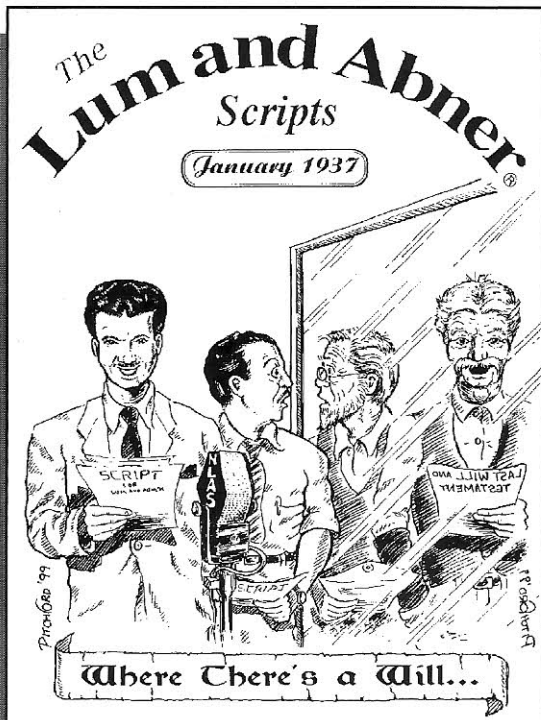


AUGUST 1999

New Volume of *THE LUM AND ABNER® SCRIPTS* NOW AVAILABLE!



Our ongoing series of books reprinting L&A's original scripts of the 1930s now continues. Yes, it is time again to "see what's going on down in Pine Ridge" back in the days when the *Lum and Abner* shows were not being recorded daily! In *JANUARY 1937: WHERE THERE'S A WILL*, our old friend Abner receives some astounding news. Through a sheer twist of fate, he is due to inherit \$100,000 from an eccentric millionaire, but only if he meets the very strange terms of the will! These scripts were "remade" in a drastically shortened version in the summer of 1948, but this is the ORIGINAL version of the story. This is also the month that the *Lum and Abner* program moved permanently from its home base in Chicago to the sunny land of Hollywood, and this event itself had some effect on the scripts in this volume.

As usual, the price for *JANUARY 1937: WHERE THERE'S A WILL* is \$5.00. We also have a handful of copies remaining of the previous volume, *DECEMBER 1936: A-HAUNTING WE WILL GO*, also for \$5.00. All earlier volumes are sold out, and the supply never lasts long! Send orders to the NLAS Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062.



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**THE NATIONAL
 LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY**
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PRESIDENT
 Donnie Pitchford

VICE-PRESIDENT
 Sam Brown

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
 Tim Hollis

Cover: Famed radio announcer
 Fred Foy meets up with Robert
 Cates (son of L&A associate Opie
 Cates) at the 1999 NLAS
 Convention in Mena, Arkansas.

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

AUGUST 1999

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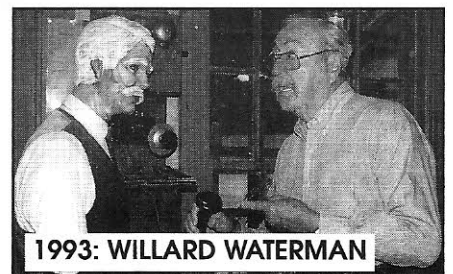
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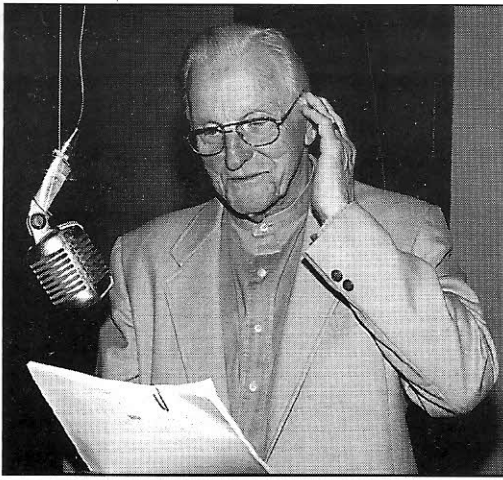
1992: LOUISE CURRIE



1993: WILLARD WATERMAN

NEW NLAS CONVENTION VIDEOS!

The latest releases in our NLAS CONVENTION VIDEO series are now available! THE 1992 NLAS CONVENTION was devoted to the 50th anniversary of L&A's movie *The Bashful Bachelor*, and the guest was the leading lady from that film, the beautiful LOUISE CURRIE. THE 1993 NLAS CONVENTION spotlighted famed radio actor WILLARD WATERMAN, famed as the second "Great Gildersleeve." Both Convention videos feature complete coverage of these two historic NLAS events. As usual, tapes are \$10.00 each (allow 2-3 weeks for delivery). And don't forget that the earlier NLAS Convention Videos, covering years 1985 through 1991, are also available for \$10.00 each. Send orders to the Executive Secretary at 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062.



"HI YO, SILVER!"

YOUR ANNOUNCER,

FRED FOY

A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a

hearty HI YO SILVER! The Lone Ranger! With his faithful Indian companion Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early Western United States. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear! From out of the past come the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver! THE LONE RANGER RIDES AGAIN!

The *Lone Ranger* radio program was broadcast live from 1933-1954. Of all the announcer-narrators who served on that exciting series, one gentleman made the above introduction more memorable and meaningful than any words or anyone preceding his tenure: Fred Foy. Just listen to the extant episodes! There were some fine announcers at WXYZ Detroit. Even Brace Beemer, best remembered as radio's final *Lone Ranger*, served earlier in the announcer/narrator capacity, but with all his rich resonance, he was unable to match Mr. Foy's intensity.

