



LADMO KWIATKOWSKI
1928-1994

Honored as a Historymaker 1992
Creator & Performer for
Longest Running Children's TV Show
Wallace & Ladmo



The following is an oral history interview with Ladimir "Ladmo" Kwiatkowski (**LK**) conducted by Steve Hoza (**SH**) for Historical League, Inc. on December 12, 1991, at the Arizona Historical Society Museum in Tempe, Arizona.

Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.

Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Heritage Center Archives, an Historical Society Museum, Tempe, Arizona.

SH: OK, for the first part of the interview I'd just like to ask you about your years before you came to Arizona. Where were you raised?

LK: I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio and went to John Adams High School and I graduated in 1947. I had a scholarship to attend Bowling Green University in Ohio to play baseball and at that time I didn't know what I wanted to do. I wanted to go to college or get a job and get a car because that was the big thing after the war, get a car so I chose to work and get some money and buy myself a car and then go from there but as the years went on, I realized how important a college education was so in 1949 I decided to come to Arizona State, and that's what I did, in January of 1949 and I wanted to become a broadcaster, a sports broadcaster so I took mass communications and journalism at ASU and also one o' the prime reasons for me coming to Arizona State was the baseball, because the weather was terrific and the Cleveland Indians, who were sort of scouting me and talking to me about playing ball were training, spring training in Tucson so I said, "Let's go to Arizona," and when we got here, I realized, instead of enrolling at the University of Arizona in Tucson, I enrolled at Arizona State College at Tempe.

I immediately contacted the Cleveland Indians organization to let 'em know where I was at and they said, "There's no problem. It's just down the road," and they'd be keepin' an eye on me and stuff like that, so that's how I came to Arizona State, and I never regretted it, 'cause it's a great college. It was small then, 3,000 students. Now it's a city of what, about 50,000 students? Jeez!

So everything was just perfect. In my first semester at Arizona State I knew I was gonna stay in Arizona in



some capacity. If I couldn't make it in baseball, because at the time I enrolled, I weighed about a hundred and fifty pounds and I had to gain a lot o' weight to play organized baseball, which I did, by the way, which is kind of amazing but after a few years I met my present wife, Patsy Lou. She was attending Arizona State. She was in business law and secretarial and all that stuff so we met, and I married her in 1951 and we had five children and she helped me get through my college education. She quit school, and then she went to work and God, it was really great. I continued to play baseball. I had a part time job at this college, and it was mainly kind of a work scholarship.

The baseball team coach helped me, Coach Kajikawa. He's still there, I think. He helped me find a job, part time job at the school, so that was real. I consider that a baseball scholarship, 'cause he did help me and I worked, graduated with a B.S. in journalism and when I graduated I had five telephone calls from Hanlc Greenberg and the Cleveland Indian organization asking me to report to Cleveland, and they would send me somewhere in their organization and they were gonna pay for my transportation and everything, but I talked to my wife, and we had my son, Kim and I said, "I still haven't, I don't have enough weight," and at that time they had one of the greatest third basemen, Al Rosen. They had one of the greatest second-basemen, Robert Avila playin' in the, and they were both hitting 300's, fly homeruns, and I said, "I'm gonna try to get a job in television. I'm gonna stay. If I can't get a job in television I'm gonna take the baseball offer." Well, I graduated from ASU. The next day I went to KPHO at 9 a.m. and met with Mr. Dick Rawls and explained my situation. "I'd like to become- involved in television," because I thought *that* was the business of the future and I wanted to stay in Arizona also so talking to him was great. We laughed. WE had a good time and at 10:00 I got home. That morning I received a call from the program director at Channel 5 and he asked me when could I start workin.' I said, "Any time." He says, "How 'bout this afternoon?" And I says, "I'll be there." I have been with KPHO since then. That was a long time, 1953.

SH: 1953.

LK: May 1953, end of May.

SH: What kind of programs were there on Channel 5 at this time?

LK: Channel 5 had all the networks, and they'd just lost a network to Channel 12, NBC, so they had CBS, ABC, and Dumont and they had *loads* and loads and loads of television. Locally, they had the f, *Lou King Luncheon*, *Lou King Rangers*. Now this was live television, no tape, live television. *Lou King Rangers*, which was a talent show for Phoenix kids, and as far as cartoons and kids' shows, they had *Golddust Charlie*. Golddust was a the old western cowboy telling tales of the old West and showing cartoons and he has a, he had a kid audience of about ten to twenty kids at the time on the set so that's what was happening then. They also had- Saturday morning shows with Art. I can't think of the name of the show. They had art shows of the camera and were from the museum, I guess, of art. They were teaching kids how to draw.

