

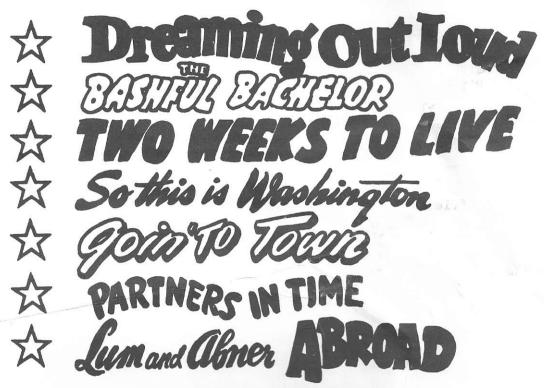


August 1987



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THE NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY

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Tim Hollis

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\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

COVER: The reporter holding a note pad on the left is Jerry
Hausner, in this scene from the
Lum and Abner feature TWO WEEKS
TO LIVE (1943). (Photo courtesy
of Mr. Hausner.)

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of Chester Lauck, Jr.

THEY'RE SPARKIN HORSELESS BUGGY Style

## THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

AUGUST 1987

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SAM BROWN PRESENTS THE L&A MEMORIAL AWARD TO MRS. HARRIET LAUCK AT HER HOME IN HOT SPRINGS, JUNE 19, 1987



## EVERYBODY'S FRIEND

Jerry Hausner occupies a position unique among Lum & Abner's associates in Hollywood. Not only did he become acquainted with them during a critical period early in their careers, but he went on to play more different roles on their show than any other performer outside of Chet & Tuffy themselves.

As with many performers, there was nothing in his background to indicate that he would be making his way in show business. He was born on May 20, 1909, in Cleveland, Ohio, into the family of a struggling shoe store owner, Max Hausner. According to Jerry, they managed to exist just above poverty level.

About the time Jerry reached his teenage years, he began to hang around the local Cleveland vaudeville theatres. On one of these adolescent excursions he happened to catch a performance by a Spanish clown named Pepito. Pepito's act consisted of imitating various types of baby cries and gurgles, and young Jerry Hausner was fascinated by them. Backstage, he asked Pepito to teach him how the act was done. After initial hesitation ("You might take my job away from me," Pepito said prophetically), the clown demonstrated to Jerry how to constrict his throat in order to effect the sound of a baby. This talent was to serve our friend well in the ensuing years.

Time passed, and Jerry entered vaudeville himself, partnered with his girlfriend, Velma McCall, also from Cleveland. By the early 1930's, radio was beginning to make inroads, and station WTAM in Cleveland was utilizing the services of a couple of other struggling performers, Chet Lauck and Norris "Tuffy" Goff, known on the air as Lum and Abner. After their first success in Chicago in a series for Quaker Oats, they had fallen on rather hard times. During their tenure at WTAM, word came that the Ford dealers of Chio wanted an audition disc from them for a new type of show to be called the "Friday Night Sociable."

The manager of WTAM asked Jerry if he would be willing to assist the two boys from Mena in the preparation of their audition. He agreed, and after consulting with Chet & Tuffy, decided he would appear on the show as a traveling medicine—show salesman who would attempt to bilk them in some way or another. The time came to record the show, and Jerry prepared a page of jokes in the "wise guy" characterization he

had adopted in vaudeville. When he made his entrance, much to his surprise Chet & Tuffy plunged into one of their famous ad-libbing sessions, leaving him standing there with a page full of half-jokes. But the Ford dealers must have liked what they heard, because the "Friday Night Sociable," as hosted by Lum and Abner, became tremendously popular, and the L&A series did not fall on hard times again until the advent of television, which was still just a glimmer in the distant future.

A few years later, in 1936, everyone's fortunes had improved even more. By then, Jerry was living in New York City, while in Chicago Lum and Abner were going full steam under the sponsorship of Horlick's Malted Milk. In February of that year, Chet & Tuffy took their show to New York for a few days, and since they were unfamiliar with the metropolis, they called upon their old Cleveland pal Jerry Hausner to show them around. As it turned out, he was going to be out of town on a tour, so instead he fixed them up with Velma McCall, who was also living in New York. L&A were so impressed with Velma during their time with her that once they got back to Chicago they sent her a telegram inviting her to come and work for them as secretary and office manager. She accepted, and the association lasted for the next ten years. Jerry himself did finally get together with Chet & Tuffy that July, when the three of them wound up on the same bill at the Palace Theatre in Cleveland ( see the June 1987 Jot'Em Down Journal ).



