

Sunday, 15 April 2012

LSMFT

One of the downsides of Jack Benny switching sponsors from General Foods to American Tobacco in the fall of 1944 was the change in the opening commercial. I always liked the swing piece by Phil Harris with Don Wilson reading about Jell-O over top. Substituted was a hard-sell pitch that became memorable because of its repetition and stridency—and its unique opening.

American Tobacco paid good money for not one, but two real-life auctioneers to go through a mock spiel live on the air from New York before several different announcers (dare we say it?) plugged tobacco. It was attention-grabbing. It was parodied, even in Warner Bros. and Paramount cartoons. And it inspired a column by *New York Herald-Tribune* syndicate radio writer John Crosby.

Crosby was noted for going after what he saw banal and stupid in radio but, interestingly enough, he didn't make fun of the auctioneers in his column of February 14, 1947. Maybe he tread lightly because American Tobacco had only resumed newspaper advertising a few months earlier. Or maybe he was simply curious about something and thought he'd pass it on to readers who might be curious, too. In any event, he spoke little about radio in what was a serious, straight-forward column.



CIGARETS NOT IMPROVED BY THAT GARBLED GARGLE

Tempers Also Take Beating As Lads Chant

By JOHN CROSBY

"Lasa la lasa la— sold American!"

The chant of the tobacco auctioneer, which has infuriated, exasperated and sometimes entertained radio listeners for years, has given the tobacco auction a peculiar publicity even greater than and certainly more lasting than the recent New York auction at which Dr A. S. W. Rosenbach purchased the Bay Psalm Book for \$151,000. This curious advertising device has made the tobacco auction a part of popular folklore.

I never saw a tobacco auction but several years ago I was stranded in Waycross, Ga., where an amiable Georgian volunteered to drive me out to a huge barn-like structure where a tobacco auction was to take place the next day. On the way out he told me a good deal about the business which he had only recently abandoned. Tobacco buyers are full of more tricks than horse traders, I learned. Frequently, he said, they will bid in a basket of tobacco for more than it's worth—generally they're spending somebody else's money— and later split the extra profit with the farmer.

The baskets of tobacco leaf are arranged in long lines at the auction. The auctioneer proceeds up one aisle and down the next, auctioning the baskets in order. A buyer may bid in a basket of tobacco for, say, 27 cents a pound, then quietly push the basket across the aisle.

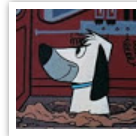
TRICKY FELLOWS

When the auctioneer reaches it the second time, it may or may not bring more than 27 cents. If it brings less, he will, of course, bid it in himself. If it brings more, he will clear a few cents profit.

The sellers employ a variety of tricks too. It's not uncommon for a farmer to hide a couple of bottles of whisky under the top leaves. When the purchasers inspect the tobacco, their appreciation is considerably heightened by the sight of the whisky, sometimes to the extent of paying a few extra cents a pound for the tobacco. The leaf goes to the tobacco company; the whisky goes to the purchaser.

Good tobacco has a velvety feel and is slightly sticky. If this texture is not naturally present in the leaf, there are a good many ways to simulate it. One method favored by farmers whose leaf did not turn out as well as they had hoped is to spray it with a mixture of water and honey before the auction. The treated leaves are

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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...
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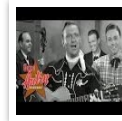
Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandolleracartoons.com
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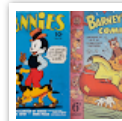
Movies with Michael



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

usually at the top of the basket so experienced buyers will usually inspect leaves at the middle or bottom of the basket before they buy.

OVERDONE SALES TALK

However, trick or no trick, the manufacturers of popular cigarets buy fine tobaccos, the finest they can lay their hands on. That curious chant is the price, say 27, repeated over and over in a sort of sing-song. When the pitch of the chant changes, the auctioneer has jumped one cent. Incidentally, my friend was of the opinion that the two auctioneers on the Jack Benny program overdid it a little. Many auctioneers are quite intelligible. Tobacco is just about the most lucrative crop there is. An acre of tobacco may bring in \$650, as compared with \$23 which is a good yield from an acre of wheat. At the same time, tobacco is more expensive and more trouble than almost any other crop.

Where a wheat farmer's troubles are largely over after he has planted, the tobacco farmer must keep his eye on his tobacco plants every day guarding them against weather and insect pests. Tobacco leaves must be picked one at a time when they ripen, which means a daily inspection of the plants leaf by leaf. Also tobacco is a soil robber, which is one reason why the South uses more fertilizer than any other section of the country. Any further questions about the chant of the auctioneer?

The auctioneers were, by all accounts, a favoured advertising device by American Tobacco president George W. Hill. When Hill died in September 1946, they stayed on the air for a few years but were replaced in the '50s with a recorded jingle and a pitch by Don Wilson that was decidedly less interesting and attention-grabbing. By then, big ad money was moving from radio to TV.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [08:14](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#), [John Crosby](#)

3 comments:



J Lee 15 April 2012 at 10:37

It took a long time for General Foods and Jack Benny to finally get back together, [but they finally did in the 1962-63 season](#) (and every other commercial on CBS in the mid-1960s seemed to be for some General Foods product, anyway).

Lucky Strike/American Tobacco was one of the first companies to figure out the difference between 'hard sell' ads for radio and 'soft sell' ads that played better on television. But you can still rifle through the archives and find some overly-pretentious ads that would be all but gone, not just from TV by the end of the 50s, but also from radio, by the mid-1960s.

[Reply](#)

Mike Peterson 15 April 2012 at 15:59

Not sure of American Tobacco being out of newspapers. Lucky Strike went to war rather prominently -- was I only seeing those ads in magazines? They certainly hadn't abandoned print for the duration.

[Reply](#)



Yowp 16 April 2012 at 15:48

I ran into a newspaper story (probably a handout; there was no wire accreditation) stating American Tobacco was resuming advertising in papers and outlining the campaign. One of the ads that was published several weeks after the squib appears at the top of the post.

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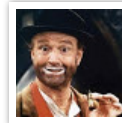
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additional covers you could share! ...

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

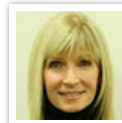
In His Own Words: H.T. Kalmus on Disney in Technicolor - Suspended Animation #276 Many references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)...

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.

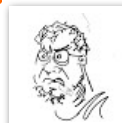
The ones

that were really liked wou...

4 days ago



The World of Knight

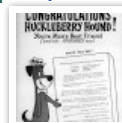


TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

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

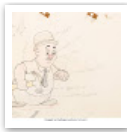
Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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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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