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 hoof beats 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 "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)."

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

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As he recalled at the NLAS Convention, the period following "the Ranger" was difficult, but he eventually found a position 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 awkward "HI YO SILVER!" Actor Klinton Spilsbury'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 awarded to 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

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