Showing slides, pictures, books, and stuff like that and also what else was there? There was *Treasure*



Chest, which was kind of fun. They had *Pig in a Poke*. Laura Scudder's had a show that was called *Pig in a Poke*, where they gave away premium prizes, when you collect Laura Scudder potato chip bags and stuff like that. Those were the early shows, but I started off as a cameraman, I mean a floor director. I swept set up sets and then I later became a cameraman, which I ran the camera, lighting and then I became a director directing a lot, news shows commercials and but in the meantime I also became Ladmo on the *Wallace and Ladmo Show*, when it started in 1954. That was less than a year later.

SH: How did Bill Thomson come to get his own show on Channel 5?

LK: Bill worked in the art department, and he put in twenty hours in the art department and twenty hours in the studio, so we became very good friends and we goofed around a lot of one upmanship you might call it, and we had a lot of fun and it seems like there was all this comedy going on around the studio and the mi department and the whole building really and then we had a lot of fun with that and then one day Channel 5, we got all these cartoons, the Warner Brother package which included Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and a lot of the other Warner Brother characters, roadrunner and they were looking for a clown because Bozo the Clown, I believe, was on in New York, and so clowns were the thing. They wanted somebody to put on all this makeup, come on as a clown, and just host a cartoon show.

So Bill had an idea and a format of what to do with the cartoons. He presented it to Dick Rawls and he seemed to like it, so he said, "Go for it." So Wallace produced *It's Wallace*. That was the first name of the show, with a question mark, and after he got the cartoons and started the show a few weeks later he asked me if I'd appear with 'im in front of the camera because I was behind the camera. I was his cameraman as he was goofin' around. So he asked me if I'd appear in front of the camera with him and I said, "Yeah, what the heck." I thought it'd be easy, 'cause we're goofin' around in the studio anyhow and when I got in front of that camera, I blanked out. That's the honest to God's truth. When that camera went on, because the word got around, and the studio was full of crowds, and Mr. Rawls was standin' back there. I think that's what really put the, the fright in me, with everybody standin' there watchin' me and I just blanked out, and when Wallace gave me the joke, and like I was supposed to come in with the punch line, I forgot it and he kept on asking me, and he asked, and in the meantime everybody was *laughing!* They *thought* it was part of the gag when Ladmo the character and ever since then, Ladmo (Tapping on something with his next words.) was that character that happened on the air. It was funny, and everybody thought I did a terrific job, and I was scared. they never knew how scared I was, and that I goofed, until later when we told everybody but it was one of those crazy things that happened, that was very, very funny to a lot o' people, I think, except prob'ly Wallace and myself but it was fun, and it, it that established the character right then and there, and we went from there. And it was terrific.

SH: What is the origin of the name Ladmo?

LK: My name is Ladimir, Ladimir Walter James Kwiatkowski. Wallace gave me the name, tagged the name Ladmo to me. At the time there was a commercial goin' around called Babbo and Babbo the [?]



(Humming.) b b b bum bum, (Talking again.) you know, stuff like that. And I was taggin' everybody Bob Martin Bobbo Jim Spanow Jimbo. I tagged everybody whose name I tagged it with an o, and then Wallace just tagged my name with an o Ladmo, and God, and it was funny, and that stuck. And that was it. Instead of goin' on as Lad or Ladimir, it was Ladmo. And I've been Ladmo ever since. It's my real, legal name and everything.

SH: Really?

LK: Yeah.

SH: Legal.

LK: I legalized it, because everybody's callin' me Ladmo. I get mail by Ladmo. When I sign somethin' Ladmo, they say, "That's not your name. It's Ladmo." So I just changed it. I went to the court and changed my name to Ladmo so that's it.

SH: How long ago was this that you changed it?

LK: I believe it was in '70 somethin' like that, maybe late '60's because after, at first I, it was just a character, you know. But later it I was Ladmo. That's what everybody called me. And they wouldn't believe my name was Ladimir or Lad. "No, you're Ladmo." So I had it changed.

SH: So at this time you had no formal training in either acting or comedy?

LK: No.

SH: At this point.

LK: Except the writings on state press at ASU. I tried to write it in a funny way instead o' tryin' to be the sportswriter. I tried to write a column and stuff like that, try to make it a little humorous, and that's the only thing, but at college at Arizona State, I was kind of a big cut up. We used I, in my 1949, September, my first football game home football game at Arizona State they were so proud of this 100 band organization. They were so, they were *building* it up in the papers, on the State Pre', and everything, so I had an idea. "Well, wait a minute. When they introduce this band, why don't we come on the field and we make up this bag?" So we got serapes. We got lots of toy instruments. When they introduced the band, we come out on the field, just for a laugh.

