda Hayes never returned to her acting career, but spent much time in outdoor sports and visiting her good friend Elizabeth Goff, who lived nearby. She passed away in December 1995.

All three daughters went into tennis in a big way, touring the country and even playing at Wimbledon. After those days were over, each pursued her own interests. Linda Lou specialized in the technical aspects of film and TV, so she became a very successful video producer for a number of Los Angeles TV stations. Today, she is employed in the same capacity at the China Lake Naval Base near Ridgecrest, California.

Cathy Lee, of course, chose acting as her main interest, and made her professional debut in 1974. After appearing in several roles, many of which were based on her athletic ability, she was picked as one of the three hosts of the ABC-TV *That's Incredible* series, which ran from 1980 to 1984. Today, she divides her time between new acting roles and her more recent job as an executive producer. She has been an Honorary Member of the NLAS since 1986. Lucinda Sue likewise pursued an acting career, but as of this writing has not yet gotten that big break.

Cathy Lee had long expressed a desire to visit the NLAS Convention, but it was not until this year that she and Linda Lou worked it into their schedule. They totally immersed themselves in the world their dad had narrated for so long, and because of his work and the encouragement the NLAS has received from the whole family, they accepted one of the 1996 Lum & Abner Memorial Awards on behalf of the Lou Crosby family.

In 1944, it was stated that because he was not related to Bob or Bing Crosby, Lou was frequently referred to in the industry as "the wrong Crosby." When asked what he thought about the name in comparison with its more famous owners, Lou stated...

"It's such a wonderful name, mine should be Smith!!"

- Tim Hollis

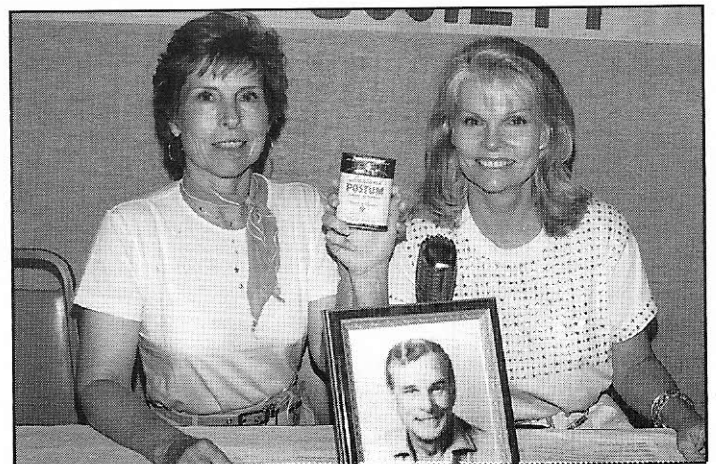
Behind the Mask, which was purportedly based on *The Shadow* radio series, but bore very little resemblance to it. Lou's role was that of Marty, a shady nightclub owner who liked to blackmail his wealthy clientele.

Television was now cutting into radio's market, and Lou found that his talents were in just as much demand for the new medium. Two more daughters, Cathy Lee and Lucinda Sue, had joined the clan by now, and the whole family embarked on a local Los Angeles TV series known as *Crosbys Calling*. *TV GUIDE* described the series as "a half hour of songs, birthday wishes, and such." Little Cathy Lee had the biggest scene of the show when she carried in the birthday cake. Another star of the series was Talky, a dog trained to bark on cue. "He got more mail than we did," Mom Linda Hayes recalled.

It was during this period that Lou had his final, though temporary, reunion with his old associates Lauck and Goff. In an attempt to get back into radio after the end of their weekly 30-minute show, in 1951 the duo recorded an hour-long audition they called *Lum & Abner's Jukebox Jamboree*. Following a disk jockey format, L&A played popular records and made funny comments... sometimes interrupting the records themselves. As it had always been, Lou was brought in to record the opening and closing announcements. However, the *Jukebox Jamboree* did not sell as a series, so the promise of a Crosby/L&A revival remained unfulfilled. (This recording is another new release in our series of special cassettes; see ordering info on the back page of this issue.)

