



Sunday, 4 November 2012

Jack Benny, 39+40

Jack Benny predicted he'd never retire, he'd die while he was still performing. That he did. He was about to begin shooting "The Sunshine Boys" with Walter Matthau and had begun work on another TV special when he passed away at the age of 80 on Boxing Day 1974.

Jack was still giving interviews, including one with the Associated Press as he was just about to leave age 79 behind. It appeared in papers starting February 3, 1974. In those days, papers banked long wire service writes for whenever they needed them; this one appeared in some papers as late as May.

There's a unique connection to Jack's show in this story. Writer Jay Sharbutt's father was the great announcer [Del Sharbutt](#). In the late '40s, Del was one of several announcers of the commercials for Lucky Strike cigarettes that were broadcast at the beginning and the ending of Jack's radio show. So Jay's dad appeared on Jack's show every week for a number of years (albeit the commercials were broadcast from a different building). The old Hollywood newspaper gossips—Louella Parsons and the like—would have blatantly wormed their own names into the story if they had a connection. Jay was a journalist (he spent time covering Vietnam). He didn't. So I have.

Jack Benny: 39 and Counting

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jack Benny's trump card as a comedian has always been timing. The pregnant pause. He still has it. And at age 80 it still isn't time to retire.

By JAY SHARBUTT

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—JACK BENNY, age 39, turns 80 this month. His sputtering Maxwell has long since been garaged, but not the man or the legend.

He's still defying time with well-honed comic timing. At an age when most men are playing shuffleboard, he's playing Las Vegas. At an hour most octogenarians are snoozing, he's up drum-beating for a television special. In an era of imminent nostalgia, he's not rambling about the good old days, belying the late Fred Allen's theory that most performers' lives "are bounded on the north by their entrance music and on the south by their exits."

He even gets exasperated if someone points out that network radio drama is making a small comeback and asks: Why not radio comedy?

"Because nobody will listen," he'll defiantly say, puffing a big cigar, propping his feet on the coffee table in his hotel suite and jamming his hands in the pockets of an old, comfortable bathrobe.

Nobody will listen?

"You wouldn't listen to it." Sure I would.

"Like hell you would. You know why you wouldn't listen to it? Well, maybe you would be one of a few who would listen to it. The big thing is television. Before radio it was newspapers.

"Supposing I was the only one doing radio now? How many listeners do you think I'd have?"

Millions Listened

Hmmm. Odd words from a man who in the 1930s kept millions listening and laughing of his alleged stinginess and vanity, and his Maxwell Rochester, Dennis Day, Mary Livingston, Don Wilson. And the violin assaults on "Love in Bloom."

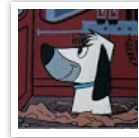
And don't forget his long-running "feud" with Fred Allen, whom he greatly admired. The war erupted when Allen heard Benny playing violin. Allen had a child prodigy playing violin on his show the next week and compared him to Benny.

"Fred—you know how he talked with that nasal twang—he said a very funny line," grinned the mufti maestro, pinching his nostrils and commencing an uncanny imitation of Allen.

"He said, 'When Jaaack Benny plays the violin it sounds like the strings are baack in the Caat.'"

Fiddling for 62 Years

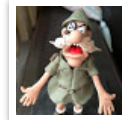
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[safety measures.](#) - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com
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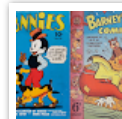
Movies with Michael



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..."
8 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

Benny, born in Waukegan, Ill., on Valentine's Day in 1894, started in vaudeville 62 years ago as a violinist. He got in the humor business both in word and bow while in the Navy in 1918.

His instrument only has had a relatively small saw-on role, so to speak, during his almost 42 years in radio and television. But he's been using it to help, not hurt, music since 1956, when violinist Isaac Stern persuaded him to play with the New York Philharmonic to raise money to save Carnegie Hall.

It was a gag with a serious intent; and Benny, who actually is a competent violinist, has been doing it ever since, appearing at fund-raising concerts. He's raised, by his estimate, nearly \$6 million for money-starved orchestras. Why does he do it?

