

Sunday, 3 June 2012

Swoongoons for Dennis

The main players on the Jack Benny Show are well-known today because they all stuck with Jack for a very long time. Phil Harris was the only one who didn't move to television with him, being tied up with a big contract on another network (Phil's replacement, the affable undistinguished Bob Crosby, did).

Dennis Day was the last of the main cast members to join the show. He started as a clone of the previous tenor, Kenny Baker, but as time progressed, and running gags settled in for the long haul toward the end of the '40s, Dennis proved far more versatile and, frankly, better at dialogue. His character was so ingrained with Benny's audience, he was able to carry it off on television when he was obviously older than what his character should have been.

So convincing were the Benny characters that newspaper stories invariably explained to readers the people really weren't what they were like on the radio. Seemingly endless stories about Jack felt the need to inform people he really wasn't cheap. And profiles of Dennis threw in that he wasn't a sheltered mama's boy. Here's an Associated Press story from 1948.



Dennis Day Guided by Pure Irish Luck

By GENE HANDSAKER

HOLLYWOOD. March 13. The luck of the Irish has been guiding Dennis Day, both of whose, parents were born in Erin.

Take the time he was 6 months old, and nursing his bottle: The carriage toppled over and dumped Dennis into Hughes Ave., the Bronx. The bottle broke and gashed his nose so deeply that he lost nearly all his blood. The doctor filled out a death certificate and said Dennis couldn't last the night. But the saints were watching over him—though the long scar is still noticeable.

Even a later appendectomy was pure luck. The operation kept him from enrolling in law at Columbia for a semester. To kill time, he began knocking around radio stations as an occasional singer. When Jack Benny needed a tenor in May, 1939, Dennis' auditions record was one of 500. Luck again—Mary Livingstone heard it and liked it.

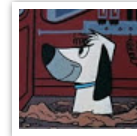
That emergency operation turned him toward a still-expanding career as vocalist, impersonator, comedian, recording artist and music publisher. Soon he'll act in a movie, "Babes in Toyland," and he's preparing to get into television.

Black-haired, sharp-nosed and slender, Dennis is shyer and smarter than the naive youth he plays on the air. He was born Eugene Dennis McNulty 27 years ago in the Bronx. When announcers mispronounced his name "McNoolty" and "McNalty" he borrowed part of his grandmother's name, O'Day, for professional use.

He lives in a Spanish-style stucco house with his pretty 23-year-old bride, the former Peggy Almquist, a U. S. C. student until their marriage last Jan. 29. Several bobby-soxed young residents of the neighborhood had been walking or bicycling by during my visit, and when I left there was a scrawled note in the mailbox: "Dear Dennis Day—We are the fans of you. We are what you call swoongoons over you. We want your autograph."

It always seems odd to me that girls would be hot for Dennis Day. Irish tenors strike me as appealing to the more matronly type. Well, maybe *grandmatronly*. Before the turn of the last century, large waves of Irish immigrants arrived in the eastern U.S., bringing music with them. The direct-from-the-Auld Sod population

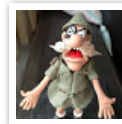
About Me



View my complete profile

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...
4 hours ago

Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.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

aged and shrank as time progressed. People born afterward found their own culture and music.

Dennis commented about that to the North American News Agency in this column of March 5, 1960. He was still part of the Benny TV family, albeit occasionally.

Dennis Day—Last Irish Tenor

By DONALD FREEMAN

LAS VEGAS (NANA)—“I’m the last of the Irish tenors,” sighed Dennis Day, speaking in his normal voice, which isn’t at all high-pitched. “We’re the whooping cranes of show business. We’re practically extinct. Phil Regan’s out of the business now. Morton Downey’s retired. The old generation’s dying and no new tenors are coming up.

“Perhaps it’s just as well when you consider what’s happening to the good old Irish songs. On a jukebox the other day I heard a rock ‘n’ roll version of—hold your hats?—‘Danny Boy.’ Imagine that! What’ll they think of next—‘Mother Machree Cha Cha Cha’?”

Such worries to one side, Dennis has been headlining the show at the Riviera Hotel here where he concludes his act with—what else?—a medley of Irish tunes. Offstage, he is small, compact, unassuming and serious. His expression rarely changes except for the sudden flashes of wit.

Then you see the humor coming alive in his eyes, which are dark brown and very guileless. He started life, incidentally, as Owen Patrick Eugene Dennis McNulty. However, when announcers insisted on calling him “McNulty,” he became Dennis Day, his grandmother’s name having been O’Day.

We talked about his long-flourishing association with Jack Benny, now in its 21st year. “It’s the luckiest thing that ever happened,” Day said. “Kenny Baker has just left the Benny show. I auditioned for Jack and I got hired—me, a kid fresh out of Manhattan College, starting out on radio’s top show. What could be better?” Day added: “Like all native New Yorkers, I was the world’s biggest hick. I’d never been north of Yonkers in my life. Being so green, so provincial, I had no trouble stepping into Kenny Baker’s role of the silly kid singer. But how was he able to play the silly kid singer all these years? Day smiled and said: “The credit goes to Jack Benny because he’s the one who creates the illusion. I sure don’t look like a kid, silly or otherwise. I’ll be 42 this year. I’ve got wrinkles—and seven children at home. But on Jack’s show, somehow, people believe it, like they believe, well, sort of believe—that Jack is 39 and drives a Maxwell.

“The interesting thing is that I can only play the silly tenor on Jack’s show. But when I do a guest appearance elsewhere the writers take the easy way out and make me say things like ‘Yes, please?’ It never works. Without Jack Benny, there’s no illusion to make it funny.