Linda Lou and Cathy Lee remember that, true to his L&A image, papa Lou was a born storyteller. One of their fondest childhood memories was the continuing saga of "Annie Garfinkle and Her Dad." HUH, you say? This was a concept in which each night, a different family member (mom, dad, or one of the three girls) would make up a new installment for the entertainment of the others. The Garfinkle family lived in a junkyard, and their episodic adventures revolved around the various pieces of useful garbage they found.

Lou's most famous TV role was as announcer for *The Lawrence Welk Show*, a job that began in 1955. He delivered the commercials for Dodge automobiles in a wide range of styles, from booming hard-sell spots to slow-paced, low-key speeches that closely resembled his *Lum and Abner* commercials. The three daughters were not



Linda Lou (left) and Cathy Lee (right) carry on the family tradition!

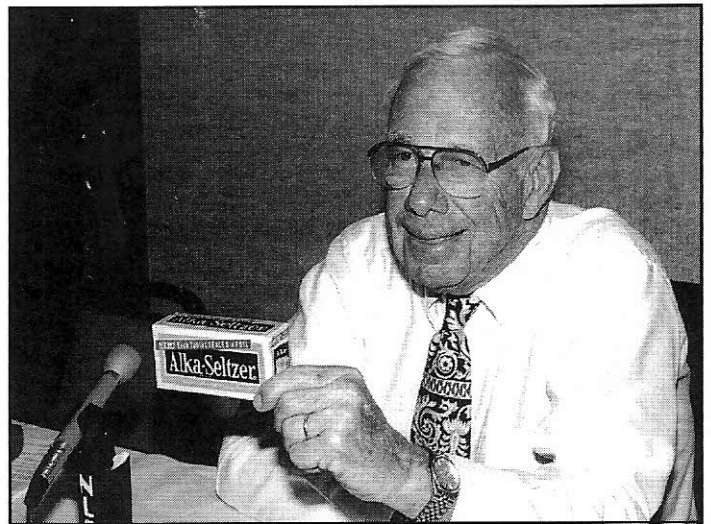
The Effervescent **FORREST OWEN**

Lum and Abner is a deceptively simple show. With its limited cast of usually only two performers, very few sound effects, and slow-paced style, many listeners probably thought the show actually was being broadcast from a little general store in Pine Ridge, Arkansas. But it is important to realize that, for all its simplicity, *Lum and Abner* was as much a network radio production as any other show on the air, and as such, its behind-the-scenes doings had just as much influence on it as they did on any show of more elaborate nature.

This especially applied to the relationship between the show and its sponsors. It cannot be overemphasized that in the days of radio, the sponsor was the all-powerful force that any show had to reckon with... and, to take the process one step further, it was the advertising agencies that controlled what the sponsors (their clients) did. In the case of *Lum and Abner*, the longest-running sponsor (from May 1941 to September 1948) was Miles Laboratories of Elkhart, Indiana... makers of Alka-Seltzer, One-A-Day Vitamins, and Miles Nervine. The fate of Miles Laboratories, in turn, was in large part controlled by the Chicago firm of Wade Advertising.

Wade Advertising gets the credit for elevating Miles from its patent-medicine roots to a major American pharmaceutical company through one route: RADIO. Miles, via Wade Advertising, was one of the busiest sponsors on the airwaves. In the 1930's and early 1940's, Wade put Miles on the networks as sponsor of *The National Barn Dance*, *The Quiz Kids*, *The Alka-Seltzer News*, and other more minor productions. For each of these shows, the agency assigned a producer to oversee the production, handle rehearsals, and generally be in some sort of control.

When Wade Advertising took on *Lum and Abner* as another of its shows in the spring of 1941... first only on the West Coast, and then finally on a national basis



that fall... they followed this same procedure. From 1941 to 1946, a distinguished agency man by the name of Bob Dwyer handled *Lum and Abner's* production chores; in April 1946, he was succeeded by our good friend (and 1996 NLAS Convention guest) Forrest Owen.