Incidentally, the famous words printed at the beginning of this article were not fully present in the early days of *The Lone Ranger*. That so-perfect opening took many years to develop, and was never recited in a "block." "With his faithful Indian companion Tonto" actually came after the first commercial! (Syndicated reruns of *The Lone Ranger* in more recent years sometimes lump it all together.) Still, the voice associated with those now-immortal words is that of Fred Foy.

Mr. Foy admits he was something of a "ham" growing up, always jumping at the chance to perform. Born in 1921, he and radio shared a common childhood! Listening with his family to a variety of early programs, he literally "grew up with the *Lone Ranger*." The thrice-weekly program appealed to children as well as many parents.

There are a number of *Lum and Abner* / *Lone Ranger* crossovers that bear investigating. We will do so while reviewing a bit of the history surrounding these two programs. Originating from station WXYZ in Detroit, Michigan, *The Lone Ranger* made its debut in January 1933. Time has clouded and confused many details surrounding the creation of the program, a factor that extends to the documentation of the early actors who portrayed the title character. Thanks to such excellent books as Dave Holland's *From Out of the Past, a Pictorial History of the Lone Ranger* (Holland House, 1988) and *Who Was That Masked Man?* by David Rothel (A. S. Barnes & Co. Inc., 1981), we know that *The Lone Ranger* evolved from the creative efforts of WXYZ owner George W. Trendle, director James Jewell, and writer Fran Striker. Actor George Stenius (later Seaton, the renowned Hollywood motion picture craftsman) initiated the role of the Ranger, and was followed by two men who played the character for extended periods: Earl Graser (who died tragically in 1941) and Brace Beemer (who carried on until the end of the series). Other names are associated with the character, but some

had only fleeting attempts at the role, or cannot be documented with certainty. (One interesting bit of casting had silent screen idol Francis X. Bushman as the Masked Man in an early test performance for Chicago's WGN. Bushman was later a regular on *The Opie Cates Show* and a frequent supporting player on *Lum and Abner* from 1945 on.)

The Lone Ranger was a phenomenon, and Trendle had a hit on his hands. The program's coverage was broadened by its multi-station airing on the Michigan Network, and by 1934, stations WGN, WOR, and WLW linked with WXYZ to form the Mutual Broadcasting System. This was formed on the strength of *The Lone Ranger*, but as Dave Holland and Chet Lauck have both pointed out, *Lum and Abner* (then originating at WGN for Horlick's Malted Milk) was among the other programs benefiting from this new network. Other affiliations carried *LR* from coast to coast: NBC's Blue Network (later to become ABC), New England's Yankee Network, and California's Don Lee Network. As with *Lum and Abner*, 16-inch transcription discs were available to independent stations.

Del Sharbutt, an early (1931) *Lum and Abner* announcer (and a substitute on later occasions) held a position on the WXYZ staff, and Fred Foy acknowledges him as a mentor. (Sharbutt later served as the spokesman for regional *Lone Ranger* sponsor Merita Bread in the South.)

We cannot forget the direct and indirect references to the Ranger in episodes of *Lum and Abner*! Often, they involve Pine Ridge children, or the sometimes childlike actions of characters such as Cedric Weehunt and Mousey Gray. Clips were played during our 1999 NLAS Convention of Abner and Cedric discussing the Masked Man directly, while in another series Mousey and Cedric adopt the alter-egos of "The Masked Muskrat" and



Fred Foy (far right) during a broadcast of THE LONE RANGER at WXYZ, Detroit. At left are John Todd (Tonto) and Brace Beemer (the Lone Ranger).

"The Blindfolded Wildcat," respectively. Then there was the occasion when Lum mentioned some children playing and shouting "HI-HO Superman!"

Fred Foy joined the WXYZ staff prior to World War II, being drafted in 1942. As a member of the Special Service Unit, he was stationed in Cairo, Egypt. He became the first American voice among British announcers delivering news for Egyptian State Broadcasting, and began writing and directing programs for the U.S.O. One memorable broadcast had him filling in for Don Wilson, trading quips with the one and only Jack Benny.

Following the war, Mr. Foy made his way back to WXYZ Detroit. His voice would eventually be heard delivering the announcements and narration on such favorite programs as *The Green Hornet* and *Sgt. Preston of the Yukon*. By 1948, notice was given that auditions were being held for announcer-narrator on *The Lone Ranger*, and Fred Foy gave it his best. "I felt like Daniel walking into the lion's den," he states in his autobiography, but there was a quality in the 27 year old man's performance that director Charles D. Livingston appreciated. Beginning July 2, 1948, Mr. Foy delivered "the opening" on live radio for the first time, and remained with the program for the remainder of its run.

As is discussed in his fascinating autobiographical booklet and audio tape, Mr. Foy held tremendous respect for Brace Beemer, the voice of the Ranger. Asked to become the star's understudy, Mr. Foy finally received the chance of a lifetime to step into the Ranger's boots on the episode of March 29, 1954 ("Burly Scott's Sacrifice") when Brace Beemer arrived with a case of laryngitis. Jay Michael (a 1947 performer on *Lum and Abner*) stepped in as announcer, and John Todd's Tonto had a "new" partner - but only for that one memorable evening. Mr. Foy explains today that Beemer swore never again to lose his voice, and he kept that promise! Fred Foy returned to his task of announcing the program, and playing the Ranger only in early rehearsals, allowing Beemer a bit more time off.

Radio actor Gerald Mohr (*The Adventures of Phillip Marlowe*) provided narration for the early television episodes of *The Lone Ranger* (which first aired in 1948), but at George W. Trendle's insistence, the Hollywood production company began utilizing the voice of Fred Foy, as recorded in Detroit. The television Ranger has a history of vocal schizophrenia: In some episodes, his "HI YO SILVER" is the voice of Earle Graser, in others, we hear Brace Beemer! Then there is a third voice - is it actor Clayton Moore himself? No, it is Fred Foy! As physically well-suited to the role as Moore was, his "HI YO" was not deemed suitable, hence the dubbing juggle. One of the most stirring closings to any LR episode comes not from the radio or television series, but from the 1956 Warner Brothers motion picture, *The Lone Ranger*, "on the big wide, wide screen in WarnerColor" (as the newspaper ads proclaimed). The expansive Utah scenery and the heroic figures of Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels riding away astride Silver and Scout as Fred Foy shouts "HI YO SILVER" are unforgettable.

