



Lum 'n Abner was set in a folksy, rural community based on Waters, Arkansas, where the two men who created the program, Charles Lauck and Norris Goff, grew up. On the program the town was renamed Pine Ridge,

Arkansas and the town of Waters renamed itself Pine Ridge in 1936 in response to the radio program's popularity.

The following interview material originally appeared in the "Jot 'Em Down Journal", a publication of friends of the *Lum 'n Abner* program.

Norris Goff (who played Abner) recounted:

Lum decided that he was going to run for President of the United States on the Demopublican ticket. So, we talked it over one Monday and thought it would be a good publicity stunt if we put out some 'Lum for President' buttons. So we announced it and thought, 'Well, if we get any letters, we'll have some made up.' Well, the letters started pouring in. Our offices were in the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, and by Wednesday there were mail trucks lined up outside; truck after truck, full of mail. We had thought we might get a few, so we had said that in order to get these buttons they'd have to get 12 signatures on each letter ... they had to organize a club with at least 12 members before we would send them a button.

So, each one of these letters had at least 12 names on it, with 200 on some. You could look down the hall, and it was just men coming in with hand trucks with these big mail sacks. The first thing you know, we've got five girls in there opening mail. *Now*, we hadn't talked to the sponsor about paying for this deal, but we started ordering these buttons. First we ordered them in hundreds, then thousands, and then ten thousands; in three days we'd sent out over 32,000 buttons. So we quickly announced on Wednesday that there were no buttons left, because this was breaking us! But after we announced there were no more buttons, my gosh, the mail just kept pouring in, and we kept announcing every night, 'Don't write anymore, because there's no more buttons available.' And the sponsor never would pay for it; we were stuck for the whole thing. I think it cost us about \$10,000 or \$12,000.

And we never opened our mouth again on a free giveaway!

Velma McCall Hausner, for many years the secretary/office manager for the program, contributed her thoughts about her role during this stunt:

I think the biggest job I ever handled was the 'Lum for President' gag in 1936. During the presidential campaign, a 'Let's 'Lect Lum' drive was started on the program as a joke. We thought it would be fun to get out some buttons, and discussed what amount to order. I was in favor of getting 5,000 'cause they came in cheaper in large quantities, but the boys said, 'If we get rid of 2,000 we'll be doing well.' One announcement was made on the air, to the effect that 20 or more persons in a club sending in their names could receive the buttons. Well, it ended up with our sending out 300,000 'Let's 'Lect Lum' buttons, into every state in the Union and points in Nova Scotia and Canada. I had to get nine girls to help me mail them out!