I was a drum majorette. I had a skirt on and a sweater. Underneath the sweater I was wearin' a bra and they lit up. I had a battery pack on my side and I had this baton, and so every time I'd turn the battery and they would light up and it was just a lot of silly nonsense my first year at college. I didn't take my first year too



serious. Aaaaa but it was fun. I enjoyed, and we had gags and we had a lot of fun, and I, I try to write that way, and I think my baseball days at Arizona State were the same way, where we were not known. We were not recognized. We had rags for uniforms and I just tried to make it light and happy playing baseball. That was the main thing. Because none of us had a scholarship.

But I don't know. I think I was always that way. I was the oldest of all the, the Kwiatkowskis all the grandkids, and I was kind of looking after them and trying to have fun with 'em, too.

SH: What was the format of the show when just you and Bill were on the show?

LK: A lot o' slapstick comedy. A lot of Laurel and Hardy stuff. A lot of stuff, pie in the face. A lot o' that stuff, a *lot* of pie in the face. Boy, I got hit by I don't know how many, a hundred pies maybe. What else? A lot o' the boxes were comin' droppin' off the catwalks and all this, you know. It was a lot *of sight* stuff.

A lot of visual stuff and that was the early Wallace and Ladmo stuff, and we always felt that we needed one more thing to make it kind of perfect and up came Pat McMahan and he made the perfect Jerald, the bad guy, so we had Ladmo the good guy, Jerald the bad guy and Wallace the man tom between his best buddy, Ladmo, and Jerald the nephew of the manager of the studio, the KPHO's manager.

So it was one of those things. Do you play for the money, or do you play for the friendship? It was, so it became great, so Jerald became the villain and Ladmo was the hero, and it was playing off, and it, it was just like old Greek tragedy.

You know, good guy/bad guy. It was, it was just fantastic. It caught on real quick. Our first personal appearance with Jerald was at Papago Park and we were on a truck a flatbed, semi truck. There was a band on it and Jerald was there, and he got peppered by pickles and *watermelons*. He ran for 'is his life. As the kids stoned the stage and broke it Jerald ran for 'is life hid in a pickup truck, *locked* the doors, and the kids were standing on both sides of the truck and *rocking* this truck back and forth, and Jerald was screamin' for the police and Wallace and I are standing on the stage and sayin', (Claps.) "I think we've got somethin' here." It was *hilarious*. We just stood there and watched, it was so funny. No one attempted to help. The band, I forgot who the band was, I think it was Sunny Star, no, yeah, I think it was Sunny Star's or maybe it was Mike Condello. I think it was Mike and it, it was just incredible. We all just stood there and watched. We didn't even raise a finger to help him.

SH: In, in all of the stage shows that, that you've done at Legend City, the state fair, the movie theaters were there any other close calls with the audience or any funny incidences that stand out in your mind?

LK: I was locked in a restroom in Ajo. We're, (Deepening his voice.) "Stand by!" (Changing to a falsetto.) "Hey, you guys, come on! Let me out!" (Kwiatkowski knocks on something.) Hey, come on! This ain't funny! Let me out of this restroom! (Laughing, still in falsetto.) The door's jammed! I can't get it open!"



(Resuming normal voice.) "OK, we're on!" and they had to get out on the stage. Wallace came on. They got a janitor. The key wouldn't open the door. "Come on, you guys, let me out!" We're s'posed to be on, and Wallace, in the mean', meantime, is goin' out on the stage, makin' announcements. "And we'll be right, we'll be right with ya." They had to get a ladder. They had to go outside the building climb up the ladder open up the window, and I had to claw, crawl out the window and down the ladder to get back in. *That's* one thing I'll never forget. (Shrilly.) "Come on, you guys, let me...!" Goin' too far, I thought it was a joke at first. But it wasn't. They couldn't get the dam door open.

SH: Any other close calls with the Jerald character.

LK: With Jerald. I, and he had a lot. I imagine he told you the one at Chandler, not Chandler Coolidge, about the kid comin' up onstage[?] with a cross. (Knocks something once.) Let Pat tell you that. It happened to him. I had tears comin' down in my eyes.

SH: I talked with Pat, and he didn't mention that.

