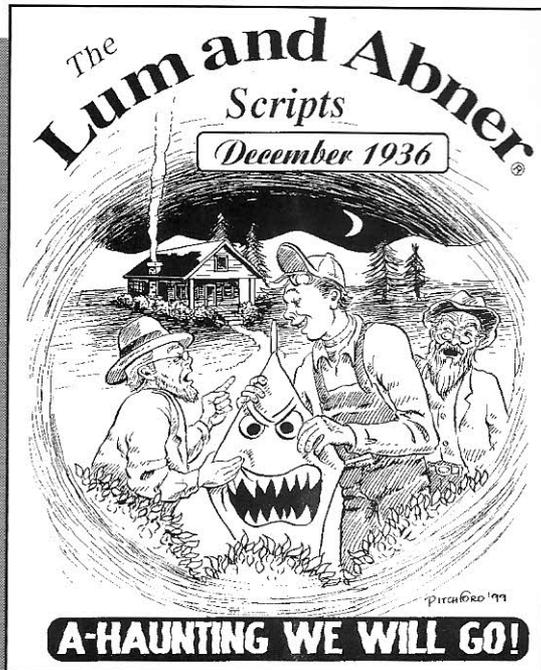


FEBRUARY 1999

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 1999

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Cover: In this wonderful character
 shot, L&A could very well be
 debating the merits of their new
 half-hour show format. (Photo
 courtesy of Joe Riddle)

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After **MANY** years of work on our part, we are at last able to release one of the largest "missing" chunks of the **NLAS Tape Library!** The existing programs from **1947-48** have at last been collected and organized, and are available now!

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While many 1947-48 episodes are still missing, we now have the **last four months** (June-September 1948) before the 15-minute shows converted over to the weekly half-hour format. L&A get into even more trouble just before they announce their change in broadcast schedule!

As usual, to obtain the **NEW Tape Catalog pages**, just send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the NLAS Executive Secretary, 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062. If you need a whole new catalog, the price is **\$3.00**. If you have an **OLD** catalog, **remove the pages containing Tapes #230 through #234**, as these have been withdrawn and incorporated into the new numbering system.



In December 1968, Ralph and Dorothy McClure were on a vacation to visit their family roots in the Midwest. The McClures had been retired for a few years, but still lived in Fresno, California. Ralph had a cousin who had recently moved to the community of Pine Ridge, Arkansas, so a stop there was included in the agenda. It was a stop that changed the lives of many people!

The McClures were both antique collectors. Ralph specialized in guns, and Dorothy in art glass. They had bought and sold in antique shows all over California, and had amassed large collections. They had thought about opening a shop somewhere, but hadn't found the ideal spot. When they drove into Pine Ridge, they saw an old store with a fading sign that said "Dick Huddleston of the Lum and Abner Program." The store was still open, but in a run-down state of disrepair. If someone didn't do something about the old building soon, it would be lost forever. After all, it had been built in 1909. Suddenly there was a possible solution to both problems.

The McClures knew all about *Lum and Abner* on the radio in the 1930s and '40s, and realized the name recognition potential of the old general store and the town. In 1968 most people still thought "newer is better," so there was not the general interest in nostalgia that there is now, but the movement was beginning. They knew that at least the people of their own generation would come to the Jot 'Em Down Store, and hoped that many others would too.

Ralph's cousin told them that Dick Huddleston's daughter lived just across the street from the store, so they visited Ethel to get an idea of how she felt about selling the family business. They explained their plan to sell antiques and souvenirs, and preserve the history of Pine Ridge and *Lum and Abner*. Ethel did not keep the store open on any regular schedule, but she did allow visitors to browse through the old merchandise that was still on the shelves. Dick had sold *Lum and Abner* souvenirs since the program's inception in 1931, but it was still basically a general merchandise store.

A deal was struck, and the fixtures and merchandise were to remain in the store as the beginning of a Pine Ridge museum. The Huddleston home behind the store was part of the purchase. It had once been the centerpiece of Pine Ridge, but had been empty since the death of Dick in 1963; his wife Nan had died in

1958. Ethel and her husband Homer Graham had elected to build their house across Highway 88.

The McClures hurried back to Fresno to sell their house and pack their belongings. They were determined to be open for business at the beginning of the spring tourist season, so they arrived back in Pine Ridge in January 1969. It took several large moving vans to carry all of their possessions and merchandise. People were hired to help clean and repair both the store and the