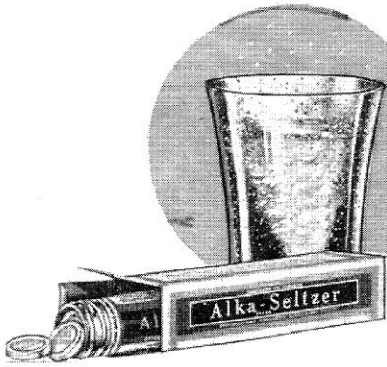
Owen's first forays into radio had nothing to do with his future career in the advertising end of the medium. His initial ambition was to be an announcer, and he got his first taste of this profession between high school and college. "We discovered that by lowering the voice and speaking close to those old microphones, we could make our voice sound much older than we really were," he recalls. Owen continued to pursue his intended announcing career while a student at Michigan State University. After a stint at the legendary WXYZ in Detroit (home of *The Lone Ranger*), he got what appeared to be the greatest offer of his fledgling career.

One of his former professors from Michigan State decided to start his own radio station in Waterloo, Iowa, and he offered Owen the position of chief announcer. Another of Owen's college peers, who was laboring at station WWJ, was to be the new station's news director. The proposed station, KXEL, would be a 50,000-watter, and as such would mean unheard-of exposure for these new inductees into the world of radio. Unfortunately, as Owen puts it, "It was a disaster. It was awful; it was all over in three to four months."

Returning to Chicago, Owen auditioned



Forrest Owen and Gene Baker (standing), Chet Lauck and Norris Goff (sitting), with newborns Kathy Lee Owen and Karen Baker, 1947.



unsuccessfully for an announcer position at WGN, and soon began to have second thoughts about his intended career. It began moving in another direction when he signed on at WTOL in Toledo, Ohio, not as an announcer but as a production manager. From that position, he graduated to a small Toledo advertising

agency as a radio producer, and eventually worked his way up the corporate ladder to Wade Advertising in Chicago.

It was now 1944, and *Lum and Abner* was one of Wade's several prize radio series. However, it was being broadcast from Hollywood at the time, so Owen's first experiences with Wade Advertising's radio work came from the Chicago-based *Quiz Kids*. About a year later, Owen finally got his first meeting with his future stars from Mena. He explains:

"Chet and Tuffy would come to Chicago once a year to meet with the client in Elkhart, Indiana... take him to dinner, and so forth. They would entertain the client, and they were experts at schmoozing and doing the salesmanlike thing they needed to do every year prior to renewal time. They were as entertaining in person as they were on the air.

"They originated their show in Hollywood, and came to Chicago this particular year to do what they did, and I was assigned to be the temporary producer for two weeks. I didn't know that I was being 'tried out;' I just thought it was great. They did everything themselves, just sitting across a table from each other. They let me produce the show, and after it was over, my boss, Jeff Wade, made me an offer to go to Hollywood to be the agency producer for *Lum and Abner*."

The weeks during which Forrest Owen was "auditioned" as L&A's producer were September 3 through 27, 1945. An incident he recalls particularly well occurred during one of the very first of those shows. It seems that the screen door they used for their sound effect was not weighted down properly, so when Chet Lauck, on cue, gave the cord a mighty pull, the whole door apparatus fell to the floor with a crash... on the air, mind you. This is the broadcast of September 6, 1945, which can be found on Tape #180 of the NLAS Tape Library, and which has become something of a classic among L&A collectors.

As Grandpappy Spears talks on the phone in the Jot 'Em Down Store, Abner makes his entrance singing "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree." When the door closes and falls over, a session of ad-libbing and giggles ensues throughout the rest of the show. Tuffy/Abner's initial reaction is, "Oh doggies, Lum, did you hurt yersef?" before he remembers that it is Grandpap to whom he is supposed to be speaking. Much hilarity follows, as Grandpap continues to insist that "that fall musta addled me," and Abner remarks that Grandpap will "break yer neck stumblin' over stuff thataway." Until May 1996, Forrest Owen had only his memories of this blooper, and when he at last heard the actual recording of the show he was somewhat surprised to learn that the sound of the falling door did not come across nearly as bad over the air as it did live in



Lum & Abner take time out during the filming of THE BASHFUL BACHELOR to pose with the sponsor's display, which was a part of the actual movie set.

the studio.