LK: Well, when you see 'im, ask 'im about that. Or if Wallace comes back, you ask Wallace about it. 'Cause I was rolling on the stage. I could not believe it cause Jerald, is pickin' on Ladmo, and this kid just had it, and he run up on the stage, and he had this cross and he was holding it in front of Jerald. Let him tell you. I can't get the right sentence that he said, 'cause I was laughin' so hard, but he'll remember the sentence. That was hilarious. I mean the, it there were a lot of things, spontaneous things that, that happened throughout the show and every one of 'em was just funny even at Christown when the kids attacked 'im, and Jerald was hidin' behind this huge curtain that covered the screen. And he *ran* behind the curtain. The kids were poundin' on that curtain and Jerald was runnin'. The ushers were tryin' to get these kids, the hundreds of *kids!* And again Wallace and I, we were standing on the stage, *laughing!* "Go get 'im, Danny! Go get 'im! He deserves it!"

SH: Oh, God!

LK: But just that that, ever since then, we always tried to ha', have a, some kind of security guard. You know just standing on the corner of the stage because we were laughin', but it was serious. He could 'a' really got hurt. Like the time at Legend City with the gun, and the kids with the gun. Did you hear about, did he tell you about this one?

SH: No.

LK: Well, I don't know if they wanted to tell you this or not but we heard that there was a kid in the seats in Legend City with a gun and they were gonna kill Jerald, shoot Jerald and well somethin' like that. We didn't take no chances so we had security roaming around, looking, and stuff like that and we finally went on, and then when we were doin' the act, there were two (Thumps something.) kids by a tree and the



security guard saw 'em, and they had a gun and they (Thumps something.) escorted 'em out. Now *I* don't know if those kids would 'a' done anything or not, but they had a gun, and *that's* what the rumor was. Whether they were just gonna do that to scare it, but maybe it's best to forget that. That was really bad.

SH: Of all the characters that Pat played, did you have any favorites?

LK: Jerald.

SH: Any others besides that you enjoyed doing skits with?

LK: Oh, Captain Super. He was good. He was very good, you know and well, who else? Marshal Good. I loved Aunt Maud. She comes in with those stories with all the twists at the end, you know. Those were funny and a lot of times they wouldn't tell me what the story was about so they wanted my natural reaction, so I never, lot of times I did not know what the stories were but some of the stories I wrote too but *those* were good and I think everybody enjoyed those and yeah, you can go through the years. The, ya, ya the, Hubcap was very good, too, you know, with lot o', lot o' press, and a lot o' lot o' good times and it brought music to our show, with Condello, and the music years I really enjoyed. With Mike. It, it brought that extra element to our show and I had Mike on my afternoon show. We had a spin off, *Ladmo at Lunch*, or *Ladmo at Noon* and Mike was my partner. He was my friend on that show so it was *Ladmo* and Mike on the afternoon show.

SH: How did you discover Mike?

LK: I think Wallace discovered 'im at Stage Seven Jack **Cmiis** at Stage Seven at Seventh Street and Indian School Road is now the Phoenix Junior Chamber of Commerce, what do you call it? Junior- Chamber of Commerce, I guess. That's what it is. They have their own building there. It was a teenage dance night every Friday and Saturday night and Mike played there so I think Wallace heard 'im and went and saw 'im and said, "Hey, would you guys like to be on a show called *Teen Beat*?" with Pat McMahan. That would c', was played every Monday for I think it was during the summer for a year or somethin' like that.

SH: Was an *American Bandstand* type of show?

LK: Yes with no dancing though. This is more entertaining. Any celebrities that came into town, they would appear on the show plus we had local bands on the show. Alice Cooper was on the show. Well, Alice Cooper's done *Wallace, Wallace and Ladmo Show* as the Spiders. The Spider's Alice Cooper.

And it didn't make it. He changed his, the name from the Spiders to Alice Cooper. (Snaps fingers.) Voila. There he had instant success but we had a lot of local talent. The Tubes were on, and a lot of national personalities stopped by so I don't know. It's good, so that's how we got Mike, from *Teen Beat* to the *Wallace*, to the *Ladmo Show* to the *Wallace and Ladmo* show.



SH: Did you play any other characters on the show, besides Ladmo?

LK: Oh, yeah. I played quite a few. In the early years I was Lalah Galumki. There was Lalah and Loolah Galumki, the twin singers. God, those were funny.

SH: Now what

LK: That was Pat and I.

SH: What is the origin of that name, Galumki.