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1937 found L&A moving their whole operation from Chicago to Hollywood, and of course Velma went with them. Jerry also migrated to the West Coast, and during the summer he was written into the show in a regular role...the first actor to appear on the show other than Chet & Tuffy. He became Spud Gandel. a small-time crook. Since no recordings and very little other material exists from this period, almost nothing else is known about this character. Later, in one of the 1940 episodes, Abner mentions that Evalena Schultz "married Spud Gandel back in 1938." So, it is safe to assume that Lum probably had no love lost for this character ... at this same time, Jerry helped write gags for the 1938 Lum & Abner Almanac (subtitled "L&A's Adventures In Hollywood") and The Jot'Em Down Store Catalogue, Calendar, and Party Book ( which included a couple of references to Spud Gandel).

On April 18, 1939, Jerry made the big step and married Velma McCall. The wedding reception was held in the Hollywood home of Tuffy & Liz Goff; something must have been done right, because the marriage lasted until Velma's death on December 31, 1978, after a long illness.



JERRY AND VELMA MC CALL AT THEIR WEDDING RECEPTION IN THE NORRIS GOFF HOME, 1939

Beginning in 1941, Jerry started to pop up on the Lum & Abner program in a multitude of roles. The first and most famous of these was the phoney Hindu miracle man Prince Ali Kush, whose real name (according to Squire Skimp) was Louie. For this character, Jerry ad-libbed his way through a jumble of double-talk, incorporating pig Latin, nursery rhyme phrases, nonsense words, and even the names of some of his friends and acquaintances (during one tirade, there is a clear reference to Mrs. Goff's maiden name, Liz Bullion, as well as Tuffy's son Gary). While plotting with Squire, the fake Prince's voice was a New Yorkish gangster accent.

Jerry turned honest, even slightly daffy, in his next appearance about six months later. In the story of Lum & Abner's Wonderful World Apartments, he appeared as the befuddled J.W. Tiffin, whose motto was "I never can remember a name, but I always forget a face."

At this same time, and in fact ever since his move to California, Jerry was kept extremely busy on other radio shows as well, primarily because of the baby-crying act he had learned from Pepito the Clown. He cried and gurgled as Baby Dumpling on the "Blondie" show, and as Robespierre, the baby brother of Fanny Brice's "Baby Snooks." He also appeared as scores of anonymous babies on other series. Naturally, this talent did not go unnoticed by L&A, so in July 1942 a mysterious lady left her baby in the Jot'Em Down Store, setting off a new mystery for L&A to solve. When the baby's father finally showed up over a month later, his voice might have sounded vaguely familiar: it was Jerry Hausner once again.



JERRY PERFORMING WITH JANE WYMAN (MRS. RONALD REAGAN AT THAT TIME)

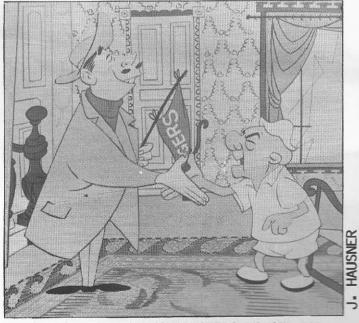
After this appearance, Jerry answered Uncle Sam's call and entered the military, where he continued to perform on the Armed Forces Radio Service in a number of shows. On furlough in the spring of 1945, he visited his old pals L&A in the guise of another of his trademark shady characters: the "man with the black hat" who sold Lum the accursed Kunlun Diamond.

Well, the war ended (thankfully), and Jerry returned to civilian life. In 1946, he came to L&A's store again, this time in the role of Bob Hope's fictional manager, Jimmy Diamond. He found his attempts to line up personal appearances for Hope in Pine Ridge completely useless. Between times, Jerry found himself performing regularly in the series "Big Town" with Edward G. Robinson, and "The Adventures of Sam Spade," as Sam's agent, Sid Weiss.

Velma retired as Chet & Tuffy's office manager in 1946, and moved on to greener pastures. Jerry appeared on the show less frequently after that, although according to Clarence "Ben Withers" Hartzell Jerry worked on "Lum & Abner" more than once during 1947 and 1948. However, since these two years of shows have not been located on tape yet, we know nothing about the roles he might have played.