In March 1946, Owen married his sweetheart Mary Lee, and the following month the newlyweds packed their valises and hopped the mail hack for Hollywood, where Owen became the official producer in charge of *Lum and Abner*. He soon found that Chet & Tuffy had a rather loosely-constructed method of getting their show on the air. "They were both good businessmen, so they did insist on rehearsals and script read-throughs at the beginning of the week, which the agency went to in their office. The rehearsal would be about an hour before the show each day, and it would be a read-through, done informally more for the mechanical things. They just loved to talk and tell their stories and go off in one direction or another. The only thing I knew was that it was very important that I get the show on and off on time, and very important that we remain friends!"

Owen points out that Lauck and Goff really didn't need a producer from their own standpoint, as they had been doing their show basically the same way for 15 years, and, in his words, "had seen producers come and go." But they happily submitted to the custom of having a producer for the sponsor's sake, and everyone seemed pleased with the whole setup.

Most people associated with the show agree that *Lum and Abner* was nothing if not a family affair, and when the Owen couple had their first daughter on April 21, 1947, L&A even worked a reference to that into their show of that date. (This was another incident that the Owen family was surprised beyond belief to discover existed in recorded form.) Other highlights during his time with the show included the hiring of Clarence Hartzell as Ben Withers in November 1946, and the on-the-air "surprise party" given for Chet & Tuffy on the occasion of their 16th anniversary in radio in April 1947. In October 1947, the show moved from the ABC network back to CBS (where it had last been heard in 1940), but other than the fact that it was now heard five days a week (the ABC run was four days a week), nothing much changed.

Forrest Owen's and Alka-Seltzer's connection with *Lum and Abner* came to an end on Friday, September 24, 1948. After that date, the show switched to a weekly half-hour format sponsored



by Frigidaire. Various reasons have been given as to why this switch was made, but the general consensus is that *Lum and Abner* was treated as something of a second-rate show as long as it was in its daily spot; there seemed to be more prestige associated with a big weekly prime-time sitcom. Be that as it may, Miles Laboratories and Wade Advertising still controlled the 5:45 p.m. Eastern Time slot recently vacated by *Lum and Abner*, so instead of the Pine Ridge duo

the sponsor put in a daily comedy starring Herb Shriner.

"Herb Shriner was a bomb," recalls Owen, "and after having success with *Lum and Abner* and enjoying a long run, the Shriner show just didn't make it." In his capacity with Wade, Owen found himself assigned to various others of Miles Laboratories' shows, including the well-known game show *Queen For A Day* and the long-running saga of *One Man's Family*.

As radio slowly gasped its last (for the time being, anyway), Owen remained with Wade Advertising, although he did return to Chicago after his producing days in Hollywood ran out. In 1952, the Wade agency introduced TV audiences to one of the most beloved advertising characters of all time, Speedy Alka-Seltzer. As with any famous cartoon personage, many different people can claim part of Speedy's creation; in Forrest Owen's case, his radio connections were instrumental in his casting of veteran broadcaster Dick Beals as Speedy's inimitable voice.

Wade Advertising continued to handle the Alka-Seltzer account through the early 1960's, when they sponsored such highly-

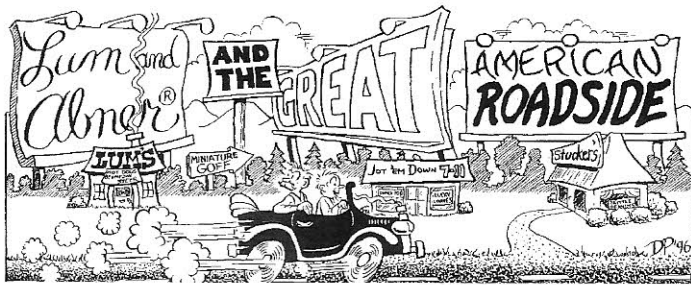
regarded series as *The Rifleman* and *The Flintstones*. But times changed in the world of advertising just as they did for radio, and by the middle of the decade Wade Advertising had sold the Miles account to a larger agency and closed up shop. Forrest Owen moved on to another well-known agency, BBD&O, and remained perfectly happy in his advertising career until his retirement.