Ralph & Dorothy McClure

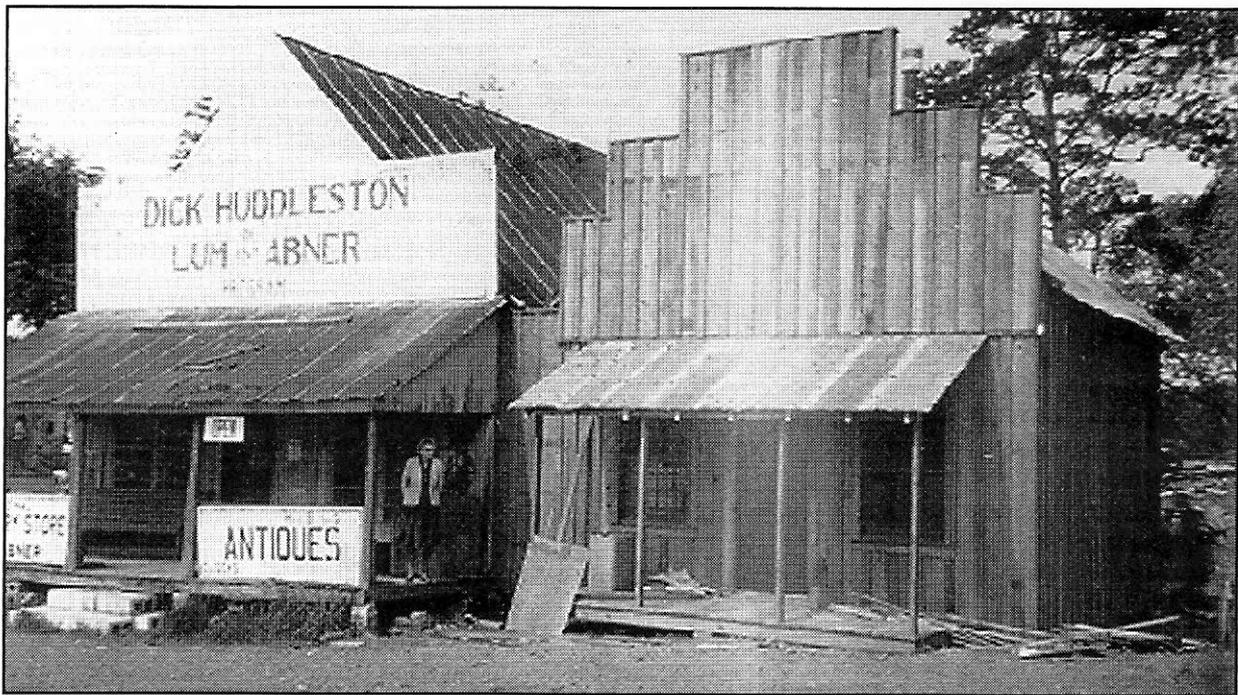
house. The Pine Ridge antiques would not be for sale, so a museum-like area was set up in the back half of the store. The California antiques and local souvenirs would be sold in the front half. The house needed modernizing, but the McClures had to live in it while the work was being done. What was suitable when it was built in 1936 was barely liveable in 1969. Electricity hadn't even come to Pine Ridge until 1945.

In April 1969,

the old store opened with the new owners and a new slant on business. People had never entirely quit coming to Pine Ridge to renew their memories of what Lum and Abner described on the radio, but now they could see it being preserved for their children and grandchildren. Word spread and business was good.

Chet (Lum) Lauck had moved to Hot Springs in the 1960s. His wife Harriet was originally from Hot Springs, and they had retired for the second time, but Chet never could stay away from the public. He had spent the last 15 years as the vice-president of public relations for the Conoco Oil Company in Houston, Texas, and now had a public relations business of his own in which he spoke to gatherings throughout the area. When the McClures told him about their enterprise, he expressed surprise that anyone was still interested in *Lum and Abner*, but was willing to donate memorabilia for display. He gave permission to use the names (which had been trademarked following the Lum's Restaurants fiasco), and gave his blessings. Perhaps he had never really quit performing as "Lum" during his appearances for Conoco, but soon began receiving more requests for more of "Lum." The nostalgia craze was building, with *Lum and Abner* as a big part of what was attracting attention in Arkansas. More and more radio stations across the country were playing the syndicated tapes of the original programs.

As the McClures gathered more things reflecting Pine Ridge and *Lum and Abner* history, it became very evident that more room would be needed for the museum displays. And as more tourists came to visit, more room was needed for souvenirs as well. The programs had been about two stores, one belonging to Dick Huddleston and the other to Lum and Abner. In the real town there were indeed two stores, but the small one was the McKinzie Store, not the Jot 'Em Down Store. However, the structure was still standing. It had been moved when Highway 88 was paved in 1956, and Ethel was using it as a hay barn. For Christmas 1970 she gave it to the McClures to be moved and restored, and to house the Lum and Abner Museum. This new



The Lum & Abner Museum (formerly the A. A. McKinzie Store and a hay barn) under construction next door to the Dick Huddleston Store in Pine Ridge, early 1971.

project was complete by the spring of 1971 and opened that April with local newspaper coverage. More additions were made to the museum collection, and by the 1980s there were four rooms of displays.

Ralph McClure passed away in 1971, but Dorothy continued to operate the stores during the spring, summer, and fall months. She remarried, and with Cecil Stephens, kept up with the tourist trade. In 1979 her son Lon Stucker retired from the US Navy, and came to Pine Ridge with his family. Lon and Kathy have operated the store and museum ever since, adding the post office to their duties in 1983.

The lives of all of these people were changed when Ralph and Dorothy McClure bought the Huddleston property in Pine Ridge, Arkansas. In addition, many unknown lives were touched. Old timers were able to bring their grandchildren to Pine Ridge to better understand the stories of the "good old days." People born during the television era found out about old-time radio comedy, and became avid collectors of trivia and memorabilia, culminating in the formation of the National Lum and Abner Society. The residents of Pine Ridge came to appreciate the history of their community, and to realize that people across the country knew about their small town.

With a real physical entity to refer to, media of all kinds have focused on Pine Ridge. Television documentaries have been taped in the museum. Newspaper and magazine articles have been written for publication all across the country. Students have written major reports on *Lum and Abner*. Local schools schedule field trips to Pine Ridge to study history. The last 30 years have seen many changes across the nation, but Pine Ridge has taken people back 60 years to 1939, when Lum and Abner were at their peak of popularity, and even 90 years to 1909, when the Huddleston Store was new. Progress takes a back seat to nostalgia at the Lum and Abner Jot 'Em Down Store.