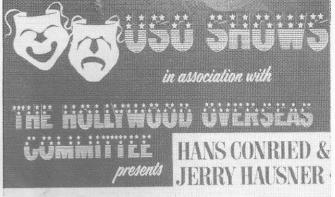


JERRY AND FRIEND IN "ARTHUR'S PLACE



ONE OF THE MANY CHARACTERS VOICED BY JERRY IN THE MR. MAGOO CARTOONS

In 1949, famed animated cartoon director John Hubley asked Jerry to help him find a voice for a new character being created by his studio, United Productions of America (UPA). Jerry took a look at the early sketches and suggested an old friend of his from Cleveland, Jim Backus. And so was born the near-sighted Mister Magoo. For the next several years, Hausner and Backus worked together on the Magoo cartoons, with Jerry providing the voice of Magoo's dimwit nephew Waldo, as well as numerous incidental voices.







J. HAUSNER



JERRY DEMONSTRATING HIS BABY-CRYING ACT ON ARTHUR GODFREY'S SHOW, 1962

During the early 1950's Jerry began to concentrate on television. When the "I Love Lucy" series began in 1951, Jerry was there as Ricky Ricardo's fast-talking agent, coincidentally known as "Jerry The Agent." And naturally, when Little Ricky was born, it was our old friend Jerry who provided the gurgles and cries. He remained with the show until 1953, when he had an argument with hot-tempered Desi Arnaz and quit.

Sitcoms proved fertile ground for Jerry's performing style, and throughout the 1950's and early 1960's he appeared in a variety of roles on "I Married Joan," "The Patty Duke Show," "The Dick Van Dyke Show," and many others. In 1964 he had a regular

J. HAUSNER



AFTER 50 YEARS SPUD GANDEL RETURNS TO THE JOT EM DOWN STORE AND IS UP TO HIS OLD SHENANIGANS

part on a short-lived sitcom, "Valentine's Day," starring Tony Franciosa. Jerry also appeared in many movies, including OFF LIMITS with Bob Hope and Mickey Rooney, MA AND PA KETTLE BACK HOME, SAILOR BEWARE, with Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis, WHO'S MINDING THE STORE, again with Lewis, and made a dramatic appearance in Stanley Kubrick's PATHS OF GLORY, with Kirk Douglas.

For two years Jerry & Velma were stationed overseas with Radio Free Europe, but he returned stateside to find himself busier than ever. When UPA Studios began a new series of made-for-TV Magoo cartoons in 1960, and a similar set of Dick Tracy films at the same time, Jerry returned to the studio to provide voices and serve as dialogue director.

Late in the 1960's, Jerry eased off of TV and back into live theatre, touring with a long succession of stage plays, many with his good friend Hans Conreid. He and Velma also traveled to various foreign



JERRY HAUSNER TODAY, SPEAKING AT THE 1987 NATIONAL LUM AND ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION

countries with their 16mm motion picture camera, and the resulting travelogue films were in great demand for TV and personal appearances.

Jerry finally made it into semi-retirement, but emerged again in 1985 for a role in the TV-movie AMOS, which again starred Kirk Douglas. In this drama, which dealt with cruelty in a nursing home, Jerry was seen as Sol Kessler, a former delicatessen owner and a resident of the nursing home.

In 1987, Jerry appeared at the NLAS Convention and reminisced about his long career. He was presented with one of the 1987 Lum & Abner Memorial Awards for his performances and friendship with Chet and Tuffy, as well as the hours of entertainment he has given us all in his other performances. Clarence Hartzell says, "Jerry has more friends than anyone I know." Anyone who meets Jerry Hausner can clearly see why this is true!

- Tim Hollis

---Advertisement-----

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## Surprise, Surprise The 1987 NLAS Convention

Scorching temperatures and surprise afternoon thunderstorms couldn't keep the show from going on at the 1987 NLAS Convention on June 20 & 21. Our sincere thanks go out to all of our loyal members who showed up and helped make this year's meeting our most successful yet!

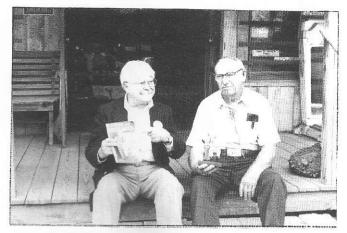
The Squire Skimp of this year's meeting turned out to be the weather. Severe storms forced a delay in Jerry Hausner's scheduled arrival, but he finally made it after all. But it seemed that just when noone was expecting it, the storms would return, regardless of where the people were or what activity they were involved in. More than one wished they had brought soap along so the surprise showers wouldn't have been a total waste of water.