Mr. Foy was asked how well he knew the television actors (including John Hart, who briefly replaced Moore), and he replied, "We celebrated the 60th anniversary of *The Lone Ranger* in Lone Pine, California, and I was invited, as was Clayton Moore. I had never met him! My wife and I were walking down the streets of the town, and someone told us Clayton was in a nearby store, so we walked in, and Clayton's back was toward me. I walked up right behind him, and said, 'A fiery horse, with the speed of light, a cloud of dust...' and Clayton turned around and joined me for the entire thing! We met there for the first time. He's a wonderful gentleman, and he carried on the tradition of the Masked Man. He really lived the character (as did Brace Beemer)."

As he recalled at the NLAS Convention, the period following "the Ranger" was difficult, but he eventually found a position



Fred Foy (left) as the recipient of the ammunition used in a pie fight on *THE DICK CAVETT SHOW*.

with ABC in New York, where his most visible assignment was a five year stint as announcer on *The Dick Cavett Show*, which was thrust against NBC's powerhouse *The Tonight Show* (starring Johnny Carson).

With the production of a new motion picture, *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* (released in 1981), veterans of the series were given cameos. John Hart and Fred Foy were both asked to appear, but sadly, Mr. Foy's role of "Mayor of Del Rio" was left on the proverbial "cutting room floor." "I was counting on an Academy Award!" he joked at the NLAS Convention. The highly-budgeted film died at the box office as quickly as the Texas Rangers who were ambushed in Bryant's Gap (leaving the "Lone Ranger" to carry on), and today Mr. Foy remarks, "Perhaps if they'd left my scenes in..." You may hear Fred Foy, however, in the closing of the film, issuing that great opening speech, but beware of the the awkward "HI YO SILVER!" Actor Klinton Spilisbury's vocal performance was so inappropriate, all his dialog was post-dubbed by James Keach, who presumably provided the "HI YO."

Today, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Foy enjoy the company of their children, while Mr. Foy continues to keep the Ranger alive with appearances at OTR conventions around the country. The week prior to the NLAS Convention, he participated in a Smithsonian Institution round-table discussion of radio history in the company of such luminaries as Jackson Beck and Arnold Stang. Fred Foy has just been nominated for induction into the Radio Hall of Fame by the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, and we eagerly await the results, and wish him success in receiving this honor (which was bestowed on another NLAS Honorary Member, Les Tremayne, in 1995). Fred Foy certainly deserves the title bestowed upon him by radio historian Jim Harmon: "The greatest of all radio announcer-narrators!"

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

The NLAS has a limited supply of Fred Foy's autobiographical booklets and cassette tapes available. Order yours today! (Sorry, no Cheerios box tops accepted!) **FRED FOY from XYZ to ABC**, an illustrated booklet, is \$5 per copy. "Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch..." **FRED FOY REMEMBERS**, an audio cassette collection of memories and clips (including a scene from the rare *Lone Ranger* episode with Mr. Foy as the Masked Man), is \$10 per copy. SEND YOUR ORDER TO THE NLAS, 81 SHARON BLVD, DORA, AL 35062.

8-28-99

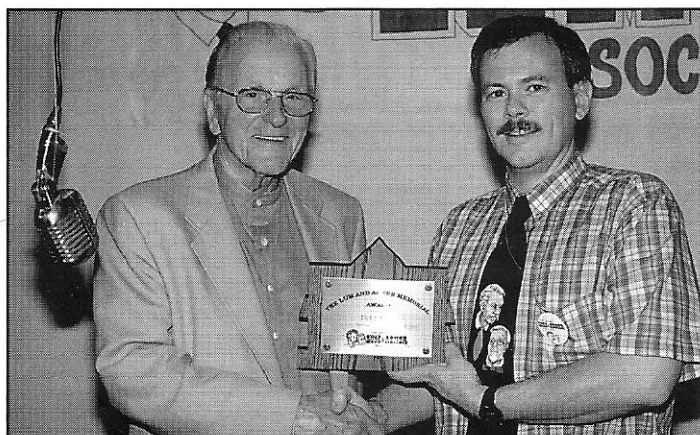
THE 1999 NLAS



Fred Foy tries to tune in *THE LONE RANGER* on the antique radio in the Lum and Abner Museum in Pine Ridge.



Performing *LUM AND ABNER MEET THE LONE RANGER* (l to r): Sam Brown, Fred Foy, Tim Hollis, and Donnie Pitchford, who also wrote the script.



Donnie Pitchford presents Fred Foy with one of the Lum and Abner Memorial Awards for 1999.

To borrow Opie Cates' opening phrase from his ABC radio series, "The doggonedest thing happened ta [us] th' other day..." The 15th annual NLAS Convention very nearly did not happen! Before reporting on the delightful goings-on, we must express the gratitude of the "ossifers" to the many members of the NLAS whose financial support made the 1999 convention a reality. **We thank you!**

If you were unable to be with us, "you shore missed a good-ern!" Let's retrace our steps: "Ossifers" Sam and Tim, accompanied by Tim's mother Kathleen Hollis and Michigan member Chuck Anders, met guest star Fred Foy in Little Rock on June 24, transporting him to Pine Ridge's Jot 'Em Down Store and Lum and Abner Museum. Following a tour by curators Lon and Kathy Stucker, the NLAS "team" proceeded to Mena.