- Kathy Stucker

LUM & ABNER: JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1949

We at the NLAS must admit that we have been most gratified by the response to our series of articles analyzing the series of half-hour *Lum and Abner* episodes. While these programs were certainly not "vintage" L&A, they still give us a view of how the long-running show was attempting to stay afloat during the late 1940s. In this installment, we examine the L&A shows of January and February 1949.

JANUARY 2, 1949 - The first show of the new year brings an immediately noticeable change. The "three rings on the phone" opening, a holdover from the later 15-minute episodes, has been completely discarded. Instead, the show now opens with Wendell Niles' announcement: "*The Lum and Abner Show*, on the air for Frigidaire!!" After a fanfare, Niles continues, "Frigidaire, a division of General Motors, brings you a brand new comedy show starring Lum and Abner!" (As the season continues, the opening will be amended to include the names of other cast members.)

After these pronouncements, we still have a brief opening scene before the first commercial. Lum has reached the end of his patience with Abner and his many mistakes: "Air you goin' to go through life actin' like a eediot?" he asks. Abner's typical (for the 30-minute shows) response: "Who's actin'?" During their discussion, Abner reminds Lum that they went into business together 17 years ago... supposedly a reference to the radio show's 1931 debut (although by January 1949 it was closer to its 18th anniversary). Finally, Lum bets that Abner can't go 12 hours without making a mistake of some kind.

Abner's original inclination is to sit still in a rocking chair for 12 hours, doing nothing, but Lum insists he must go about his usual daily affairs. This includes waiting on customer Maude Toops, played by Bea Benaderet (who had made her L&A debut the previous week in the role of a department store clerk). If Maude was intended to become a regular member of the cast, those plans must not have worked out. Benaderet voices her in a whiny, weepy voice that can be humorous, but quickly becomes tiresome. When Ben Withers (Clarence Hartzell) enters to buy poison to get rid of gophers, he tells how he has already tried a method of eradicating gophers developed by Fleeger Zincafoose of Mt. Idy, which didn't work. As Abner wraps up Ben's rat poison, Ezra Seestrunk (again played by Western movie sidekick Horace Murphy) comes in with the big news that J. F. Bigelow, head of the Eastern Division of their Great Horned Owls Lodge, is going to be attending the meeting



Bea Benaderet

that night. Ezra wants Lum to be the one who presents a gold watch to Bigelow during the meeting. Naturally, Abner manages to confuse the box containing the watch with Ben's box of rat poison.

After Wendell Niles explains that he will have no trouble keeping his New Year's resolution to help people, because Frigidaire products are so helpful, Abner and Ben make tracks for the lodge hall to recover the rat poison before Lum presents it to Bigelow. Naturally, Lum's speech contains many "double references" that also apply to the poison. Bigelow, by the way, is played by long-time L&A supporting actor Frank Graham (the voice of Diogenes Smith, B. J. Webster, Gregory W. W. Dobbs, and countless other bit parts from the 15-minute days). Abner narrowly averts disaster at the last moment... Bigelow gets his watch, and Lum doesn't find out about the mixup until the 12 hours are over (but just barely).

JANUARY 9, 1949 - Lum's romance with Ezra Seestrunk's cousin Rowena (Isabel Randolph) cranks back up again after having been dormant for the past couple of weeks. Squire Skimp is building a new subdivision (defined by Abner as "a cow pasture with utilities"), and Lum is eager to buy a lot and build a new house for himself and his sweet intended.

The homes Squire intends to build in "beautiful Scrub Oak Flats" appear to Lum to all look the same, but Squire wisely points out that some houses have the front door knob on the left, while others have the door knob on the right. "You're getting a house as good as the ones they built 30 years ago," says Squire. "In fact, some of the building materials we're using ARE 30 years old." Lum is all set to trade a worthless piece of property Squire stuck him with earlier for one of the subdivision homes, and determines to propose to Rowena that very night.

Difficulties arise (so what else is new?). Rowena is otherwise occupied with an "old friend" from her home town of London (Ohio), Herbert Maddox-Maddox. Lum's eyes turn green, especially when he finds out that Herbert is wealthy enough to buy any house in town. Herbert enters, making many disparaging remarks about the Jot 'Em Down Store ("how is the junk business these days?"). Herbert is excellently portrayed with phony British accent by radio veteran Joseph Kearns. Lum tries to impress Herbert with his own credentials: "Mr. Peabody here owns the Standard Oil Company, and I've got a half interest in Jack Benny." (Benny's much-publicized move from NBC to CBS had just occurred the previous week.) When Lum learns that one reason Herbert is thinking of moving to Pine Ridge is to find a quiet spot to soothe his frazzled nerves, Mr. Edwards gets a fiendish idea.

Wendell Niles suggests that L&A sell a new Frigidaire refrigerator to the happy newlyweds, but Lum has other ideas. Hearing that Rowena and her old flame are to have dinner at Luke Spears' restaurant, he cooks up some noisy distractions to convince Herbert that Pine Ridge isn't so peaceful after all. Among all the slapstick antics that ensue, it is easy to miss the fact that a new, permanent cast member is added in this scene:

Luke Spears himself, played by Dink Trout, a busy (but today obscure) radio character actor who had joined the L&A cast on an irregular basis as far back as 1945. In fact, we are told that during the first three months of 1948, when Tuffy Goff had to be off the show for a serious cancer operation, Trout joined Chet Lauck and Clarence Hartzell to help carry the show... According to writer Roswell Rogers, the storyline involved a murder mystery and Trout's character was actually killed off on the show! (Unfortunately, only a couple of recordings from this period have been located, and neither of them sheds any light on this plot.) At any rate, Trout's portrayal of the eternally cantankerous Luke Spears is perhaps the most consistently funny of any of the new characters created especially for the 30-minute L&A shows.