"Well, in the first place I love the violin," he says.

"Second place, I'm nuts about good music. In the third place, I hate to see the symphony, orchestras fold.

"That doesn't mean I can keep 'em alive all the time, but I can always start a little excitement and keep them going for a little while."

"If I want to quit for a while, I'll just quit. Sometimes I get tired of playing certain places. But I still go."

He's a Comedy Editor

Despite Benny's carefully cultivated image of vanity, the concerts are one of the few things he'll openly boast about. Another, which isn't too well-known outside those in the business, is his reputation as an excellent comedy editor.

"This I will admit," he laughed. "I am probably not the best writing comedian, but the best editor. All the writers give me credit, even on other shows, for being the best editor."

Although he's not the swiftest ad-lib man in the business, he considers himself "fairly good at it. But let me give you an idea of what I term good ad-libbing.

"I think the most important thing to know is what you're going to say, and make it sound like you're just making it up, which I have a knack of being able to do."

Pause That Amuses

The acknowledged master of comic pause and effect was asked for a 25-word definition of timing. He shook his head.

"No way I can define it," he sold. "People will say to me, 'How'd you learn timing?' I haven't the slightest idea. The only thing I did know was innately, when I first started to talk on the stage.

"I knew that I must not be a one-liner comedian ... I must not do those kind of jokes I must talk on subjects. And I must make my whole act sound as though I've hardly ever changed the subject.

"That if I go from one subject to another, I must do it very gracefully, so that you, as an audience, wouldn't even realize I'm changing.

"Now, a lot of people think I have excellent timing. But what they don't understand is that it isn't better than a lot of comedians, except they talk faster.

"They think because I talk slower my timing is better. Well, let me tell you something: Every comedian better have good timing or he's not a comedian. He's dead."

No Money Worries

Benny never has quit working for more than six decades in show business. He certainly has no money worries, aside from a recent dispute with the Internal Revenue Service.

Doesn't he ever get the feeling he'd like to take a few years and just goof off?

No, he said. "Do you know I would be three years late in"—he chose his words carefully—"in my material, my approach to material, in my being topical.

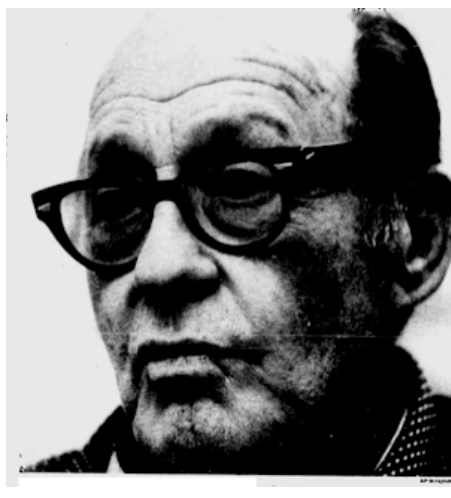
"I don't mean being topical because there's a Watergate or something. I mean generally topical... you come back stale and I don't give a damn how clever you are.

"You don't lose your delivery. You wouldn't lose your delivery if you were 100 years old. This stays with you always. What you lose is material, what to talk about."

A cheerful, confident man with neither the walking nor talking hesitations of age, Benny grew somber only when asked why he'd never retire.

"I don't know," he softly said. "I don't know. I think I'll probably die with my boots on. I hate to word it that way—it scares me—but I just don't give it a thought."

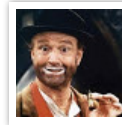
"If I want to quit for a while, I'll just quit, Sometimes I get tired of playing certain places. But I still go."



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

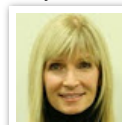
Cartoon Research

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

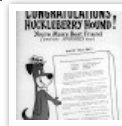
The World of Knight



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

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Yowp



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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 -

Posted by Yowp at 01:20



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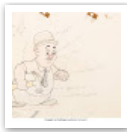
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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

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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