Fred Foy's most familiar radio role was that of announcer-narrator on *The Lone Ranger* from 1948 to 1954. "What does *The Lone Ranger* have to do with *Lum and Abner*?" you might ask. "More than you might think," we might answer! Both programs enjoyed long runs on ABC, both made use of actor Jay Michael in supporting roles, and *The Lone Ranger* was referred to several times on *Lum and Abner*. Besides, there was a program entitled *Lum and Abner Meet the Lone Ranger*! Of course, it didn't take place until... 1999!

The Friday evening program commenced at 5:00, with Mr. Foy recounting fascinating anecdotes from his career in radio and television, accompanied by audio clips. (See the feature on Mr. Foy elsewhere in this issue!)

Lum and Abner Meet the Lone Ranger was performed, complete with the stirring finalé to *The William Tell Overture*, and numerous authentic selections of Republic Pictures musical cues for dramatic bridges. Mr. Foy performed the dual role of announcer-narrator and the Lone Ranger, and did so with the tremendous flair fans have appreciated for years. Audience members commented on the "chills" and "thrills" they experienced, and many closed their eyes to experience "the Theater of the Mind." Alphabetically, Sam Brown performed key sound effects and the roles of Tonto, Dick Huddleston, Snake Hogan, Ulysses S. Quincy and Mr. Waters, Dick's 1872 counterpart. (The live sound effects included bathroom plungers pounded in boxes of cat litter to simulate "the thundering hoofbeats," and ring-cap pistols filling in for the sounds of "silver bullets!") Tim Hollis portrayed Lum, Mousey Gray, and Ben Withers, while Donnie Pitchford produced the recorded music and effects and played Abner and Sidewinder (Squire) Skimp. "Aunt Laura" Pitchford tackled the exacting task of cuing the prerecorded audio, which included original "He's feeling his Cheerios" jingles for the middle commercial. (While the script was transcribed from an actual Cheerios spot, the 1999 author added a few references to *Lum and Abner* sponsors as well!)

The script, written by "Uncle Donnie," is something of a sequel to the Tim Hollis radio play of 1995 that united L&A with Chester (Parley Baer) Proudfoot of *Gunsmoke*. L&A are transported back "to those thrilling days of yesteryear" by a strange time machine discovered in a decaying shack near an abandoned stretch of railroad. In the "yesteryear" of 1872, our old friends

CONVENTION

encounter a gang of train robbers headed by "Sidewinder Skimp," and help to rescue a badly wounded Tonto. In the second act, the Lone Ranger himself arrives for plenty of action, which includes exciting gun battles and fistfights with Skimp and his gang. With the evildoers arrested, L&A return to 1999 via the amazing time machine, to be greeted by their Pine Ridge friends.

Fred Foy, who received a standing ovation as the final strains of *William Tell* galloped off into an audio sunset, was a recipient of the Lum and Abner Memorial Award for his contributions to radio history, and his friendship and enthusiastic involvement with the NLAS. Due to the presence of several small children (mostly belonging to a certain family soon to be discussed), a new prize was offered to the "youngest attendee!" Little Miss Ashton Spradlin was awarded the two tiny boxes of Cheerios used in the above-mentioned commercial, both of which were "Cheeri-ly" autographed by Fred Foy.

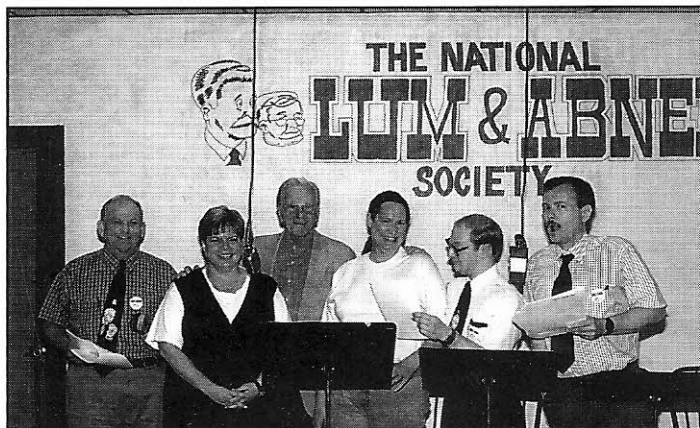
In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Lum and Abner Monument in Mena (see the June issue of the *Journal*), Saturday's 10:00 a.m. program honored retired Mena businessman Doy Grubbs, a major force behind the implementation and 1979 completion of the project. Thanks to charter NLAS member David Miller of Texas, a rare videotape of the dedication ceremony was available for viewing. Mr. Grubbs' memories of the event, and of meeting and working with Chester "Lum" Lauck, were extremely informative. In addition, he presented the NLAS with an original souvenir program and related newspaper clippings. For these achievements, as well as for the years of assistance Mr. Grubbs has given the NLAS, he was honored with the second 1999 Lum and Abner Memorial Award.

Mr. Grubbs informed the attendees that additional names were being engraved on the back of the L&A Monument, and we were overwhelmed when NLAS member Bob Flood of Texas donated a cash amount to have the National Lum and Abner Society added to that list!