Dink Trout

Ben Withers is enlisted to help, but Abner has a hard time getting Ben off the subject of his courtship with Myrtle Traverts of Mt. Idy. ("After sharing a cone of cotton candy with her, I realized I was stuck on her.") However, everyone makes it down to the restaurant, and between Lum, Abner, Ben, and Luke, Herbert's nerves are soon worn out and he loudly voices his intention to leave town. In the payoff, Lum finds out that Herbert was Squire's potential buyer for the worthless property.

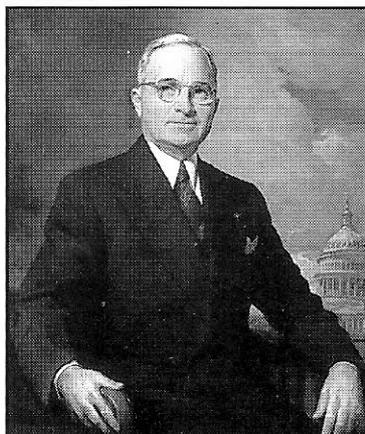
JANUARY 16, 1949 - This is probably the single most famous broadcast in L&A's history, and depending upon whom you ask it is either the very pinnacle of their comic genius, or the ultimate discarding of the style of humor from the 15-minute shows. For absolutely no apparent reason, L&A receive an invitation to attend the inauguration of Harry S Truman as president on January 20!

For most of their career up to this time, L&A had largely avoided political humor. This could have been due to many factors, one of which was that by all reports Lauck and Goff rarely shared the same political views. However, as we saw in our last installment, on the *Lum and Abner* broadcast following Truman's unexpected reelection, a few Washington-related jokes began creeping into the scripts... but nothing like the ones found in this show! To wit:

ABNER: *Whut IS a 'nauguration?*

LUM: *Why, that's the big ee-vent wher ever four years they swear a Democrat in as president!*

ABNER: *Yeah... Recollect when they used to have them... what did they call 'em... Republicans?*



Harry S Truman

LUM: *No, I don't... But course you're older'n I am.*

ABNER: *Don't you think we ort to drop Mr. Truman a post-card and let him know we're comin'? Otherwise he might not be expectin' ta see us at this 'nauguration.*

LUM: *Oh, that's all right... Ther's lotsa fokes that never expected ta see HIM at this 'nauguration!*

And those are all in the first two minutes of the show! More Abbott & Costello-style wordplay abounds when Lum makes their travel arrangements, and tells Abner they will go to Washington by Buffalo. (Why would anyone go through the state of New York to get to Washington DC from Arkansas? Just as an excuse to make jokes!) In short order, L&A are at the train depot and Sister Simpson (again played by Vivian Lasswell) has given them a LIVE chicken to present to the Truman family as a gift. On the train, L&A and Ben Withers can't figure out why Sister Simpson is waving at them so frantically, until they suddenly realize that Ben wasn't SUPPOSED to be going to Washington with them!

The rural threesome has many improbable adventures while blundering about the White House, where the dual roles of a guard and a tour guide are played by the talented Peter Leeds. While searching for the president, Abner opens a door and we hear the piano strains of *The Missouri Waltz*. ("That ain't it, jist somebody practicin' on the pianner.") They also recycle a gag or two from their 1943 RKO movie *So This Is Washington*. Unlike the timeless nature of the 15-minute *Lum and Abner*, he ending is loaded with topical humor that would probably go completely over the heads of most present-day listeners:

LUM: *I grannies, I'm gonna give this chicken to th' next feller that walks across Pennsylvania Avenue and ast him ta give it ta the president!*

BEN: *Looks like he's found somebody. He's talkin' to that gray-haired man with the glasses and bow tie.*

ABNER: *He'll stand ther an' flap his jaw fer two hour. We're goin' to miss that train jist shore as th'...*

BEN: *No, here he comes..*

ABNER: *Well, hurry up, Lum.. Did he say he'd take the chicken ta th' president? I doggies, Lum, you musta give it to th' right man.. Looky ther, he's goin right in.*

LUM: *Well, he said he knowed Mr. Truman 'bout as good as any man alive.*

ABNER: *Wha'd he say when you handed him the chicken?*

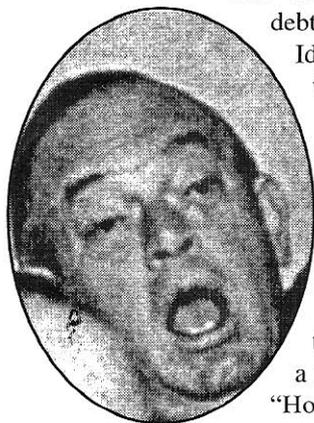
LUM: *Well, I told him hit was a Rhode Island Red and ast him if he could carry it alright... He said, "Well, I carried Rhode Island last fall, I guess I can do it again."*

In the "tag" at the end of the show, Chet Lauck steps out of character briefly to announce that they really ARE attending the inauguration. And he is right... L&A did entertain during one of the functions held in Washington that week, but since we do not know exactly which one, even the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, has been unable to help us locate any of the photos that were surely taken at the time.

JANUARY 23, 1949 - This week's episode is something of a mystery. Some listings of L&A shows have the January 23 installment logged

as "The Farewell Dinner," but we have never located any recording that seems to coincide with this. Just who was getting the farewell dinner remains unknown, since as of the next week all the regular cast members are still in place.