Besides the weather, there was another surprise guest in the person of one of our members, Mr. Trov Boyd of Sulphur Springs, Texas. What distinguishes Mr. Boyd is that back in 1942 he entered Science and Mechanics magazine's contest to make a wood carving of Lum & Abner, and he won 7th Prize in that compe-Mr. Boyd and his wife brought along his award-winning carving, which was the subject of much admiration and photography.

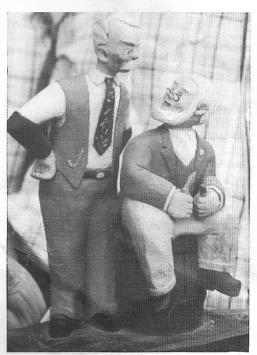
The official meeting and dinner at the Holland House Restaurant in Mena went off without a hitch. Besides Jerry Hausner and the Zekatif Ossifers (minus Rex Riffle, who was forced to stay at home this year) other honored guests included Lon & Kathy Stucker of the Lum & Abner Museum, and also Mr. & Mrs. Chet Activities began with recorded messages Lauck Jr. from absentee Honorary Members: Grandpa Jones, Bobs Watson, Roz Rogers, Bob Dwyer, Clarence Hartzell, Elmore Vincent, and Elsie Mae Emerson. Then came a video retrospective of Jerry Hausner's appearances in radio, television, and films, which served as an introduction for the man himself.

Jerry was kept busy answering questions and relating anecdotes about his 60 years in show biz, demonstrating his famous baby-crying act, and highlighting his appearance by helping to recreate an original Lum & Abner script from June 14, 1937, in which L&A were in jail (accused of stealing money from the post office ), and Spud Gandel only helped make matters worse.

Afterwards came the presentation of the 1987 Lum and Abner Memorial Awards. The recipients this year were Mr. Hausner, the Chester Lauck family, the Norris Goff family, and Elmore Vincent (who had planned on being with us but had to withdraw at the last minute ). The Lauck family award had been presented to Harriet Lauck earlier, at a private ceremony on Friday, while those for Mrs. Goff and Mr. Vincent were mailed to them. At this time, recorded and written messages from Mrs. Lauck and Mrs. Goff were



JERRY HAUSNER AND MR. TROY BOYD



MR. BOYD'S AWARD-WINNING 1942 CARVING



UNCLE DONNIE PITCHFORD PRESENTING THE L&A MEMORIAL AWARD TO JERRY HAUSNER

also heard. In addition, prizes were awarded to the members who had come the longest distance to be present. Pilson Potter of Los Angeles received a specially-baked loaf of Lum's famous Prune Bread, and a video cassette of L&A-related material was presented to Alfred Clark of Urbana, Ohio.

In addition to those already mentioned and their families, other members attending this year were Mr. & Mrs. Cecil Mick (Paducah, KY), Roger Chambers (Fort Worth, TX), Charles Thurman (Paducah, KY), John Knuppel (Yukon, OK), and Clark Sexton (Longview, TX). (If we missed anyone who attended, it's because we somehow didn't get you in our notes!)

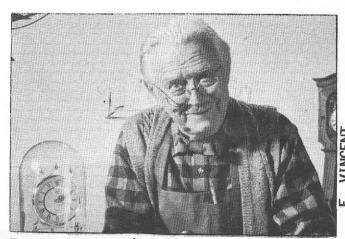
On Sunday, the annual festivities in Pine Ridge were as big a smash as always, even though the heat

made it certain that no one would be expecting a dramatization of "Lum & Abner's Christmas Story." Several of the original members of Dick Huddleston's Pine Ridge Follies were present, including Mr. Dewey Ward, who appeared in the band under the name of Spud Gandel! It was a historic occasion when Mr. Ward (Spud's body) finally met Jerry Hausner (Spud's voice) for the first time.

Everyone agreed that this year would be hard to top, but plans are already underway for next year. Hopefully Elmore Vincent will make it at last ... for those of you who might not know it, Mr. Vincent is the one who appeared on the L&A series in 1944 as Abner's crusty old Civil War-veteran papa, Phinus Stonewall Peabody. Begin making out your schedule now to help welcome him next year!!