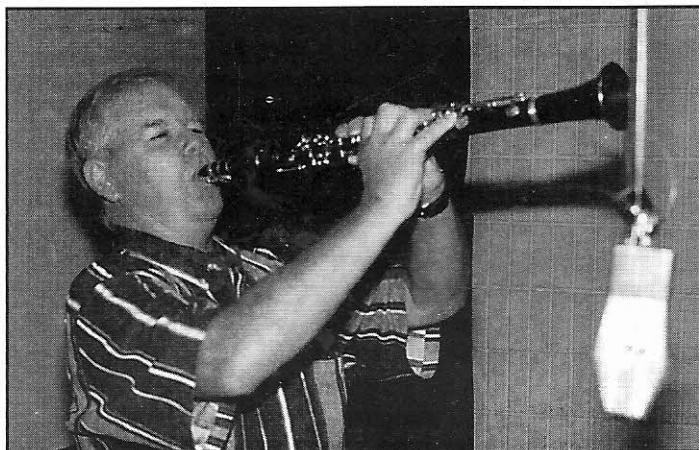
Eddie Huckaby of the Ouachita Little Theatre (housed in Mena's historic Lyric Theatre where L&A themselves once performed) introduced a video clip of their recent performances of L&A scripts (see our installment of "And Now..." elsewhere in this issue), and donated archival material to the NLAS, including a rare copy of the 1946 *Hail Arkansas* sheet music, which sports a photo of Lum and Abner, and some of the original newspaper coverage of the song's Mena debut.

Walter Graves, a former Frigidaire dealer, presented the NLAS with a priceless souvenir of his experiences in California over 50 years ago: an original *Lum and Abner* broadcast script from the Christmas program of 1948! As he explained, he had tickets to the show (since Frigidaire was the sponsor), and afterward made the request to visit with Lauck and Goff. A CBS employee told him "no," but Mr. Graves insisted she inform Tuffy Goff that "I moved here from Cove, Arkansas" ("Abner's" birthplace), and before long, the two were united! As a gift, Mr. Graves received Tuffy's personal script, which is now preserved in the NLAS archives.

As we reported last issue, no recording has been located for the L&A program of June 12, 1949. A bit more than a half-century



This cast recreated the LUM AND ABNER script of June 12, 1949: Sam Brown (Honeyboy Davis), Laura Püchford (ZaSu Pitts), Fred Foy (Wendell Niles), Verla Huckaby (Widder Abernathy), Tim Hollis (Lum/Mose Moots), and Donnie Pitchford (Abner). Not shown is Robert Cates, who enacted the role of his father, Opie Cates.



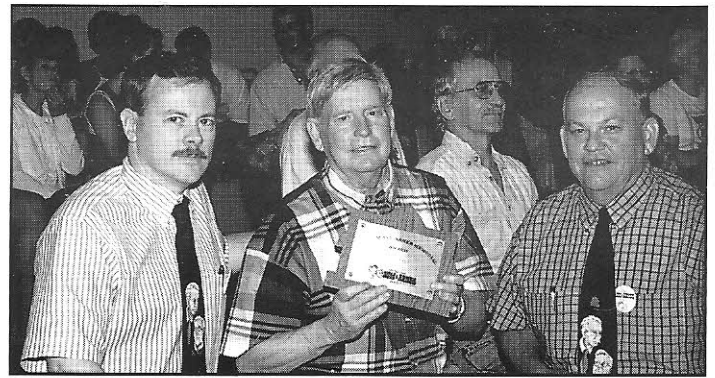
Robert Cates tries to emulate his dad Opie's talent with the clarinet... which, by the way, is the very clarinet Opie used on LUM AND ABNER.



Sam Brown presents the Opie Cates family with one of the 1999 Lum and Abner Memorial Awards. L to R: Robert, Dixie, Dinah, Linda, and Liza.



Doy Grubbs greets Chet (Lum) Lauck at the dedication of the Lum and Abner Monument in Mena, June 1979.

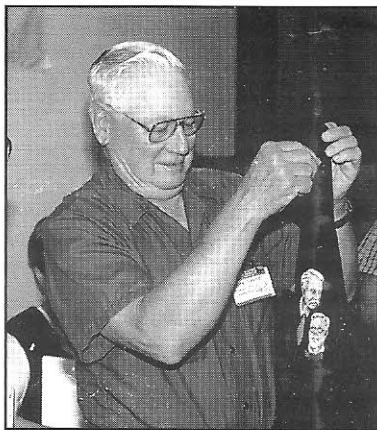


Donnie Pitchford (left) and Sam Brown (right) present Doy Grubbs with one of the 1999 Lum and Abner Memorial Awards.

later, the NLAS staged a recreation of that script, with (alphabetically) Sam Brown as Honeyboy Davis, Tim Hollis as Lum and Mose Moots, Verla (Mrs. Eddie) Huckaby as Widder Abernathy, Donnie Pitchford as Abner, and Laura Pitchford as Zasu Pitts. For announcer, who could ask for better casting than Fred Foy as Wendell Niles? (Mr. Niles, who passed away in 1994, was an NLAS convention guest ten years ago - another anniversary. See the August 1989 issue of the *Journal*, or the 1989 videotape!)

"The doggonedest thing..." Opie Cates was portrayed by Robert Cates - Opie's son!! When it came time for Opie's hilariously horrid rendition of "Glow Worm," Robert produced his father's actual clarinet as a prop! (The taped version Robert pretended to play was performed by Laura Pitchford, but he surprised us by actually squeaking out the first phrase!) Other NLAS "firsts" were the performances of the ladies in the cast (Mrs. Huckaby had played "the Widder" in the aforementioned Mena stage shows), Tim's flabbergasting impersonation of Andy Devine (Mose), and Donnie's version of Abner singing "I Grannies, I Love You" to a newly created backing track. (See our June 1999 issue for the script to this program.)

Only one NLAS member holds the distinction of perfect attendance to our 15 conventions: John "Grand-pappy" Knuppel of Yukon, Oklahoma! "I wonder what's in this tie box?" quipped "Grandpap," as he opened his commemorative gift. Mr. Knuppel received the fourth in a series of hand-painted Lum and Abner ties, which matches the three worn by the "ossifers."



15-year Convention veteran John Knuppel with his newly-created Lum and Abner necktie.