LK: Galumki? That's a, a Polish pigs in a blanket. It's a galurnki. It was a great name, I thought. It's Lalah and Loolah Galumki and so it's a Polish food. it's, a lot of our names are taken either from words in Polish or Wall, Wall near, hears names from school, you know, buddies and stuff. That's what we always do but that was a couple o' characters, and I'd come out o' the time machine a lot but everybody knew it was me. "Ah, that's Ladmo." We can put a wig on. "Hey, that's Ladmo." What was so great about Pat McMahon no one saw Pat McMahon on the *Wallace and Ladmo Show*. They saw characters so they never complained and say, "Aw, that's Pat McMahon!"

SH: Right.

LK: You know, it was just super, so any time like he came on as a character, it was a real character, 'cause no one knew who it was. So that was kind o', but everybody knew, I did skits and left the boots on purposely and I used to wear a watch and they knew that was me, because I wore the watch, and they knew my boots and it was funny. The kids enjoyed it that way. So that's, we kept it that way.

SH: Tell me the origin of Ladmo bags.

LK: Oh, boy. We used to have contests, and we invited the winners come down on the show and pick out a prize on the show, from the toy cottage. Now we had girls' prizes boys' prizes, lot o' prizes on the show. Well, before the show started, we would take the kid, the winners up there and say, "Now which toy do you want, 'cause when we ask you what toy you want you just say you want this toy, so now what toy do you want?" and the kids would look and say, "OK, I'll take that airplane." Well, when it comes time on the air, this is live television, we can't stop and we ask the kid, "OK. What do you want?" now, instead of saying, "The airplane," he will say, "Oh, I don't know. " and now, all of a sudden tells ya, ,becomes dead air, because a lot o' kids took a lot o' time, and we didn't wanna seem like we're pushin' the toy on the kid. And it didn't happen all the time, but when it did ha', happen, there was that dead air, and we always kind toward the kids, and we, "Did you say you wanted the airplane?" " I don't know." You know, and we didn't say, "Well, you said before. Take the " We always treat 'em nice, so Pat, I Pat said, "You know, we should



get that thing and just put it in a bag and then just go, 'Hey, here's your prize.'" They said, "Well, wait a minute. We could put potato chips in there from Clover Club," 'cause they were a sponsor. "Hey, maybe we can get some other stuff from our other sponsors," and that's how it , that's how it snowballed. We got - started with a toy from Toy Cottage, and we added ingredients from our sponsors like Clover Club, like who else? We had put certificates in for ice cream and there was w', we had Mary Ellen Jelly, jars of jam, so we had a lot of stuff in the Ladmo bag, and they were *big*. They were the size of a grocery bag.

SH: I can remember those.

LK: Yes. Well, that, the reason for that was because also the toys were big and Clover Club gave us those *big bags* that were about 59¢ then. And I don't know what they are today the big bags! And so we filled the Ladmo bag up. And it was pretty good and today they're smaller, but that's inflation.

SH: Now you and Wallace also did some of your own live commercials. Did you ever have a sponsor complain because of the way you handled a product? 'Cause there were times, I can remember, when you would kick things around and smash things.

LK: I've never heard of it.

Even when we got the bottle of Bactine and we were a test market for Bactine.

SH: What happened with that?

LK: We were doin' a commercial, brand new commercial. Course Ladmo was holding it, and it slipped out of my hand (Pounds something once.) and it drops on the floor and breaks so Wallace goes on the floor and said, "Wow! It's *workin'*! Look at all those germs! They're boiling!" So the camera panned down and shootin' at the floor and all this spilled Bactine! And I'm over there again shakin' and Wallace is ad libbin' the commercial and he comes up, "Good job, Ladmo! See, gang, not only will (Thumps something.) on the cuts, but those bugs were " God, those germs were dyin'."

SH: That's wonderful.

LK: So that's the fun o' talent and spontaneity. You know, it fits the Ladmo character. Ladmo was, was a kid getting into lot o' trouble and accidental stuff and lot o' times a kid at home would do something. "It was an accident, Mom," and that's what I was doin', when I was a kid, and I still am. I still drop stuff.

SH: During the course of a show, what was a typical day like for you? What was your level of involvement in the production of the show?

LK: Oh, gosh, let me see. OK, well, it stymied with let's see, on a Monday I always made pickups for the



Ladmo bags. I used to go around, meet all the sponsors, and go to get Tootsie Rolls, get candy, and get sunflower seeds, and I'd get the Pepsi delivered. I'd just make sure they deliver 'em. And they like, I go to Nabisco, and when I go see these people, they like me to visit, because the employees there see me, and they, "Hey, Ladmo, saw this!" They'd tell me this (Claps once.) and all that soli of stuff so it, it's kind of a good PR for, for the show and for, for Channel 5 and also our sponsors. So I stymied out with doin' a lot of pickups, makin' sure I got stuff for the Ladmo bags. Then when it getting's close to time for the show , makin' sure the tapes are there, makin' sure the prompters and all the stuff is according to the format, which Wallace writes and distributes that morning so I'd just get it, and I'd just make sure everything's ready whether it's props or anything so that's my extent. Then, when Pat gets there, we go over the scripts and over the format and that's about it. If there's music to be put on tapes, I put the music on tapes in the audio booth, so and stuff like that.