THE MEMORIAL AWARD FOR THE GOFF FAMILY



ELMORE VINCENT (PHINUS PEABODY), ANOTHER RECIPIENT OF THE L & A MEMORIAL AWARD



JERRY HAUSNER DEMONSTRATES HIS FAMOUS BABY-CRYING ACT DURING THE NLAS DINNER



THE TWO SPUD GANDELS: DEWEY WARD AND JERRY HAUSNER

### NLAS SPOTLIGHT

And now, let's see what's going on down in Southern Illinois. As we look in on this area today we find Lym & Abner to still be very much alive through the efforts of two Christian Church ministers, Ed Frost of Vienna and Kurt Jensen of Murphysboro. the past 14 years Ed and Kurt have brought their impersonations of Lum and Abner to radio, television. senior citizens groups, nursing homes, church banquets and camp retreats, parades, and other activities. Both were personally acquainted with Chester "Lum" Lauck, and in Kurt's office hangs his framed letter from Lauck giving them the permission to impersonate the Lum and Abner characters. For years Kurt has used the Pine Ridge cast in cartoon format for his church newsletters. "Lum called us his special ambassadors to southern Illinois," Kurt recalls. Ed adds, "Chet was our biggest supporter back in the early 1970's and we only wish he was still around to see how far we've gone with this." Ed portrays Lum in the pair's programs and appearances. Kurt, who actually was doing Lum and Abner impersonations as far back as 1970 with his cousin Bruce Graff, por-"Bruce and I did L&A at a high school talent show and the teachers thought we were great," "Our fellow classmates didn't un-Kurt recollects. derstand us, but we thought our production never hurt our grades any."

In the early 1970's, Frost and Jensen lived in an area in southern Illinois where they could listen to Lum and Abner five times a day from five different stations! Two of these stations eventually put Ed and Kurt on the air as Lum and Abner historians. But by 1983 the only station in the area still airing the show was WGGH in Marion. The current sponsor of the series on WGGH is Mack's Super Foods, a large Marion supermarket. Mack James and his wife Fritsi not only buy the air time for "Lum and Abner," but also provide their own style of homespun humor by doing their own commercials before and after the L&A programs.

In October 1986, Mack put together a special drawing for over \$5000 in free prizes. About this same time, Ed and Kurt, averaging a booking per month with their own act, were invited to be interviewed on WGGH about Lum and Abner, and the idea was born to have the three interested parties go together on this special drawing, set for October 11. WOCH would be on hand to broadcast a special live remote segment, including spot interviews as well as live coverage of the hour-long drawings. Ed and Kurt were to appear in costume and character as Lum and Abner, and several promotional commercials were made and used by WGCH during the week before and the week following the event.

Frost and Jensen were given a 16-foot area in which to display Lum and Abner memorabilia. The local Curtis Mathes store donated the use of a wide- 8



ED FROST (LEFT) AND KURT JENSEN (RIGHT) IN MAKEUP AS YOU-KNOW-WHO

screen television and VCR on which several of the Lum and Abner movies could be viewed. A vintage Philco radio was also displayed and wired to play Lum and Abner programs. Brochures on the NLAS were distributed, as well as material from Chet Lauck Jr.'s Lum and Abner Associates, as many people inquired about the availability of the movies. Kurt and Ed were also given a store microphone, with which they periodically talked "over the party line" to shoppers.

After several hours at the Lum and Abner display, Ed and Kurt were escorted atop a large outdoor stage for the prize drawings. Hundreds of folk crowded the store's parking lot and traffic in Marion was tied up for an hour while WOGH broadcast the whole affair. This event's success for Mack's Super Foods, Ed and Kurt, and WGGH, demanded a repeat performance on April 4, 1987; this time, NLAS Vice-Prez Singin' Sam Brown was also on hand to promote the Society.

Ed Frost and Kurt Jensen appear to be two of the NLAS's most active members, and both have a point to make of all of this. They insist that other L&A fans might get together with the radio stations in their areas that play Lum and Abner, and with the sponsors of those shows special promotions for L&A and the NLAS might be worked out. The result would be renewed interest in Lum and Abner, plus more revenue for the radio stations and sponsors, and more members for the NLAS.

The NLAS does appreciate active members such as Ed and Kurt. Also, we appreciate the stations that carry "Lum and Abner" and the companies that see fit to sponsor the broadcasts. WCCH and Mack's Super Foods have joined together in an unprecedented push for Lum and Abner in the 1980's. We hope that others may follow suit!

## The Secretary's Desk

Hot and sticky greetings from the Zekatif Seketerry's office! As usual, your Zec Sec returned from the annual Convention only to find a pile of work staring him in the face, and it has not all been

caught up yet.