The Saturday evening program was devoted entirely to the multi-talented Opie Cates. As the "ossifers" joked, this convention could have been renamed "the Cates Family Reunion," because all of Opie's children (Bob, Dixie, Dinah, Linda and Liza) were present, bringing with them their spouses, children and grandchildren! Never before has the NLAS been honored

with such a large ensemble of family members paying tribute to their patriarch. Robert Cates led us through Opie's life via photos projected onto two large monitors, and audio clips of his musical and comedic performances.

Other incredible anniversaries were observed! We listened to Opie's own audio "demo" of "I Grannies, I Love You," which was recorded June 26, 1949, exactly 50 years prior to our Saturday programs! The July 1949 half-century old, half-hour *Lum and Abner* CBS TV pilot was offered on videotape, and it proved nostalgic in more ways than one. Introducing it, thanks to a 1985 convention clip, was Roz Rogers, one of our first-ever guest stars (the other being Clarence Hartzell). Be sure to see our October issue for a special salute to Opie Cates!

What a sight it was when all of Opie's children came forward to accept (and pretend to fight over) the third 1999 Lum and Abner Memorial Award, engraved to "The Opie Cates Family." The support, enthusiasm and generosity of the Cates family would make Opie proud. The "distance prize," for the person traveling the farthest to attend, went to a member of the Cates family, Richard Cates Hayes of Santa Barbara, Calif.

Ted Theodore (also a member of the fine OTR organization SPERDVAC, P.O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409) once again provided the guitar accompaniment to L&A's favorite song, "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," the traditional closing to the NLAS conventions. This year, we dedicated the song to Mr. and Mrs. Troy Boyd of Sulphur Springs, Texas. Mr. Boyd has often played the melody on his hand-crafted fiddle, but the couple was unable to attend this year due to illnesses. Get well soon, Mr. and Mrs. Boyd!

The NLAS extended the best wishes of Helen Hartzell, widow of Clarence "Ben Withers" Hartzell. "Auntie Helen" was sorely missed, and we hope to see her back next year!

We were pleased to again have Scott Lauck, "Lum's grandson," in attendance for our Saturday evening meeting. The Mayor of Mena, Henry Sunderman, honored us with his presence during the weekend as well. The sad task of "striking the set" in the Lime Tree Inn meeting room was accomplished by the "ossifers" and members Chuck Anders and Jim Temple.

There was a classic moment that would have made a perfect concluding shot for the 1999 video highlights. Sadly, no cameras were rolling! Imagine if you will the Sunday morning departure of silver-haired Fred Foy, about to step into Sam Brown's silver automobile, raising one hand skyward, smiling warmly, and issuing that hearty cry... "HI YO SILVER!"

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford

Lum and Abner® In The News

Reprints of Past Lum & Abner Articles

Things were certainly humming around Mena and Pine Ridge 60 years ago, during July and August 1939. Not only was Arkansas Highway 88 officially being designated the "Lum and Abner Highway" (which it remains today, although unmarked), but the towns were preparing for the first visit to Mena by Lauck and Goff together in many years. Let's look back at *THE MENA STAR* and see what was going on in those exciting summer days!

June 16, 1939

LUM AND ABNER SIGNS WILL BE REPAINTED

For some months it has been noted that the billboards on Highway 71 north and south of Mena which herald the town as the home of Lum and Abner, have been sadly in need of repainting and freshening up, and now arrangements have been made to get the job done.

Last week a group of interested citizens decided that the boards should be repainted immediately in view of the fact that Abner is scheduled to visit the old home town early in July, and to that end, a solicitation was made and money raised to offset the expense of the painting. New and attractive color combinations will be used and the boards should be completed soon.



June 30, 1939

ABNER'S VISIT TO MENA IS DELAYED UNTIL AUGUST

Mr. and Mrs. Norris Goff and two children, who are scheduled to visit Mena this summer, will not be able to get back to the former home until sometime in August. They had been expected in July, after "Lum & Abner" begin their regular summer vacation, but latest information is that the homeward trip will not be made until "Abner" Goff makes a visit to Canada. 'Tis said that the former "Tuffy" will be on a hunting and fishing trip to the Canadian Rockies with Clark Gable, and can't make the home journey until this outing is completed. But Mena friends will be glad to see "Abner" and family whenever they can get away from Hollywood.

July 25, 1939

LUM AND ABNER HIGHWAY WILL BE MARKED

Lum and Abner, Mena's favorite radio stars, have again been honored by the Arkansas General Assembly. During the past week the legislators took time out of consideration of the governor's refunding measure, and adopted a resolution which had been offered by Representatives Roy Riales of Polk and James Fred Jones of Montgomery county, which requested the governor and the state Highway Commission to designate Highway 88 as "Lum and Abner Highway."

When Representative Riales was home over the weekend he reported that he had been advised that suitable markers would soon be placed along the route. These will make it easier for tourists who are Lum and Abner fans to get to Pine Ridge, the community which was named in honor of the program, and is the home of Dick Huddleston, and into Mena, the home town of the two stars.

The resolution follows:

WHEREAS, in 1936 the name of the town of Waters, in Montgomery county, was changed to Pine Ridge, in honor of Chester Lauck and Norris Goff (Lum & Abner), former Arkansans, and nationally famous radio characters, who with their kindly good humor and philosophy have brought pleasure to millions of people and much favorable advertising to Arkansas, and

WHEREAS, because Pine Ridge is the scene of their radio characterization and the location of the Jot 'Em Down Store, operated by Dick Huddleston, who also has brought much favorable advertising to the state by personal appearances throughout the country, and

WHEREAS, State Highway 88 leading to Pine Ridge is traveled by thousands of tourists annually because of the publicity given Pine Ridge by Lum & Abner and Dick Huddleston,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives, and the Senate concurring therein, that the Governor, and the State Highway Commission, be requested to designate State Highway 88 as "Lum & Abner



A solemn-looking gaggle of Arkansas politicians pose with the new sign designating Highway 88 as the Lum and Abner Highway, July 1939.