In 1984, Owen became one of the first Honorary Members of the NLAS, thanks to his good friend Roz Rogers, who was living in the same community at the time. Even at that, it took 12 years before Owen finally made the pilgrimage to Mena and the REAL Pine Ridge, to actually see the area he had produced a radio series about so many years earlier. For his efforts and help to the NLAS, he was presented one of five 1996 Lum & Abner Memorial Awards.

While the actors, writers, and performers who were associated with *Lum and Abner* all have their own stories to tell about their work with the show, it is obvious that someone from the production end, such as Forrest Owen, has his own unique perspective on the behind-the-scenes aspects of the program. We at the NLAS feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to hear Mr. Owen's history of his L&A association, and we hope all of you have enjoyed getting the story as well! And remember...

**"WHEN YOUR TABLETS GET DOWN TO FOUR,
THAT'S THE TIME TO BUY SOME MORE!"**

- Tim Hollis

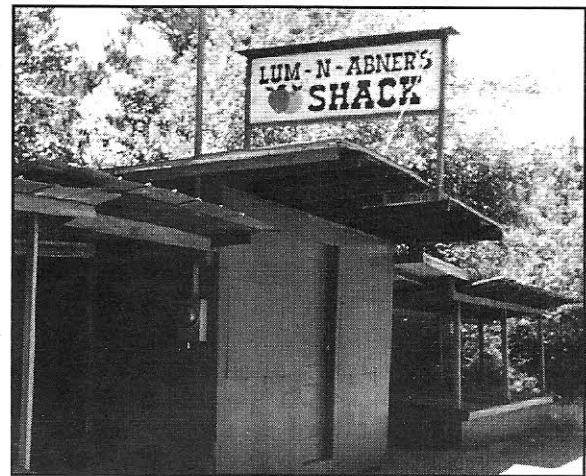


This series of articles will resume in our October issue, but meanwhile the photo reproduced at right was sent in by NLAS member John Dalton of Monroe, Georgia. He writes:

"Recently, while traveling on U.S. Highway 64 east of Hendersonville, North Carolina, we came across 'Lum & Abner's Apple Shack.' Apples were not yet in season, so the stand was closed. We would guess that the owners were L&A fans, but we couldn't locate them. Nina and I concluded that this stand would have been ideal for L&A to dispose of their surplus apples after their autumn 1946 'apple growing contest,' 'apple pie baking contest,' and 'apple pie eating contest!' Maybe L&A could have shown a real profit after all!

"This part of North Carolina looks like Pine Ridge, so it was fun to imagine the two old fellows in the apple business. Probably would have made a great script!"

We are greatly indebted to Mr. Dalton for bringing "Lum & Abner's Apple Shack" to our attention. We have quite a few members in North Carolina, so perhaps some of them could check into



this for us and get the story. As Mr. Dalton said, whoever is in the apple business on U.S. 64 must be a true L&A enthusiast!

We must admit that the response to this series of "Lum & Abner and the Great American Roadside" articles has been greater than we ever thought it would be. Somehow this seems to have pushed the right buttons in a lot of you out there ("HUH? I ain't got no buttons in me, Lum... you talkin' about the buttons on my coat here?").

Thanks again, and keep on sending in stuff like this!

THE 1996 NLAS CONVENTION



Cathy Lee Crosby, Forrest Owen, and Linda Lou Crosby are reunited with their old friends from Pine Ridge.



The Crosby sisters take in the displays in the Lum & Abner Museum.



The marquee at the Lime Tree Inn gives the guests a warm welcome.

Most of us fondly recall our childhood anticipation of Christmas, wondering what surprises awaited us under the tree. The day always arrived and passed, and with it came the letdown that it was "over," and soon we would trudge back to school (through several feet of snow, to face a bear or two, if you happened to be Lum). The 1996 NLAS Convention was much the same! We spent the better part of the year wondering who our guests would be, but as it happens each year, "Christmas in June" arrived with all the "presents" we could ask for.