JANUARY 30, 1949 - Lum decides to open the "Trace 'Em, Chase 'Em, and Lace 'Em Collection Agency." Sister Simpson (Vivian Lasswell again) is a potential client, but she only wants L&A to track down a man for her... she doesn't care whether he owes her any money or not!



Ken Christy

Ben Withers wants L&A to collect a \$100 debt from Harold W. Fein ("fine") of Mt.

Idy. The only problem with collecting the money is that Harold is dead.

The Fein estate is now under the direction of Mt. Idy lawyer Durwood Zincafoose, but before going to see him Lum thinks they should visit Mena and buy a used car ("and if we can't afford that, we'll buy a new one"). Arriving at the county seat, L&A are faced with a long row of used car dealerships:

"Honest Yohnson, the Smiling Norwegian," "Honest Gonzales, the Laughing Mexican," "Mad Man Kalua

Kalua, the Howling Hawaiian," etc. (Remember, this is supposed to be MENA they are talking about, not southern California.) The dealer they finally meet with is "Just Plain Bill," deeply voiced by Lum and Abner and Great Gildersleeve alumnus Ken Christy. Bill sells them a motor scooter with a sidecar (Abner gets the sidecar), and our friends hit Highway 88 for Mt. Idy.

Abner thinks he and Lum should advertise with signs like those used by the car dealerships, but Wendell Niles suggests other slogans and sales points more suited for Frigidaire. Bea Benaderet returns to the cast as Zincafoose's receptionist, but Zincafoose himself is an even more familiar voice to longtime



Elmore Vincent as "Senator Fishface," the model for the character of Durwood Zincafoose.

L&A listeners: he is Elmore Vincent, who spent most of 1944 as Abner's half-senile "papa," Phinus Peabody! Vincent's performance as Zincafoose is actually based more upon a character he did on various radio shows for years before he joined up with L&A, a tongue-tied orator then known as "Senator Fishface." Seeing that Abner is bent in half from his ride in the sidecar, Zincafoose thinks he can make a good case:

ZINCAFOOSE: *You say you were hit by the sidecar in the side street... er, sideswiped by the streetcar... The conductor was negligent... niggligent... er, necking... er, he was in a negligee... nebulous... inebriated... OH, HE WAS SWACKED, was he? Well, you've got a good strong case there, Mr. Pearblossom!*

Lum finally gets in a word or two, and tells Zincafoose that they are collecting a \$100 debt for Ben Withers...

ZINCAFOOSE: *Ben Withers! I know him well! We were boyhood schools together... er, schoolboy stool pigeons together... er, we were in reform school together...*

At last, L&A get the info that Zincafoose transferred the debt to Orlo Wormley, who owed \$100 to the Fein estate. Back to the motor scooter, and off to the Wormley home, which is just two blocks off the main street... of Fort Smith, that is. Their knock on the door is answered by the tearful Mrs. Wormley (Bea Benaderet again, using the same voice she employed as Maude Toops back in the January 2 program). When Orlo shows up, he too is miserable and forlorn; for years, we were unable to identify the actor playing Orlo, but the Gassman brothers of SPERD-VAC finally confirmed that he is Hal March. Orlo brightens when he finds out L&A are collecting the Ben Withers debt, because he has already transferred that \$100 to one William Calhoun of Mena (Wormley refers to Mena as "the county seat," even though in Fort Smith that reference would be nonexistent). Naturally, after L&A motor back to Mena, they find that William Calhoun is used car dealer "Just Plain Bill," to whom they still owe \$100 for the motor scooter. As Lum puts it: "Here we travel over 300 miles in a mechanized ice cream freezer to find out who owes Ben Withers that \$100... and I grannies it's US!"

FEBRUARY 6, 1949 - L&A are at the bus (not railroad) depot at Mena when, shades of their 1942 storyline, a lady asks Abner to care for her baby and then disappears, leaving L&A to presume that she has abandoned the child. Their attempts to turn the child over to the authorities are misinterpreted by another woman in the depot, who thinks they are trying to abandon the baby themselves. Typical dialogue:

LUM: *What did you used ta do when Little Pearl got to cryin'?*

ABNER: *Well, I recollect one time she was cryin' and I handed her my watch.*

LUM: *Here ya air, baby... Lookit the nice, purty watch... HEY, DON'T THROW IT! ((CRASH)) Oh me...*

ABNER: *Ha! You know, that's zactly what Little Pearl done with MY watch!*

L&A find Ben Withers working in the information booth at the depot, but you can well imagine how much good that does them. Sister Simpson (Vivian Lasswell) is also at the depot, but isn't any more help than Ben. Elmore Vincent returns for a second appearance as lawyer Durwood Zincafoose.

Besides the above-mentioned characters, this episode has perhaps the largest supporting cast of any L&A show to date. The



Virginia Gregg

Brothers Gassman have identified actress Virginia Gregg as playing the mother and also providing the sounds of the baby. Dink Trout returns to the cast, not as Luke Spears but as the announcer in the depot, reeling off Jack Benny-inspired itineraries such as "Bus now leaving for Hatfield, Cove, and Texarkannnnnnna." An actor identified by the Gassmans as Ed Macks appears as a holdup man who finds his criminal career thwarted by Abner's

innocence, and Macks later doubles as a mumbling bus driver. We do not know who plays the suspicious woman who keeps an eagle eye on L&A and their newly-acquired infant. This is one of the very few L&A episodes ever in which none of the action actually occurs in Pine Ridge.

FEBRUARY 13, 1949 - Of course, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but this week's installment may rate as L&A's UNfunniest episode ever. It starts off with a logical enough premise, as Lum shops for a valentine for Miss Rowena. The salesgirl is played by the talented actress Gloria Blondell, but her funny "Noo Yawk" accent seems a bit out of place in western Arkansas.