Highway," and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be duly recorded in the journals of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the 52nd General Assembly in Extraordinary Session, and that the Secretary of State be and is hereby instructed to mail a copy to the Governor, State Highway Commission, Lum & Abner, and Dick Huddleston.

July 27, 1939

"LUM AND ABNER" HIGHWAY NAMED

Governor Carl E. Bailey Wednesday officially designated state highway 88 leading to Pine Ridge, Montgomery county, as "Lum and Abner Highway" in honor of Chester Lauck and Norris Goff, former Arkansans who became famous radio characters. Such designation was authorized by a resolution introduced in the special legislative session by Representative Roy L. Riales of Mena.



Tuffy Goff takes the spotlight as he and Chet Lauck entertain at the American Legion Hut in Mena, August 3, 1939.

August 10, 1939

VACATION OF LUM AND ABNER IS ABOUT OVER

Completing their vacation visit in Mena, Mr. and Mrs. Norris Goff and children Gary and Gretchen left Thursday morning on the return trip to their home at Encino, Calif.

Within the next week or so "Tuffy" will be joined in California by Chester Lauck, his radio partner, and the popular team of Lum and Abner will come back into being after a two months' vacation, and work of preparing programs for the fall and winter broadcasts will begin.

The pair will go back on the air for Postum on Monday, August 28, and thereafter throughout the season will be heard thrice weekly as in the past over a Columbia network. Lum and Abner's present contract with their sponsor extends until next June.

While in Mena Mr. and Mrs. Goff observed their tenth wedding anniversary. The date was August 8. No special big celebration was had, however the popular young couple were the honor guests at the home of Abner's sister, Mrs. A. B. Gordon, where a dinner was served all members of the immediate families of Mr. and Mrs. Goff.

Among the events marking the visit to Mena of the young radio star and his family, was the christening of his children last Sunday evening at the First Presbyterian Church. A former deacon in the local church, Goff said he had felt all along that he wanted the christening to occur in his home church, and so took advantage of the opportunity.

The visit in Mena this summer of Tuffy and Chet was the first time the two radio celebrities had been in Mena at the same time since January 1932, when they were completing their Quaker Oats contract. Both have been back separately several times on other occasions, but never together. They were in the state together on April 26, 1936, and took part in a Centennial broadcast program from Little Rock, at which time the name of Waters was changed to Pine Ridge, but were unable to come on to Mena then.

"It's been a real pleasure to be here," Goff said Wednesday night. "I just walk down the street and feel that I'm right at home."

Following his return from Texarkana, where last Saturday he appeared during the opening of a new grocery store owned by his uncle, D. C. Goff, Norris said he believed Mena was the best town in this part of the state.

"Mena seems to me to be the best town in this area," he said, "judging from the new buildings and improvements made since I left. It's much more alive than I had expected."

He said he hoped his home town continued to grow, and declared he would always be a booster even though perhaps he might have to do it by rather remote control.

August 4, 1939

STAG PARTY IN HONOR OF TWO RADIO STARS

Male friends of Chester Lauck and Norris Goff, and admirers of the hill country characters they portray in the radio roles of Lum and Abner, gathered 125 strong at the American Legion Hut on Hamilton Avenue Thursday night to pay homage to the popular radio comedians who were guests of honor at the informal stag party arranged.

Prior to the luncheon Lauck and Goff were kept busy greeting friends, renewing former friendships, and meeting new admirers with a number of visitors from out of town points in Texas and other surrounding states taking advantage of the opportunity to see and shake hands with the radio celebrities. Serving of the lunch was directed by Marion Arwood of Marion's Coffee Shop.

Former Attorney General Hal Norwood served as master of ceremonies during the talk fest following the luncheon. Among cheers of applause, first Lum and then Abner were introduced and both briefly expressed their pleasure at the reception given them on their visit back home. Dudley Lauck, brother of Lum, was next called upon for a few remarks and was followed on the floor by his father, W. J. Lauck.

Highlight of the evening perhaps was during the closing minutes of the reception when Lum and Abner, at the insistence of the crowd of admirers, consented to reenact a few excerpts from some of their radio programs. A public address system was provided for the occasion

by Jack Darr, and the two boys who made Pine Ridge famous demonstrated their natural talent in a ten or twelve minute skit, much the same as if they were broadcasting.

For the first time at any party or affair similar to the Thursday night gathering, they performed in full view of all present. The microphone was placed in the center of the room, and the show went on. The skit of course was in the familiar dialect used in the regular Lum and Abner radio shows, and after a bit of banter back and forth, Abner introduced Squire Skimp. This part was played by Goff who in the dialect of the jovial old shyster made a few remarks and then introduced Grandpappy Spears. Lauck, as Grandpappy, acknowledged the introduction and in turn presented Dick Huddleston, another speaking part taken over the air by Goff. As the Pine Ridge storekeeper, Goff made a short speech and introduced the rube of the show, Cedric, which part is handled by Lauck. Thus were the principal speaking character parts portrayed to those present and with each introduction there were rounds and rounds of applause.

Thursday night's get-together also served as a farewell for Lum who with his brother Dudley, took the 11:16 p.m. northbound passenger train bound for Kansas City, Mo., from where they will go by airplane on further north into the Canadian northwoods where they will do a week or more fishing in the same vicinity where Abner and his party just spent three weeks snaring the finny tribe just prior to coming to Mena.

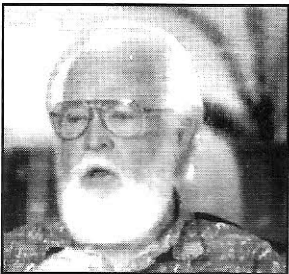
“AND NOW...”