In fact, June 22, 1996 was a record-breaker for the NLAS. We were honored with a landmark five special guests! Our talented "Zeckatiff Seckaterry" Tim Hollis deserves the praise for his tireless efforts in making the arrangements for our dignified panel.

As is tradition, the old Dick Huddleston Store, now the Jot 'Em Down Store / Lum and Abner Museum, was the spot for the first visit to Pine Ridge for Linda Lou and Cathy Lee Crosby and Forrest Owen. Kathy Stucker and her "good man" Lon, the managers and curators of the historic site, gave the group the grand tour, while the "ossifers" (along with "Mama" Hollis and "Aunt Laura" Pitchford) snapped photos and rolled video.

Upon arrival in Mena, the Friday edition of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* beckoned from the newspaper racks with an outstanding article crafted by journalist Ron Wolfe. This was clearly some of the finest newspaper coverage we've received, anticipated on the Mena level by an article in *The Mena Star* and by the radio promotions of KENA's Dwight Douglas, who greeted our celebrities as they arrived, tape recorder in hand, ready for an interview.

During the Friday evening meal, guests Ben Combs and Harlan Hobbs met the group. The remainder of the evening was spent in rehearsal of the newly written *Lum and Abner* script, and the annual late-night makeover of the Best Western Lime Tree Inn banquet room. Lufkin, Texas member Jim Temple (the guardian of our 1990 Lyric Theatre lighted sign) and son Lewis were on hand to provide the muscle and humor needed to make the job fun. Forrest Owen became the first special guest to participate in the set-up procedure, happily lugging audio-visual equipment. Thank you, gentlemen!!

Phase one: 10:00 A.M., Saturday, June 22 - show time! "Aunt Laura" and SPERDVAC / NLAS stalwart Ted Theodore greeted and registered the attendees, as the facility threatened to bulge at its seams in what was clearly a "standing room only" situation. AETN, the Arkansas Educational Television Network, assigned a crew to cover the event for a future broadcast.

"Auntie Helen" Hartzell, whose late husband Clarence was the marvelous actor who portrayed Ben Withers on *Lum and Abner* (and the legendary Uncle Fletcher of *Vic and Sade*) returned to join us with her friend Dorothy Holmstrom. Also in the "special attendee" department, a record was set: this year marked the first time the entire Chet Lauck Jr. family could join us! We were deeply honored (see the photo).

Prior to the 50th anniversary showing of the 1946 L&A film *Partners in Time*, Ben Combs introduced Harlan Hobbs, a gentleman who was acquainted with the Goffs and the Laucks since 1935. Mr. Hobbs, an Arkansas journalist, became a Hollywood publicist in 1935. During his remarkable career he worked as a marketing and advertising executive, an international marketing and business consultant, and counselor to President Eisenhower.

He spoke eloquently of his involvement in the historic 1936 "Waters to Pine Ridge" event of 60 years ago, and shared remarkable memories of his friendships with the people behind *Lum and Abner*. Mr. Hobbs worked again with the Lauck family when the Lauck and Hobbs advertising agency was formed in Hot Springs, following Chet's retirement from Continental Oil in the late 1960s.

During an intermission in the feature film, Becky Horton, representing the City of Mena and the Chamber of Commerce, presented keys to the city to the Crosby sisters. Direct from Pine Ridge, Bill Hays, the owner of the Hatfield Honey and Sorghum Co., presented gift packs of his fine products to each special guest.

Following *Partners in Time*, Little Rock advertising executive Ben Combs recounted his relationship with Chet Lauck which developed during the late 1960s, when he produced the television special *The Arkansas River* for KATV (Channel 7) in Little Rock. Chet Lauck served as on-camera host and narrator for that program. Other productions followed as the gentlemen developed a close bond. Mr. Combs was also instrumental in the formation of the Lum and Abner Radio Studio at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and designed the dedicatory plaque. Watch for future articles in the *Journal* focusing on the contributions of these gentlemen to the careers of *Lum and Abner*!