SH: How did you hear about the show ending? Did it come all of a sudden, or was it a ...

LK: It was, the there was, oh gosh did Wallace tell you this? Then it's OK with me. Same thing. Yeah, I'd hear, I heard it at a conference. We were all sittin' down at a table and I think Miss DiAngelas just came out and said, " we're gonna take the off, we're gonna take the show off the air on December 29th." I was stunned. I don't know what to say- because if I would have been prepared for somethin' like that I would have said, "Let's finish the contract and go on 'til April because this way we can say we were on for five decades (Claps once.) '50' '60 '70 '80, and '90." This way we were off on December 29th.) We missed that fifth (Claps once.) decade. But I couldn't believe it. There was talk about spin offs. If Wallace would quit, would there be the *Ladmo Show*, you know. I really it would've been nice, but I really didn't pursue it and Pat and I talked about that you know. We were too sad to think about what was going to happen later on.

SH: What was it like on the set during the final show?

LK: On the surface I tried to be happy throughout the whole thing. In my heart, I was very, very sad and when I broke up goin' home and I had my wife, Pat, to drive 'cause I couldn't drive. I was holding it all back, and then all of a sudden, Phew! I just, the tears just came flyin' out and it was very, very sad for the next few days until Jan D 'Atri and Smitty's made me very happy again. So yeah, that was really, it's still sad today.

SH: So what have you been doing since the show has left the air?

LK: I'm, I'm with Smitty's, still with Smitty's doin' a lot o' PR for them. Then they're really the same business I am. their customers were our audience, and their number one priority are customers. It was just like our audience though. I'm still entertaining for their customers and my audience. 'Cause it's been three generations., We have the grandmas and moms and dads and the kids, and they all remember so it was a great family tie, I think. And I enjoyed it.



SH: Has there been any drawbacks for you being a local celebrity?

LK: I think my kids had a little rough time because Ladmo was the kind of a character that was, you know, **matmdeling**, dropping stuff, and all and, you know. Then they say, "Yeah, your dad did this! Your dad's all ...," you know. Well, my son just didn't take it, so he got in a fight and got called to the principal's office, and I went in there and I said, "What happened?" and then I had to explain to him, "Ladmo is a TV character. I am your dad. You can always tell a kid that, 'He may be that way, but he's getting' paid a lot o' money for doin' that.'"

“And if you believe him in that case, that means he's doin' a pretty good job.” And ever since then I don't recall ever havin' any more problems, 'cause we told all our kid that afterwards and it seems like that must 'a' did somethin', because then these kids that were pickin' on 'em all of a sudden turned the other way and they went along with the show and the character, and I too became their hero. But that was the only thing I often wondered about my kids and when they went to school, "Will he get into another? Will my daughters be picked on?" But that was the only incident I ever had, and that was called into a principal about that unless they kept stuff away from me, and I never saw it. Even when I watched 'em play baseball or I coached teams or stuff like that there was always good friendship, which I was thankful for.

SH: How, how many children do you have?

LK: Five.

SH: And what kind of occupations do your children ?

LK: My oldest son, Kin he is going to school. He's getting' a CPA. He worked for Circle K, and Circle K is sending him to school, paying the education to get a CPA, and Robin, he's on the Tempe Fire Department. He's an engineer. He drives a truck and he's been there quite a while. My third son, Jamie, he's in the navy. He's a investigator for the navy. He's stationed at Fallon Field, Nevada and my daughter, Debbie, living here in Tempe and my daughter, Sheny, she's in Utah at Bountiful, Utah. She's workin' for Kennecott. She was a gymnast. She was coaching gymnasts up until about six months ago. She was a coach, and she did a very, very well, and she finally got out of that and is now doing well and is going to be married in next year. 1992. And that's my family. My wife's at home now. She's my business manager, secretary, friend, wife, grandmother, all that stuff and what's she doin'? Yeah. That's it.

SH: One question I have ...

LK: Oh, wait. Seven *grand kids*, seven grandkids. You gotta get the grandkids in there!

SH: Oh, sure.



LK: Seven grandkids, one grandson.