I'd like to take this corner of the <u>Journal</u> to express appreciation to some who helped make our yearly pilgrimage to the Ouachitas the success it was. The first THANKEE goes to Jerry Hausner himself, who braved storms, delays, and innumerable other annoyances to be with us. Another THANKEE to Ms. Shirley 'Gypsie' Cannon of Mena, who was a great help with advance publicity, and helped us discover literally tons of priceless material lurking in the files of the <u>Mena Star</u> newspaper. You will be seeing some of it popping up in the <u>Journal</u> starting with our very next issue.

Ethel Huddleston Ball was her usual gracious self during our annual visit, and the same goes for Mrs. Harriet Lauck. We can't thank her enough for her hospitality in allowing Zekatif Ossifers and their entourage to invade her home for a wonderful visit. We can see that even though the fictional "Lum" never married, Chet Lauck himself couldn't have done any better if he had married Evalena Schultz personally!

Something to think about: we are considering moving the date of next year's convention away from its traditional Father's Day weekend to give more members an opportunity to attend. Should we schedule it for another time in June, July, or August, what would be the best time for you? We'd like to know what the members think.

The question that seems to be on everyone's mind seems to be WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE TAPE LIBRARY CATALOG?? Don't worry; we're working, we're working! By the time the October issue of the <u>Journal</u> is released, the new, improved catalog should be ready. In the meantime, if you already have a catalog, continue using it as always, but if you don't, just be patient. It will be worth the wait...we hope.

I'd like to welcome our newest Honorary Members: Elmore "Phinus Peabody" Vincent, and radio veteran Parley Baer. Mr. Baer appeared in bit parts on the L&A series in the late 1940's, as well as on several dozen other radio shows. He is currently the voice of Ernie Keebler on the Keebler cookie commercials.

As a quick glance at this issue will show, we are instituting some new features, with others in the works. We'd like to know what you think about them. As always, address comments, criticisms, threats, etc, to the Executive Secretary, Tim Hollis, Route 3, Box 110, Dora, AL 35062. So long fer now!



## Rex Riffle's PARTY LINE

HOWDY, FOLKS, HOWDY!

I'm ole Grandpappy Squire Riffle, or better known as Rex Riffle from Buckhannon, West Virginia. I am the Publicity Director for the NLAS. If you have read the fine print on the Contents page of each issue of the <u>Journal</u> you might have seen my name; I'm listed last in the Zekatif Ossifers credits. Oh well, gotta start somewhere.

Anyway, I just thought I'd get on the party line here and talk to you all. We've been putting this <u>Journal</u> out for quite a while now, and most of the stuff in it has been our rantings and ravings about Lum and Abner and everything and anything that we could find about them. But we know that Chet and Tuffy wouldn't have had much of a show if they hadn't had such loyal fans and listeners over the years.

So, we also know that we wouldn't have much of a Society if it wasn't for all of you out there who send in your dues and hopefully keep standing beside your mailbox just waiting for the next <u>Journal</u> to get there. We know that Chet and Tuffy received a lot of fan mail. They received all types of requests for autographs, suggestions on plots for their show, questions about people and places in Pine Ridge and so on.

Well, we don't expect that you will be stuffing our mailboxes desperately wanting our autographs, but just maybe we could hear from you once in a while. I am positive that all of us would like to know if you can remember when Lum and Abner were on the air. Did you ever see them in person, perhaps during one of

their stage shows? Are the programs broadcast in your area now? Did you ever write to them while they were on the air, and what sort of reply did you receive? Did you ever drink Horlick's Malted Milk or take Miles Nervine? Have you ever been to Pine Ridge? Do you know anyone who knew Dick Huddleston? Did you ever open up a library in a store? Or have you caught yourself saying, "Let me set down, I'm wore to a frazzle... WORE TO A FRAZZ-ZZULL!"

Well, if you have ever had any of the experiences above, then you are quite possibly just the people we are wanting to hear from. In all seriousness, we would really like for you to write in and tell us anything about the show, the characters, what you like about the old fellows, or what you like or dislike about The Jot'Em Down Journal.

Please write to us. If you don't mind terribly, we'll put your comments in the <u>Journal</u> under a new column that Yours Truly will be in charge of. I'm gonna call it "The Party Line." Write as many times as you want or as much as you like ... if need be, we may have to condense your letter for publication, but the main thoughts will still be there. Please address your letters, postcards, etc., to:

THE PARTY LINE
P.O. Box 369
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So here's hoping that we'll be hearing from you soon. Let's hope that we get so many letters that the Post Office has to give us our own zip code.

- Rex Riffle



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