



Interest raised by Encyclopedia's wide variety of entries, subjects

Encyclopedia Assistant Editor Matthew Chase has learned quite a bit about Arkansas. Originally from Maine, he says one of the reasons he took the job of Assistant Editor is that he wanted to learn more about the state he has come to call his home. "I've been surprised at the wide variety of entries we've gotten over the last six months," said Chase. "Topics have ranged from an underwater amphitheater that was meant to become a pyramid [Monte Ne] to a long list of people who have done amazing things in the state of Arkansas. One of the most interesting people on this list is a television pioneer who, to this day, calls Hot Springs his home, Stephen Owen "Steve" Stephens."



Steve Stephens interviews Little Rock, Rainey High School senior Betty Faye Douglas and Tommy Sands, 1958.

Written by Charles W. Cunning, the Encyclopedia entry on Stephens recounts his personal and professional life. "I've always found entertainers very interesting, and Stephens was most definitely a pioneer in the world of entertainment. "Steve's Show," a dance program for Arkansas teenagers, predated "American Bandstand." Stephens was known nationally in a period when the world of television was flooded with entertainers," Chase said.

Stephens' abilities extend beyond entertainment. He worked for Sen. John McClellan in Washington, D.C. as special assistant in charge of media relations. He then formed his own public relations and advertising company before signing on to become director of communications for Stephens Inc. (He shares no relation to the founder of the

company.)

But Stephens is known mostly for his work in television. "I've always been fascinated by weather, and to hear that Stephens was the first broadcaster in the state not only to use radar forecasting the weather but also using it to track Santa was really remarkable," said Chase. Stephens worked for KTHV-Channel 11 as AP&L Weatherman from 1957-1965.



Steve Stephens as AP&L Weatherman from 1957-1965.

Many other entries have captured Chase's interest, from outlaws to Civil War battles to counties and towns around the state. "It's been a real treat to sit down and read through them. Judging from what I've been working on, the Encyclopedia will be a very comprehensive and thorough source of information for anyone wanting to learn about Arkansas. I look forward to continuing my work on the project and learning more about the state," Chase said.

Volunteer Spotlight



Volunteer Katherine Stanick works a half-day a week at the Encyclopedia office. Keeping our filing current is only one of the important tasks she performs.

Coordinator's Column

Jill Curran



The Encyclopedia is very much a group project. It's taking the ideas and effort of a whole lot of people to create such a wonderful resource for our state. One of the groups I'm most excited about working with is Arkansas' students -- high school, college, and graduate. They are contributing to the Encyclopedia Project in a number of ways. For example, we'll be using student-produced videos from the "My Community" Digital Media Project of the Arkansas Department of Economic Development to accompany some of our write-ups on Arkansas towns. These videos are being written, produced, and edited by high school students, most of them from EAST and 4-H Clubs. They'll all get credit for their work on the Encyclopedia website. (If you don't know anything about EAST, by the way, check out their website at www.eastproject.org. EAST is an initiative begun in Arkansas that puts students at the cutting edge of technology. All Arkansans can be proud of EAST and the impact it's having on high school students across the state.)

We're also offering great opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students. They can apply to become Encyclopedia interns, write entries, and fact check for the Encyclopedia -- and get course credit for their work.

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As just one example, Prof. Wendy Richer is structuring her Arkansas History class at Ouachita Baptist University this fall so that students can turn their research papers into Encyclopedia entries. Her students will propose topics, follow our author guidelines, and go through the full editorial process just like other writers. And they'll be listed as the authors of their entries in all versions of the Encyclopedia.

I like to think about the first time students will be able to "google" themselves as authors, videographers, interns, and volunteers. And the first time they'll go for job interviews with their Encyclopedia contributions listed on their resumes.

It's a win-win situation for our students and our state. Older students benefit by researching, writing, and otherwise helping to create the Encyclopedia, and then younger students get to learn more about Arkansas thanks to their work. One of those younger students is my son who is going into the third grade, so I'm especially grateful. He will grow up knowing more about his home state because of everyone who is making the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* a reality. When college students thank me for the chance to work on the Project, I thank them for what they are doing for all Arkansans -- young and old.



Chester "Chet" Lauck (as Lum Eddards/Edwards, left) and Norris Goff (as Abner Peabody, right) pose for a promotional photograph. From the collection of Harold Coogan.

Multimedia Notes

Frank McGarity

Over the past six months I have had the chance to get comfortable in my role as Multimedia Editor. In doing so, I have discovered that Multimedia Editor is probably not the most accurate title for my job, which would more aptly be described as "history detective." While I don't solve any crimes, I am constantly searching for missing persons.

In the process of developing an entry, my job is to find photos, documents, audio, and video to accompany it. The Encyclopedia will include photos and other media that have been published before, but we're also trying to find things the public hasn't seen or heard. This is why you will be seeing my column in this newsletter from now on. I need your help in tracking down a few missing persons, places, and things from the state's past.