That isn't the only thing that seems out of place. We have mentioned that ever since the beginning of the 30-minute shows, Abner's personality has been decomposing, but in this episode he comes across as a full-fledged cynical insult comic. Nearly every remark made by Lum is answered with a put-down from Abner, something that would never have been permissible in the 15-minute shows. (Interestingly, the same thing happened when Abbott & Costello went into radio, and Costello's rather meek, put-upon screen persona was converted into a wisecracking smart aleck for the airwaves.)

Lum, amid Abner's sour remarks, decides to make his own valentine for Rowena. This is where the half-hour show's long-simmering strain of "black humor" really boils over. Lum accidentally stabs himself with the scissors, but how does Abner react?

LUM: *Oh! Oh! Abner, help me! I've cut mysef!*

ABNER: *You don't need any help, looks to me like yer doin' a purty good job of it yersef!*

Lum feels faint at the sight of blood, and yells for some water. Abner hands him a cup and Lum gulps it down, only to discover it is paint remover instead of water. Now Mr. Edwards is REAL-LY upset, but is Abner?

LUM: *Now I'm poisoned! Do somethin'! Air you just goin' to let me set here an' die?*

ABNER: *Would ya rather stand up?*

After failing to extract an antidote from Ben Withers, who relates a long story about the time Osbert Stackpool of Mt. Idy drank paint remover, thinking it was kerosene (?), and getting some rhyming Frigidaire couplets from Wendell Niles, L&A start

off for Mena to find a doctor. (In a strange bit of unoriginality, their coughing, spluttering truck motor sounds a lot like Jack Benny's Maxwell, minus Mel Blanc's comedic talents.) They stop for gas at the pump in front of Luke Spears' lunch room, and Dink Trout returns in his humorous portrayal of Luke. Not only that, but in this show they recreate one of the first routines Trout performed with them back in the 15-minute days: "We ain't got ethyl!," first heard in December 1945.

Their journey to the hospital is interrupted by a motorcycle cop, voiced complete with Irish accent by Ken Christy. (The next time you visit Arkansas, please do us a favor and count how many Irish traffic cops you find on Highway 88 between Pine Ridge and Mena.) He hauls L&A in for a variety of offenses, and they are assigned a lawyer: yes, it's Elmore Vincent, making his third appearance as Durwood Zincafoose!

By the time this whole morbid mess is finished, Lum has spent money to have his pants patched, buy gas, pay for two long distance phone calls to Mt. Idy, pay their speeding ticket, and pay the doctor at the hospital in Mena. He then gives Abner 35 cents to buy a valentine for Rowena.

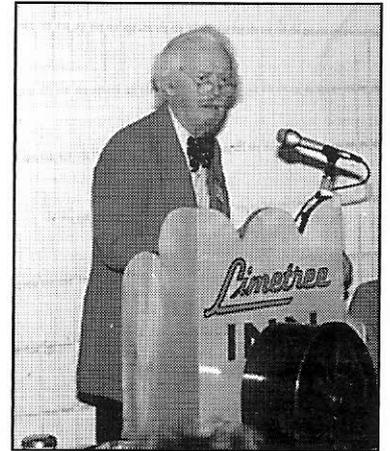
FEBRUARY 20, 1949 - Lum is trying to scrape up enough money to attend the Great Horned Owls' lodge convention, which is being held this year in Leavenworth, Kansas, site of a famous "penintentury."

LUM: *Reckon why they're holdin' it in Leavenworth this year?*

ABNER: *More'n likely so all the past lodge treasurers can attend th' meetin'.*

Lum's fundraising attempts meet with their usual degree of success. He fails to get money out of Ben Withers, Wendell Niles, and Luke Spears. The scene in Luke's restaurant features a bizarre segment with an unidentified actor playing a female customer, Birdie Finch, in a falsetto voice. The studio audience finds his performance utterly hysterical, which would lead one to believe that this actor was doing the part in some sort of costume. No one has yet been able to recognize the actor's voice, and he apparently was not used again on the show (at least in the recordings we have available to us).

Lum finally goes to a loan company, whose operator turns out to be Bill, the former used car dealer from the January 30 show, still played by bass-voiced Ken Christy. An inspector from the loan company will visit the store to check on Lum's financial condition, so Lum arranges with Abner, Ben Withers, Luke, and Birdie Finch to pose as wealthy customers buying thousands of dollars worth of merchandise. The role of the amazed inspector is the *Lum and Abner* debut of our old friend (and 1993 convention guest) Willard Waterman, about a year and a half before his



Elmore Vincent at the 1988 NLAS Convention

moving into the role of *The Great Gildersleeve*. After witnessing all the money being taken in at the Jot 'Em Down Store, Waterman reveals that he is not from the loan company, but an investigator for the Internal Revenue Service!! "Your failure to report all this income will undoubtedly earn you a free trip to Leavenworth!!" he roars at the top of his voice.

FEBRUARY 27, 1949 - This week's installment was one that forever changed the half-hour L&A series, but not because of the storyline, which was rather feeble. Abner has taken a phone message that says "Call me back," but forgot to put down who left the message. Lum goes berserk with fear that he is missing some vitally important phone call.