...Let's see what is going on around the country TODAY in the "Wonderful World" of *Lum and Abner*! Well, as we look in on Hollywood, California, today we find an important ceremony taking place, as reported by the Associated Press:

"The Watson family, dubbed the First Family of Hollywood for appearing in more than 1,000 films since 1911, was honored with a group star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Six of the siblings were at the unveiling ceremony: Harry, Delmar, Garry, Bill, Coy, and Louise Watson Roberts. Bobs Watson, age 68, is the youngest but was unable to attend because he is ill. The acting family included two more sisters and their father, Coy Sr., who have died. Coy Watson Jr. is the oldest sibling at age 86.

"Among their credits: Delmar Watson played Peter the goat boy in *Heidi*; Harry appeared in *A Damsel in Distress*; and four of the Watson kids were Jimmy Stewart's family in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*."

The Associated Press failed to mention that Bobs Watson had a major role in Lum and Abner's first feature film, *Dreaming Out Loud* (1940). He was the guest at the 1990 NLAS Convention, observing the 50th anniversary of that movie. As the article stated, Bobs was unable to attend the Walk of Fame ceremony, but sharp-eyed TV viewers may have spotted him recently in the A&E Network's *Biography* installment devoted to Spencer Tracy (Bobs was "Pee Wee" in the Tracy classic *Boys Town*.) Congratulations to the



Bobs Watson in the A&E BIOGRAPHY of Spencer Tracy, 1999.

whole Watson family, and we hope Bobs is feeling better by the time this issue reaches him!

* * *

Meanwhile, down in Mena, Arkansas, there was quite a bit of *Lum and Abner* activity going on about three weeks before the NLAS descended upon on the town for the annual Convention. The members of the Ouachita Little Theatre (the former Lyric Theatre) presented their rendition of *Lum and Abner* on stage on June 3 and 4, in conjunction with the town's annual "Lum & Abner Days" celebration.

The NLAS did have a hand in this production, as we contributed copies of some original 1949 L&A scripts that were used. (These scripts, by the way, had been donated to the NLAS archives in 1989 by announcer Wendell Niles.) The Ouachita Little Theatre did an outstanding job of casting the various roles required. Bill Hays as Lum and Bill Wells as Abner were particularly striking in their makeup jobs. Verla Huckaby handled all the female roles, including Widder Abernathy, ZaSu Pitts, and Lady Brilton. Other group members were seen as Mose Moots,

Opie Cates, Luke Spears, Joe Hemingway the Plumber, and the other familiar figures.

This was not the first association with L&A for some of the performers. Bill (Abner) Wells, a local artist of some renown, created a beautiful painting of the Dick Huddleston Store in Pine Ridge that for many years hung in the home of "Dick's Gurl," the late Ethel Huddleston Ball. Bill (Lum) Hays also had a definite L&A connection, which he revealed on stage during the group's performances. As related by OLT director Eddie Huckaby:

"Bill Hays offered his 'Hatfield's Pine Ridge Pure Sorghum Made Famous By Lum and Abner' to our audiences at a special price of \$6 per jar. He told the story of how Lum and Abner's picture came to be on the label. It seems Chet was visiting with Dick Huddleston in Pine Ridge soon after the business was started in 1953, saw the product in Dick's store, and asked if it were any good. Dick said it was the best he had ever tasted and Chet asked that Mr. Hatfield be called down to the store. When he arrived, Chet asked why Lum and Abner's picture wasn't on the label. 'Because I figured you wouldn't let me put it on there,' was the reply. Chet said, 'Why, I'd be insulted if you don't put it on there.' And it has been to this day!"

* * *

This year's NLAS Convention in Mena prompted an unprecedented amount of media coverage prior to the event. Numerous newspapers and radio stations utilized our annual press release, resulting in several new members for the Society! In addition, Kyle Kellams of Arkansas Public Radio showed up in Mena to do a story on the NLAS. We do not know when this is scheduled to air, but we always welcome new outlets for letting the public know of our 15-year existence. Thanks to all the media who helped!

- Tim Hollis



Bill Hays (Lum) and Bill Wells (Abner) in the Ouachita Little Theatre's stage presentation of L&A, June 1999.



In this rare 1940 photo, Jean VanderPyl performs in a Postum commercial while Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff await their cue to begin unrolling the adventures of LUM AND ABNER once again.

When versatile voice performer **Jean VanderPyl** passed away on April 13, 1999, most of her obituaries rightfully celebrated her 39-year career as the one and only voice of cartoon character Wilma Flintstone. However, Ms. VanderPyl's career as an actress actually goes back to radio days, and among her credits was... you guessed it... *LUM AND ABNER*.

In the 1938-40 period, Ms. VanderPyl was married to the ad agency executive who handled the General Foods account, and at the time, GF's product, Postum, was L&A's sponsor. This resulted in Jean being cast in a number of Postum commercials heard at the opening and closing of several L&A broadcasts (she can be heard as various victims of "coffee nerves" in the shows on NLAS Tape Library tapes #P11 to #P17).

In the late 1940s, Jean again crossed paths with L&A associates when she appeared as the wife on the radio version of *Father Knows Best...* with scripts written by L&A's own Roz Rogers, and produced by L&A's own Forrest Owen.

Her lasting fame, though, came when the Hanna-Barbera Studios cast her in *The Flintstones* in 1960 (in another coincidence, the cartoon was sponsored in part by Miles Laboratories, via the same Wade Advertising that had handled the L&A show!). She subsequently provided most of the female voices in Hanna-Barbera's future cartoon series as well.

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Jean was twice scheduled to appear at the NLAS Convention (in 1995 and 1996), but had to cancel because of illness. She did, however, donate the original print of the above classic photo to the NLAS archives. We regret that we never got to meet her in person.



Jean VanderPyl (2nd from left) and the other original cast members of THE FLINTSTONES: Alan Reed, Bea Benaderet, and Mel Blanc, 1960.