People have asked me if I ever resent being toed to Jack Benny. How could I resent it? I’ve made a fine living with Jack. I’ve worked with fine people. And I’ve learned comedy timing from the master.” Several years ago, Day starred in his own ill-fated show, which NBC pitted against “I Love Lucy,” then at the crest of its popularity. Cliff Arquette, as Charley Weaver, was featured on that particular series.

“In fact, we wrote the show around Charley,” Day recalled. “He was just as funny then as he was now. But nobody saw him. In those days, everybody was watching ‘Lucy.’”



Cynics might accuse Dennis Day of maintaining fame through nostalgia—nostalgia for the old Benny show, nostalgia for old Irish songs, nostalgia for the old movie stars he impersonated. If so, he wouldn’t have been the first and he won’t be the last. But he had to have something to get there in the first place and give the girls something to go swoongoons over many years ago.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at 08:09



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:



Zartok-35 3 June 2012 at 14:37

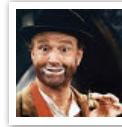
The lord is good to me, and so I thank the lord!

[Reply](#)

additional covers you could share! ...

17 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

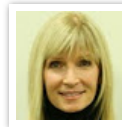
Cartoon Research

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

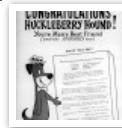
The World of Knight



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 -

Enter your comment...

 Comment as: Garth (Google) ▼

Sign out

Publish

Preview

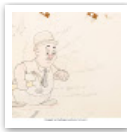
☐ Notify me

Newer Post

Home

Older Post

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)




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

Blog Archive

- ▶ 2020 (216)
- ▶ 2019 (376)
- ▶ 2018 (379)
- ▶ 2017 (380)
- ▶ 2016 (396)
- ▶ 2015 (389)
- ▶ 2014 (390)
- ▶ 2013 (388)
- ▼ 2012 (397)
 - ▶ December (39)
 - ▶ November (34)
 - ▶ October (32)
 - ▶ September (34)

- ▶ [August \(33\)](#)
- ▶ [July \(34\)](#)
- ▼ [June \(34\)](#)
 - [UPA Clipping File](#)
 - [Truce Toothbrush](#)
 - [How Do I Know It's Friz](#)
 - [There He Is](#)
 - [Señor Droopy Swirls](#)
 - [Smoked Hams Exit](#)
 - [Wonga is 104](#)
 - [The Rumors About Dr Seuss](#)
 - [That's Oswald](#)
 - [Buddy and Azusa](#)
 - [Benny and Azusa](#)
 - [Minerva Pious](#)
 - [Dippy Diplomat Outline](#)
 - [Scaredy Cat and Fake Cat](#)
 - [The Month of June \(Foray\)](#)
 - [Buck Benny and Ernie Bilko](#)
 - [What Walt Disney Learned From Snow White](#)
 - [Hairpins and Ernie Nordli](#)
 - [Ballet-What?](#)
 - [Withers and Willie Whopper](#)
 - [Wally Walrus and his Ball](#)
 - [Wild and Woolfy](#)
 - [The No 1 Man in Hooterville](#)
 - [Benny and Cantor on This and That](#)
 - [The Legacy of Frank Churchill](#)
 - [Stop Staring!](#)
 - [Ub's Classroom](#)
 - [Jack Mather](#)
 - [The Lonesome Mouse](#)
 - [Bugs Bunny Emotes Again](#)
 - [The Man Who Stopped Being Mr. Dors](#)
 - [Swoongoons for Dennis](#)
 - [Cartoons Without Tails](#)
 - [Woody's Lantz-formation](#)
- ▶ [May \(31\)](#)
- ▶ [April \(32\)](#)
- ▶ [March \(31\)](#)
- ▶ [February \(29\)](#)

► [January](#) (34)► [2011](#) (106)

Labels

[Aline Mosby](#) (17)[Art Davis](#) (33)[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (9)[Bob and Ray](#) (10)[Bob Clampett](#) (82)[Bob McKimson](#) (59)[Bob Thomas](#) (53)[Chuck Jones](#) (142)[Columbia](#) (33)[Counterfeit Cat](#) (8)[Cynthia Lowry](#) (26)[Dick Thomas](#) (14)[Don Patterson](#) (17)[Earl Wilson](#) (6)[Erskine Johnson](#) (37)[Felix the Cat](#) (27)[Film Daily](#) (50)[Fleischer](#) (154)[Frank Tashlin](#) (24)[Fred Allen](#) (43)[Fred Brunish](#) (11)[Friz Freleng](#) (137)[Gene Deitch](#) (18)[George Pal](#) (10)[Grant Simmons](#) (4)[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (99)[Hanna-Barbera](#) (2)[Harman-Ising](#) (61)[Henry Morgan](#) (13)[Irv Spence](#) (8)[Jack Benny](#) (454)[Jay Ward](#) (30)[Jimmy Durante](#) (17)[John Crosby](#) (84)[John Sutherland](#) (28)[Johnny Johnsen](#) (27)[Kenny Baker](#) (6)[King-Size Canary](#) (8)[Laugh-In](#) (11)[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (6)[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)[Magical Maestro](#) (9)[Maurice Noble](#) (12)[Mel-O-Toons](#) (4)[MGM](#) (553)[Norm McCabe](#) (5)[Pat Matthews](#) (10)

Paul Julian	(13)
Paul Terry	(2)
Sara Berner	(5)
Screwy Squirrel	(34)
Spider-Man	(1)
Terrytoons	(84)
Tex Avery	(468)
Tom and Jerry Human	(29)
Tralfaz Sunday Theatre	(17)
Ub Iwerks	(80)
UPA	(57)
Van Beuren	(94)
Vernon Scott	(42)
Virginia MacPherson	(14)
Walt Disney	(145)
Walter Lantz	(241)
Warner Bros.	(586)
Who Killed Who	(10)

Watermark theme. Powered by [Blogger](#).