The momentous aspect of this show is in the two permanent cast members it added. Some people find them utterly hilarious, while others find them somewhat inappropriate to L&A's established characters, but no matter how you feel about them they were a part of *Lum and Abner* for the remainder of its half-hour run. The first one is set up when Lum remembers that Luke Spears has been trying to get him to give a job to a nephew. Luke's nephew turns out to be "Opie Cates of Clinton, Arkansas," a low-key character played by Opie Cates of Clinton, Arkansas. Opie, a bandleader and clarinet virtuoso of the day, came to Lauck & Goff's attention when their writer, Roswell Rogers, moonlighted by writing a comedy series for him circa 1947. Why it was decided to bring him into



Andy Devine (center) yuks it up with his good friends Chet Lauck & Tuffy Goff.

Dorie Rogers 1910 - 1998

In our tribute to the late Roswell Rogers, Lum & Abner's longtime script writer, in the December 1998 issue of the *Journal*, we mentioned that his widow was suffering from a severe case of Alzheimer's Disease, and was not even aware of Roz's passing. We must now report that Dorie (Mrs. Roswell) Rogers died at the age of 88 on December 28, 1998. She and Roz had been married since 1937, and Roz often (sometimes humorously, sometimes seriously) gave her credit for much of his success as a radio and television writer. She accompanied Roz on his historic visit to the first NLAS Convention in 1985, and we extend our deepest sympathy to her family.



Roz & Dorie Rogers in 1995

the *Lum and Abner* cast in mid-season is unknown, but the character assigned to him comes across as a sort of blend of Mousey Gray and Cedric (who by now had been dropped from the cast).

The second permanent cast member is added when Lum gets the idea that someone is trying to court Miss Rowena behind his back... and that someone is none other than Mose Moots. Lum storms down to the barber shop, where the jolly Mose is introduced in the unmistakable voice of Andy Devine. Of course, as has been related in past issues of the *Journal*, Devine had been a very close friend of Lauck and Goff (particularly Tuffy Goff) practically from the time of their arrival in Hollywood in 1937. This was the first time he had ever been assigned a regular performing role with them, though. While there is no doubt that Andy was a comic performer of rare ability, many people have questioned the advisability of casting such a distinctive voice as his as a character like Mose Moots. (In another time, another medium, in the 1960s the Walt Disney Studios would be similarly criticized for casting such well-known voices as Phil Harris for its animated characters.)

We won't spoil the ending of the show by revealing who the phone message turns out to be from, but it could be classified as "none of the above."

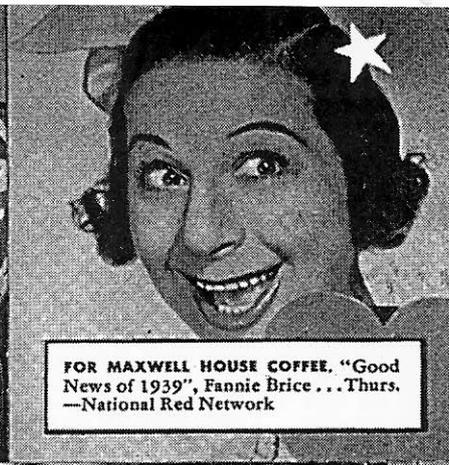
At this point, the continuous series of recordings of the half-hour shows gives way to a more hit-and-miss collection of the programs, but join us in our next issue for a look at the existing shows from March and April 1949!

- Tim Hollis

FACING PAGE: *Lum and Abner are in good company in this 1939 ad promoting the radio shows sponsored by General Foods. This flyer was distributed to grocers to encourage them to stock up on the featured products. (Courtesy of General Foods Corporation)*



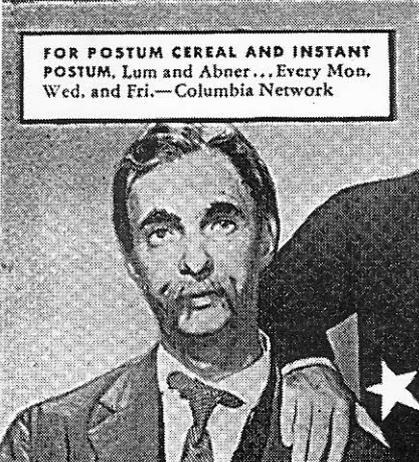
FOR JELL-O. Jack Benny... Sun.—National Red Network



FOR MAXWELL HOUSE COFFEE. "Good News of 1939", Fannie Brice... Thurs.—National Red Network



FOR POST TOASTIES. Joe E. Brown... Sat.—Columbia Network



FOR POSTUM CEREAL AND INSTANT POSTUM. Lum and Abner... Every Mon, Wed, and Fri.—Columbia Network



FOR SWANS DOWN AND CALUMET. Kate Smith... Thurs.—Columbia Network



FOR GRAPE-NUTS. Al Pearce... Mon.—National Red Network

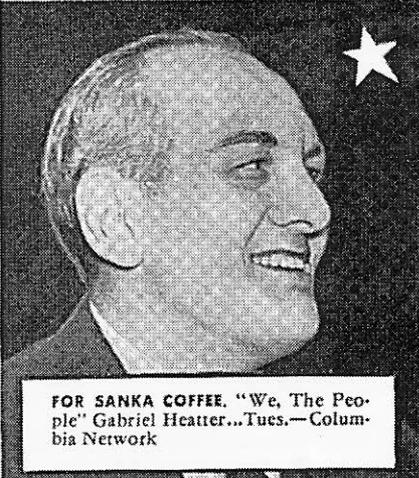
GENERAL FOODS ON THE AIR!

How to Profit from this Great Local Radio Advertising

● You can sell more merchandise . . . make more money by tying up with these successful General Foods radio programs.

For example . . . the grocers of Sioux Falls, S. D. recently staged a Grape-Nuts Week in conjunction with that product's radio program. The result? An immediate increase in sales of *more than one third!* 39%!

