

Sunday, 11 March 2012

## The Rochester Riot

Eddie Anderson's Rochester was arguably the most popular character on Jack Benny's radio show, next to Jack himself. If you listen to the on-location war-time broadcasts, Anderson gets huge cheers, even more so than the carousing ladies man Phil Harris, the type of man a G-I might aspire to be. But everyone could identify with Rochester, the underpaid working man who still managed to get one up on his boss, time and time again. The underdog with the funny voice.

Rochester's popularity unintentionally caused a riot, and not with the negative connotations associated with race (unfortunately, the matter of colour continues to swirl up in almost every discussion about Anderson's character). In reading the stories from May of 1940, it appears collegians were looking for an excuse to be rowdy, a kind of mind-set that produces things like Vancouver's Stanley Cup riot. Here are a couple of stories about the Rochester prank that went wrong.



### Seven Students Arrested; 'Kidnaped' Jack Benny Comedian.

Cambridge, Mass., May 1—(AP)—The first riot of spring occurred last night in Harvard Square and seven Harvard students were arrested for disturbing the peace. They were fined \$5 each today in district court. The riot, which embodied all the usual features of Harvard Square spring disturbances, apparently developed from a combination of the warm evening air and the fact that a group of Massachusetts Institute of Technology students put one over on the Harvards by "abducting" Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Negro comedian on the Jack Benny radio program.

Rochester, scheduled to appear at a Harvard smoker, turned up instead at the Delta Kappa Epsilon house at M. I. T., after being persuaded by a group of Dekes to leave his plane at Providence, R. I., and motor to Cambridge.

The comedian thought he was at Harvard until two hours later. The riot, which found some 200 students milling around in the square, followed soon after, giving police quite a workout for about an hour.

### Riot Follows M.I.T. Kidnap Of Harvard Smoker Guest

"Rochester" of Jack Benny's Radio Program Held Till Early Morning; Eight Sons of OI' John Wind Up in Hoosgow

CAMBRIDGE, May 1. (INS)—Eight Harvard students were arrested today during a riot that followed the kidnaping of "Rochester," Negro radio and stage comedian with Jack Benny, by Massachusetts Institute of Technology pranksters from a Harvard freshman smoker.

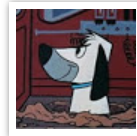
#### Riot Call

More than 2000 youths from both institutions battled and then set upon 50 Cambridge policemen summoned by a riot call.

Police hats were snatched, occasional blows were struck and water was dropped from dormitory windows as study-weary boys (?) attempted a drive on Radcliffe college, a girls' Institution.

Police drove a wedge into the milling crowd near Harvard square, dispersed the students and arrested the eight. They were charged with disturbing peace and gave these names, Royce McKinley, 19, John Buchanan, 22, Nicholas Slatterly, 24, Richard N. Brill, 18, Henry Maclog, 18, Wm. Savage, 21 and Charles C. Beaman, 23. The Negro valet comedian, whose real name is Eddie Anderson, was met at Providence, R. I. airport by Tech students who said they were a Harvard reception committee. Instead of taking him to the Harvard smoker, they took him to the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity house at Tech. There he entertained and was entertained

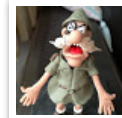
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## Blogs to See

### Peter Gray's Comics and Art



Spencer Jordan's amazing work... we are hoping artists like Ian

Knox...and families of these comic artists can see these gems... - made with fimo clay I had ago and its not very easy to do...

5 hours ago

### Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons

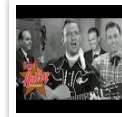


Vehicle Verification Centers of Mexico City will reopen in August with COVID

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollera.com

6 hours ago

### Movies with Michael

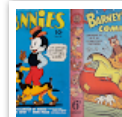


Cowboy Church #67 - Hello my friends and welcome back for another

service of cowboy church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry singing "Dear Hearts and Gentle Pe..."

9 hours ago

### Termite Terrace headlines



Question for All You Cartoon Collectors! - OK so I've been doing some

looking around. Bosko apparently had a comic book and I'm wondering if any of you know of

until nearly morning, finally being taken by an automobile caravan to the Harvard smoker at Memorial hall.

Rochester shone even more after the war. The Benny show became more of a sitcom, a comedian's life-as-comedy, and as the line between the "radio show" and "home life" blurred, Rochester became more and more a part of the on-air proceedings. When television took over, Mary and Harris were gone, Don Wilson was reduced to buffoonery and Dennis Day remained being silly. Rochester became more the voice of reality as well as turning into Jack's closest friend. And the friend of the audience, too.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [12:24](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

3 comments:

**Bobby Bickert** 11 March 2012 at 15:55

Interesting that these articles spell "kidnaped" and "kidnaping" with only one "p", just like the original edition of Robert Bloch's 1954 novel "The Kidnaper". I wonder if this was an accepted spelling back then?

[Reply](#)



**Chris Sobieniak** 11 March 2012 at 18:45

I wouldn't be surprised.

[Reply](#)



**Yowp** 12 March 2012 at 02:41

Bobby, I checked several versions of the wire stories and they consistently spell it with one 'p,' so it wasn't a typo.

[Reply](#)

Enter your comment...



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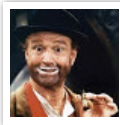
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additional covers you could share! ...

18 hours ago



**Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog**



Born on July 18, 1913 - Red Skelton - \*Today's post commences

with the Guzzler's Gin routine ...

1 day ago



**News From ME**

Sorry... - As far as I know, I do not have any diseases. I just have too much to deal with right now so I won't be blogging much if at all. I'm postponing all the web...

2 days ago



**Cartoon Research**

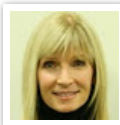
In His Own Words: H.T. Kalmus on Disney in Technicolor - Suspended Animation #276 Many references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)...

2 days ago



**AFRTS Archive**

Mary Turner 1985 - Mary Turner today Mary Turner really rocked the house.



Normally when any of the jocks got a reaction, it'd be split.

The ones that were really liked wou...

4 days ago



**The World of Knight**



TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

4 days ago



**Yowp**



Hanna-Barbera Birthday Did-You-Knows - 63 years ago today, some

forms were signed by George Sidney, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera creating what eventually became the biggest TV cartoon operation i...

1 week ago



**Supervised By Fred Avery: Tex Avery's Warner Brothers Cartoons**

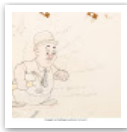
Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

for the ink and paint department. Release date: 12/20/41 Availability: Looney Tunes Gol... 3 weeks ago

**Mark Kausler's CatBlog**  
**The Lady and the Tiger** - From the Cathy Hill Archive of Unpublished Comics comes "The Lady and the Tiger". This story was drawn before Cathy started the "Mad Raccoons" series. U... 4 weeks ago

**What About Thad?**  
**Cartoon Logic Podcast** - And yet another distraction from this brick and mortar blog... I've entered the world of podcasting with renowned animation director and historian Bob Jaques... 10 months ago

 **Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie**  
**That's all, folks!** - My posts have gotten thinner over the years. I'm aware of that. I've been hopeful for a long time, that I can remain active with blogging and sharing furth... 1 year ago

 **Dr. Grob's Animation Review**  
**The Flying Man** - 'The Flying Man' is a very short absurdist film in which a man drops his coat to take a swim in mid air. Another man with a dog drops by, tries the same th... 2 days ago

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