Lon Stucker reported a flurry of activity in Pine Ridge Saturday afternoon, as the conventioners converged on the store and museum, braving the stifling June heat for a memorable visit.

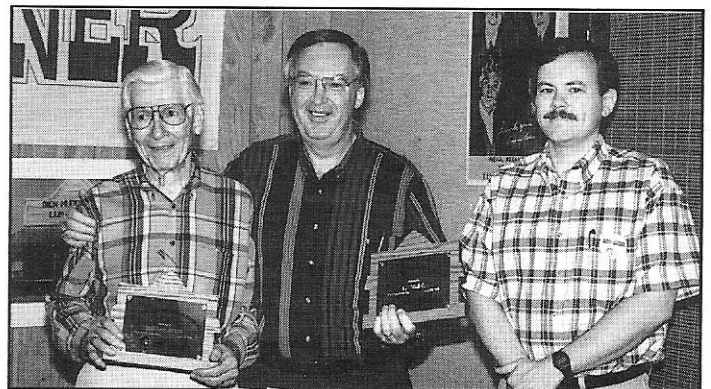
Following a countdown, the 7:00 P.M. program went "on the air" with another packed house. Forrest Owen and the Crosby sisters joined the "ossifers" at the head table (we finally got to sit down!) for a reminiscing session, which featured classic audio clips of announcer Lou Crosby's work on *Lum and Abner* and Gene Autry's program. The late Lawrence Welk's company, the Welk Group, provided an excellent video sampling of Mr. Crosby's TV spots for Dodge automobiles, and one clip even featured a 15-year-old Linda Lou Crosby dancing to the lilting strains of Welk's "wunnaful, wunnaful" music.

Forrest Owen recounted his thrill when Chet and Tuffy announced the birth of his daughter (coincidentally named Kathy Lee) in a 1947 episode of their radio show. Mr. Owen also remembered vividly the infamous 1945 "crackup" program, where the sound effects door toppled over, sending Chet and Tuffy into near-hysterics on live radio! Naturally, highlights were played to the delight of the audience.

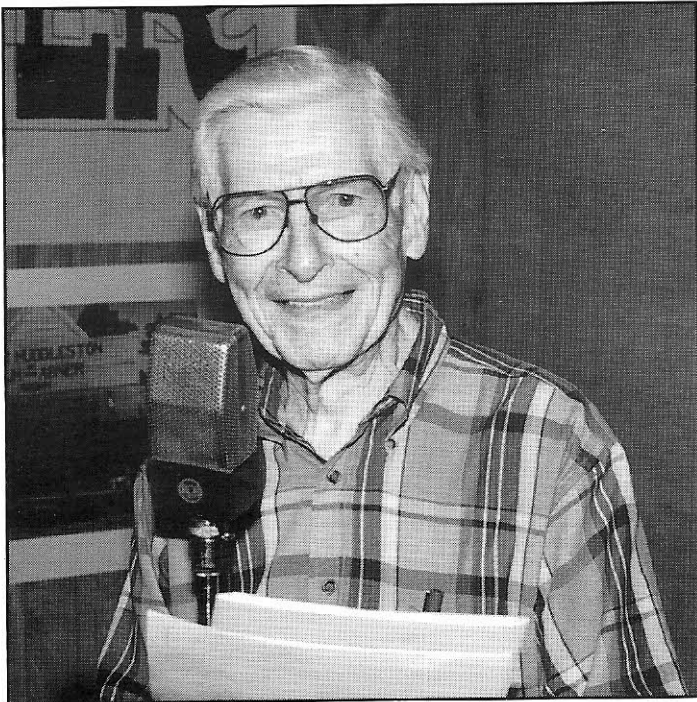
With announcer Linda Lou standing in for her father, and Forrest Owen representing the Miles Laboratories folks, this year's episode of *Lum and Abner* was presented with gusto. The script, titled *THAT AIN'T CREDIBLE*, was Tim Hollis' second "solo" effort, and featured dialogue contributed by the Crosby sisters. The program: Following the humorous commercial for the NLAS itself (in which Mr. Owen repeatedly interrupts Linda Lou with plugs for Alka-Seltzer and Miles Nervine), we are



Our intrepid troupe performs THAT AIN'T CREDIBLE!