If you know of an unpublished photograph, document, audio, or video that exists for any of the following subjects, please contact me at the Encyclopedia office, via email at fmcgarity@encyclopediaofarkansas.net, or by phone at (501) 918-3018.

Brockwell Singing School
Sarah Esther Case
Herman Dierks
Caroline Dye
Archibald Hancock Jr.
Charles Elwin "Preacher" Roe
Sophia Sawyer
Southern Tenant Farmers' Union
Coal mining
Stagecoaches
World War II ordnance plants

UPDATE: In last month's newsletter we asked for video of President John F. Kennedy dedicating Greer's Ferry Dam. We are pleased to report that an individual has let us copy her family's 8mm tape of that event. We have also been allowed to copy a number of original "Lum N' Abner" negatives, such as the one to the left. These early photographs of Chester Lauck and Norris Goff show the two in their early days of Arkansas broadcasting.

Senior Editor's Column

Nathania Sawyer



In the movie "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance," a newspaper editor says, "This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." The line is memorable because the movie's title character built an entire career based on people's belief that he had shot a local villain and "saved" the town when, in fact, he had not.

One of the greatest challenges for the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* is verifying the facts that comprise the entries. We are committed to providing complete and, more important, accurate information about the state and its people. To accomplish our goal, we do the following:

- ◆ require the entry authors to provide their sources for all information included; primary sources are preferred
- ◆ ask our reviewers to vet the content of the entries and challenge any information that is questionable or to let us know if conflicting information exists
- ◆ fact check the information included in the entries.

When I was in graduate school at UALR, I took a class in oral history taught by Frances Ross and Stephen Recken. One of the most important lessons I learned is the need to verify the information provided by the people I interviewed. Memories become fuzzy, dates become approximations, and people often feel the need to make their actions appear politically correct or altruistically motivated. Without comparing non-documentary information against what can be documented, the "facts" can become distorted.

On a related note, we need an army of fact checkers from all across the state to effectively verify the information in the entries. The work will be painstaking but the result will be well worth the effort. If you would like to join our group of "history detectives," contact Jill Curran at jcurran@encyclopediaofarkansas.net or (501) 918-3022.

When I start to write a column, I give it a working title to help keep me focused on a single theme. I titled this one, "Desoto (might have) Slept Here." We want the Encyclopedia to include both the fact and the legend; we just want to distinguish which is which.

Recent Contributors

- C. M. Terry, Little Rock
- Lee A. Johnson, Little Rock
- Gene and Linda Pfeifer, Little Rock
- Stephanie Mason, Sherwood, in memory of Narvel and Billie Jean Winfrey
- Dennis Young, Texarkana
- Kathleen Gammill, Houston, Texas
- Jane and Jack Holt, Little Rock

Mission of the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture

The mission of the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* is to collect and disseminate information on all aspects of Arkansas history and culture and to provide a comprehensive reference work for historians, teachers, students, and individuals for the purpose of promoting the study, understanding, and appreciation of the state's heritage.

The Encyclopedia of Arkansas Response Form

Yes, I would like to make the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* the definitive reference on all things Arkansas. I would like to help in the following ways:

- Name _____ () Tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____.
- Address _____ () Tax-deductible pledge of \$ _____ payable in installments. Please contact me so we can set up a payment plan.
- City/State/Zip _____ () I would like to volunteer my time and/or expertise. Please contact me.
- Phone (_____) _____ () Add my name to the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* mailing list.
- Email _____

Return to:

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or Email: info@encyclopediaofarkansas.net

“I Didn’t Know That About Arkansas”

Guest contributor: Bonnie Sticht, Moro, Illinois



In the spring of 1943 I graduated from Branch High School, in western Arkansas. After graduation, I continued to live with my parents on a farm outside of Branch, which is near Charleston, the home of Sen. Dale Bumpers. I had met a GI from Missouri who was stationed at Camp (as it was called then, not Fort) Chaffee. He was transferred to Camp Campbell, Kentucky in the fall of 1943. In March I went to Camp Campbell and we were married there. In November 1944, he was sent to the European theater and I returned to Branch to live with my parents.

Except for those eight months at Camp Campbell, I lived in Arkansas for the duration of World War II. I followed the war news because my husband and one of my

brothers were in Europe. But I was unaware of two important war-related events happening right in my own state. I was surprised many years later to learn that Japanese-American relocation camps and German POW camps existed in Arkansas.

I am looking forward to learning more about these camps through the Encyclopedia.

The writer of this article, Bonnie Studivan Sticht, is the mother of Shirley Sticht Schuette, Encyclopedia Administrative Assistant. A long-time resident of Illinois, Bonnie is one example of the Encyclopedia's anticipated nationwide, and even worldwide, audience.

If you would like to be a guest contributor to "I Didn't Know That About Arkansas," please send your ideas to Jill Curran at jcurran@encyclopediaofarkansas.net or contact her at (501) 918-3022.



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