Make up your mind to make more profits—*now*. Ask your General Foods representative *how you can tie-up with this powerful LOCAL promotion.*



FOR SANKA COFFEE. "We, The People" Gabriel Heatter... Tues.—Columbia Network



FOR LA FRANCE AND SATINA. Mary Margaret McBride... Mon, Wed, Fri.—Columbia Network



FOR HUSKIES. Joe Penner... Thurs.—Columbia Network

WHY THERE MAY BE

N O

1999 NLAS CONVENTION

This being the first 1999 issue of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*, my fellow NLAS "Ossifers" join me in wishing our members the happiest year ever. However, there is also an "unhappy" aspect of this year for the NLAS, and I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss it with you. To be blunt and honest, the financial stability of the National Lum and Abner Society has deteriorated during the past year. Here are the reasons, followed by possible solutions:

(1) **Problem:** We have not recovered from the expenses of the 1998 NLAS Convention. We "ossifers" have always viewed our annual event as our gift to the members, hence the lack of a charge for attendance. Costs have escalated due to the addition of an extra evening program, additional "room and board" for our guests, and (of course) always rising motel rates and airfare. Please be advised that the "ossifers" and their families pay for their own rooms, meals and transportation - only the guest stars are paid for with NLAS funds, and they do not receive a fee for their appearance. The additional cost of renting the theater for the 1998 "Stage Show" program took its toll on our finances as well.

Possible Solutions: We could scale down the convention, return to "single day" events, charge a nominal "admission" fee, and/or offer only one special guest. The most radical solution would be to **cancel** the 1999 NLAS Convention, should we be unable to finance it, which as of this writing is the most likely course of action. This would be the first time in NLAS history that a convention would not occur.

(2) **Problem:** The NLAS Tape Library, from which we derive most of our operating capital, is not generating as much income as before. The most probable reasons: (A) Present NLAS members have obtained a full collection, and simply do not need additional recordings. (B) Many of the L&A programs rediscovered in the 1990s and reintroduced by the NLAS (such as the 1935 Horlick's series with original commercials), have been extensively "bootlegged" by various dealers. (The master tapes of these programs came from the NLAS archives - do not be fooled by dealers!)

Possible Solutions: The NLAS will continue to search for "new" *Lum and Abner* material to release (see the announcement on page 3 of this issue), and we deeply appreciate the members who do utilize our Tape Library. The monies generated here go to offset the printing and postage of *The Jot 'Em Down Journal*, as well as our annual convention. Occasionally we have to replace or repair our dubbing equipment as well.

(3) **Problem:** *The Jot 'Em Down Journal* costs are rising. We have endeavored for years to produce the most handsome publication in all of OTR fandom, and we feel the *Journal* is an impressive publication. The costs of glossy enamel paper, high-quality photographic reproduction, printing, binding, protective mailing envelopes and annual bulk-rate postage fees have risen over the years. Membership dues do not even begin to cover all of these expenses. Thankfully, Mr. Dennis Campbell of Campbell's Publishing (Tim Hollis's employer), donates the use

of their computer equipment for all the layout functions, which is a tremendous savings, and we are very grateful!

Possible Solutions: This is a tough one. The *Journal* is the very last thing we want to cheapen, insasmuch as it is the one element that is received by every member of the NLAS. As a last ditch effort, we could mail the *Journals* without envelopes (as we used to), and/or use cheaper paper. We could also raise the annual membership fee, something we have fought to prevent.

(4) **Problem:** Our sale of merchandise and vintage memorabilia has dropped considerably. The videotape productions of our Conventions have sold very poorly, and really do not justify the many hours of labor put into them. Of course, the cost of original movie posters and radio premiums has risen dramatically, and these items simply cannot be sold to members as inexpensively as in the past. Thankfully, our volumes of *The Lum and Abner Scripts* do consistently sell out, and we thank you!

Possible Solutions: We may cease to offer videotapes of past conventions, or we may need to raise the price on the ones we do offer, promoting them specifically to raise funds for future conventions. As for vintage memorabilia, we are limited by the high cost we must pay for pieces. Do not wait to see them advertised in the *Journal*; if you are looking for original items, contact the Executive Secretary's office... there are usually a few on hand.

(5) **Problem:** For the first time in our history, new NLAS memberships are not keeping pace with non-renewals. Sadly, the NLAS membership number has dropped slightly during the past year. We fear the possible increase in our annual fee will only add to this trend.

Possible Solutions: We are encouraging you, our valued members, to communicate with us! If you choose not to renew your membership, at least drop us a note and tell us why! Do you dislike the *Journal*? Are you "sick and tired" of *Lum and Abner*? Is our membership too costly? Are the "ossifers" simply too homely for you? Seriously, let us know!

We donate our time to the NLAS, and often reach into our pockets to make this organization continue. It is a deeply personal responsibility to us, and I speak for Sam and Tim in asking that you consider your feelings toward the NLAS. Write to us with suggestions, criticisms, etc. We promise to collect these comments and discuss them in our many telephone conversations, letters, and in person when possible. If we can make the NLAS better for you, we will do so, as long as it is in the best interest of the NLAS members collectively. Feel free to write to Executive Secretary Tim Hollis (see the address on page 3), or you may E-mail him as follows:

CampHoll@aol.com

In closing, the "ossifers" unite in asking for your continued support, whether it is financial or in spirit. We appreciate the word-of-mouth promotion so many of you give us, and each membership is important. "Stay tuned" for future developments! Thank you!

- "Uncle Donnie" Pitchford, NLAS President