NLAS Prez Uncle Donnie Pitchford presents the 1996 Lum & Abner Memorial Awards to Forrest Owen (top), the Lou Crosby Family (center), Harlan Hobbs (bottom left), and Ben Combs (bottom right). A fifth award was presented to Pamela Blake, who was unable to attend.



Publicist Harlan Hobbs relates stories about his days with Lum & Abner.



The Lauck family turns out to support the NLAS! L to R: Bill Lauck Wood, Karen Lauck, Scott Lauck, Chet Lauck Jr., Nancy Lauck, Mandy Lauck, and Chet Lauck III.

ushered down to Pine Ridge, where we find our friends Lum and Abner being introduced to Cathy Lee by good old Dick Huddleston (portrayed by Sam Brown, who also created our sound effects). It seems Miss Crosby is in search of ideas for a new movie, and remembers her dad's fond stories of his days with L&A. After a quarter-hour of confusing conversations with Lum, Cedric and Mousey (played by Tim Hollis) as well as Abner, Ben Withers and Squire Skimp (performed by Donnie Pitchford), Cathy Lee leaves Pine Ridge shaking her head!

During the course of the day, Lum and Abner Memorial Awards (beautifully hand-finished by our own "Singin' Sam" Brown) were presented to Harlan Hobbs, Ben Combs, the Lou Crosby family, and Forrest Owen. Actress Pamela Blake, who portrayed "Lizabeth" in *Partners in Time*, was unable to attend due to her health, but her award will be sent to her. We wish her a full recovery, and hope to welcome her to a future convention. Two California members, Ted Theodore of El Cajon and Bernard Beckert of Canyon Country, were tied for the "long distance" prize this year, so each received an original 1946 *Partners In Time* lobby card.

Our fiddle-playing member Troy Boyd was unable to attend this year, but master guitarist Ted Theodore led us in our traditional closing: a rousing sing-along of *They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree*. As the carloads of equipment and decorations were being dismantled and packed away, Bob Flood of the Yesterday USA Superstation conducted an audio interview with the three "ossifiers" for the pilot episode of *Sentimental Journey*, which we hope will become a successful radio series.

Back to the "real world" following the 12th annual NLAS Convention, it does indeed remind one of the days following a childhood Christmas. There is a feeling that the much-anticipated day of surprises is suddenly over, but simultaneously we know the calendar will roll around to the next convention... for which astounding and unbelievable plans are already underway! (Don't you wish you knew what they were?!)

Thanks to all of you for making this year so memorable.

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

New NLAS Special Tape Releases!

As you have seen mentioned in other articles in this issue, we now have two more entries in our series of NLAS Special Release cassettes. (These special releases are L&A recordings that, as yet, have not been placed in our regular Tape Library.)

Our two new installments are *Behind the Scenes With Lum & Abner* and *Lum & Abner's Jukebox Jamboree*. In *Behind the Scenes*, we hear Chet & Tuffy auditioning their show for a new sponsor in 1941 (it turned out to be Alka-Seltzer); witness the only known recording of a *Lum & Abner* rehearsal; hear their farewell to Alka-Seltzer from 1948; and get an idea of some of the tests an actor had to undergo before being cast in a supporting role on the show. The *Jukebox Jamboree* is L&A's unsold 1951 effort to go on the air with a disk jockey format;

the 60-minute show is hilarious, and proves that the L&A characters themselves could be funny in just about any format they chose.

As usual, these new releases are \$4.00 each, and they come with extensive explanatory liner notes. Other tapes in the Special Release series are still available for \$4.00 each as well: *Totally Hidden Lum & Abner* (the "rarest of the rare"), *Thanksgiving In Pine Ridge* (the first half of a two-hour 1953 special), *The Alka-Seltzer Specials* (historic recordings from the Miles Laboratories era), and *The Music of Lum & Abner*.

Orders should be sent to the Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062.