SH: You mentioned before that your favorite era of the show was the music era.

LK: In the '60s.

SH: Can you tell me about some of the characters that people may not have remembered, like Harvey Trundle? Who was Harvey Trundle?

LK: The noon show the spinoff of the *Wall*, *It's Wallace Show* was the *Ladmo Show*, and I had help with Mike Condello and Harvey Trundle. Harvey Trundle was Ladmo's best friend in the park. he was a salesperson named Brian Donahue at KPHO and light now he's a very successful agency. He has a very successful agency in San Diego, his own and he used to come on my **pmiy** at the suite. We used to goof around work gags, and stuff like that, a little slapstick. And then we got Mike Condello to come on the show and he, and he, and we're all three good buddies. We put out an album called *The Blubber Soul from the Ladmo Trio*, and we did spin offs on the on the Beatles Songs. So we were three good buddies havin' lots of fun, and the three of us went on the *It's Wallace show*, so we did stuff on the *Ladmo Show* and promoted what we were gonna do on *It's Wallace Show*, so it's cross promotions. And when we did shows outside the studio and around the state Harvey and Condello and his band would go with us. We would have music. We would play basketball at functions, and we would also play softball. We would play football to raise money for charity. And we had the traveling team, and the team would take off the baseball, football, whatever, and basketball uniforms and entertain at halftime. Hubcap would be there with Mike Condello. Harvey and Ladmo would sing, and Mike would sing with the Ladmo Trio, and it was just fantastic! Plus all the gags between Jerald and Ladmo!

So we put on a show, plus we raised a lot of money for charity and that's what I like we would never made any money, but *boy*, it was great times! The conversations in the cars meeting the people in Flagstaff Prescott! It, it was just incredible, and it, it, it was that's why it was my favorite, I think traveling around to all these little towns. We never got to see them, and they never got to see us and we, this was our chance. So it was fun.

SH: And the name of your sports team?

LK: The Ladmo Jets. Sponsored by Redball Jets Keds. They had the uniforms, I think it was the uniforms. We wore the tennis shoes. Oh, it was terrific! You notice I'm saying tennis shoes. You can tell how far back.

SH: Some of the other characters from the '60's like Jerald the Monster. What was the origin?

LK: You're gonna have to ask Wallace about that. Wallace and I felt Jerald needed somebody to lean to



and so to scare the kids he'd come in a monster, and a big guy, (Roars.) and stuff like, but it turns out behind wall, Jerald's back, the monster, he was really a good guy. He would wave to the kids, you know. 'Cause he'd like kids and part of the fun was seeing Jerald try to put the, the monster in his place and Jerald just couldn't get anybody to like him. Nobody. And the monster was a good character. Amazo Magician was another fun character, 'cause all his tricks backfired, or they were cons. And stuff like that, and it was Grudgemyer was one of my favorite characters. He again was on the *Ladmo Show* and there was a lot of slapstick humor.

And a lot of the stuff was you might say, taken from Loral and Hardy, and they used to do that in their movies. A lot of that, just watchin' just be someone destroy the other person. And the other guy destroy the other per', just stand there, not do anything, just let 'im destroy so a lot of that stuff was taken. We did a *lot* of Grudgemyer stuff, oh, a lot of it, 'cause it was so good. A lot o' people liked it so of all the ones, that was kind of my favorite and then again, it stymied on the *Ladmo Show*.

And the policeman, the fireman, a lot of things started on the *Ladmo Show*, because the *Wallace Show* was just loaded with stuff, and then, when *Ladmo Show* went off the air, we brought all that stuff and put it on the on the *It's Wallace* show. Which is kind of nice.

SH: Are there any other characters that you'd like to, to talk about?

LK: Oh, gosh, I don't know. There are so many.

SH: You mentioned

LK: They're all, I just loved them all.

SH: You just mentioned Dan Hom. Do you want to talk a little about how Dan ...

LK: Yeah. Oh, Dan Hom!

SH: How did Dan Hom come to be on the show?

LK: OK. How did Dan Hom become, and Wallace got 'im on the show. There was a need well Dan Hom came in with the police department and was teaching buckle up and he had puppets, Cassandra and Orson, and he was using his puppets to give the message to the kids. Well, he was such a good- ventriloquist mechanical a and material that we asked him to come back again and again, and then Wallace said, "Say, would, we're gonna have a summer show. Would you like to be appear and, and do other stuff, besides the buckle up for the police?" and he said, "Yeah!" So he was with us one summer and I think he just became a regular. Wallace just asked 'im to continue coming on the show. That's how it stayed, and he was with us then daily. He would appear daily using his different characters, and he had other characters besides



Cassandra and Orson and he would think of bits and stuff to do with La', the characters on the show, whether it's Jerald, Captain Super, Aunt Maud, Ladmo, Wallace, and he would work his characters, his puppets, into the into the skit.

And the puppets became part of the show also along with Dan, and Dan worked with us for ten years, not only in the studio but on the shows- stage shows outside the studio.

There, he was a oh, terrific talent great writer. IN fact, right now he's doin' adult stuff throughout the country. Playing clubs and stuff like that. He was, he was on Showtime - so he's doin' good.

SH: The first big reunion stage show you had was in 1987 at Park Central. How was it getting the old gang back to', together again? What how, how did it feel being

LK: Mm it was *awesome!* I mean we're talkin' *big, awesome fun*, capital F U N to get all these guys back to do what we all liked to do and to create an atmosphere where the moms and *dads* can relate to it and maybe poke at their kids on the side. "This is what I grew up on." Stuff like that. It was somethin' they missed, and they could see it, and it was jam packed, and it was so successful that we had it we did it again on our thirty-fifth anniversary at Encanto Park. But aw, gosh, it was just I didn't think it could be done, but it was done, and it was enjoyed by everybody.

SH: How did you track down some of the, like, for instance, the members of Hubcap and the Wheels? And how did you track down these, these people?

LK: Hubcap and the Wheels was easy. All I did was call up Mike Condello and said "Get your band." And then ...

SH: And that was it?

LK: And ask 'em if they'd come down and they agreed, and there was no problem. They all jumped at the chance and then the LaChords were easy, because they're all here in the state and then who else was there? Oh, the *toughest* one was Ken Kendy, who was Golddust Charlie, the guy who started all this nonsense.

And because no one knew how to get in touch with Ken either what he was doin', where he was working, or anything, and just by accident, someone said, "Well, he's livin' over in Cave Creek," and I got the number, called 'im up- and there was no problem. (Thumps something.) Golddust came back. Didn't age a bit. Put on those whiskers, and no one knew the difference.

So and who getting a lot of people was[? with?] just calling. Wallace called his daughter, Carrie 'cause she was on our show. She sang on our show and a lot o' the people just were so anxious, you only had to ask 'em once! No begging or anything. "Yeah, I'll be there! I'll be there!" And we had Red MacElbeine



from Vegas. "Are you serious?" "Yeah, I'll be there!" So every time I called, one telephone call- (Thumps something.) and I said, "OK, I'll follow up with a letter and stuff like that. I'll call you again to keep you in touch." "Yeah, do that!" So it was fun even talkin' to them on the phone!

LK: Brought back old times and so that it was really easy. I thought it'd be a toughie, but it was easy. And I enjoyed it.

SH: So the, the chemistry was there even after all these years?

LK: After all these years and I think if we wanted to do a show next week, I think they'd all come.

SH: Really?

LK: One telephone call. this is the kind o' loyalty they had to the show like that, and they're terrific people; and I know they'd come. That's my feeling, 'cause it's what? When we[?] asked 'em for the thirty fifth anniversary, (Thumps something.) they all came- and if the, we had another one, they'd all come, I know.

SH: When the show did end, what kind of fan outpouring was there towards all of you?

LK: I think sad.

SH: Really?

LK: I think so. a lot of it, 'cause I hear it, when I'm doing shows now today. Says, "I just feel so sorry, because my kids won't be able to see what we've seen," and this, that was kind of sad and I hear that over and over again- of all the things I hear is, "How's Wallace?" and, "I feel so sorry, because- my kids won't grow up to see what we saw." And yeah, those are the two things I always hear so I don't know. I, it I don't think it's sunk out of my head yet. I, I still think about us doin' it. And why, we should be on the air well I guess that's management's decision.

SH: Well, is there anything you wanna say, looking back over the entire run of the show? If this is listened to by a historian years from now?

LK: Yes. The *Wallace and Ladmo Show* was fun. *Lots of fun* and we all, I want to thank all those people for watchin' 'cause without them, we'd be nowhere. That's it. It was just a lot of fun. If anything was to describe my show, I think that that would be the word, for me anyhow.

SH: And you have no regrets whatsoever not choosing a baseball career?

LK: No. I've been asked that too. And at the time I was married and had a kid, and I may have gotten



maybe two or three, four, maybe five years out of baseball, if I was lucky. And this way I had thirty-six great years every year terrific, working with Wallace and like I say, he is my best friend and I still think about us doin' those shows. It was terrific. I miss it.

