



Sunday, 7 July 2013

Not That Quiet Riot

TV Radio Mirror was one of many print publications in on the parade of "Jack Benny isn't his character" stories. This one is from May 1955. None of the little tales in this biographic article may surprise Benny fans, who have likely seen them elsewhere. The photos you see here accompanied the article.

Jack Benny—Man or Myth?

He's thrifty, 39, and frustrated . . . generous, ageless, successful . . . whatever he is, he's your favorite!

By FREDDA DUDLEY BALLING

The morning after Jack Benny's daughter, Joan, was married to Seth Baker, the Los Angeles Examiner headlined the event, "Benny Daughter Wed in \$50,000 Ceremony." The Los Angeles Times duplicated that headline with one exception—the price was quoted at \$60,000.

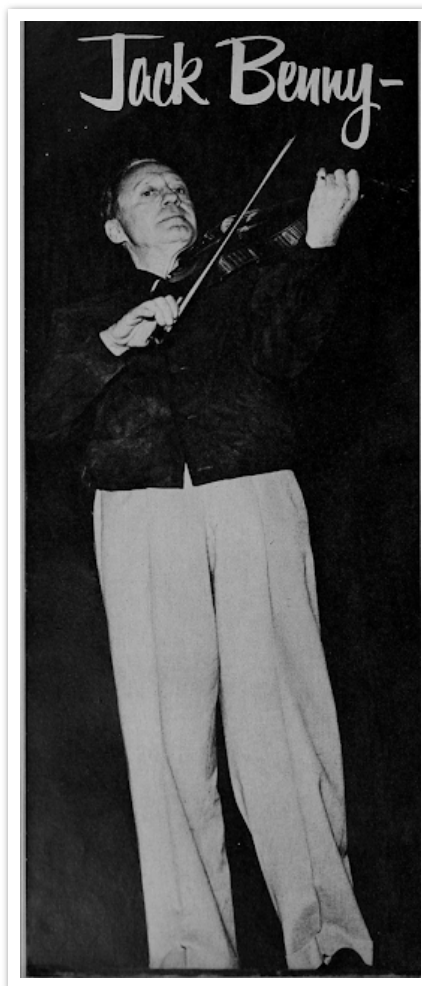
(Incidentally, both figures were incorrect.)

Eddie Cantor rushed to the telephone and asked his long-time friend, "Jack, d'ya want to save ten thousand dollars this morning?" In his usual velvety voice, Jack confessed that he had never been hostile to thrift. "Read the Examiner instead of the Times then," was the Cantor advice.

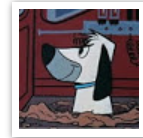
Jack has told the story repeatedly, obviously gets a kick out of it because it indicates how completely the Benny legend has permeated the American scene. He is a man who attracts labels, as if to define him could explain him as a living phenomenon. Jack Benny has been dubbed "The Waukegan Wonder," "The World's Least Appreciated Violinist," "The Most Versatile Worrier the Race of Man Has Yet Produced," "The Funniest Un-funny Man in Show Business," "The Spirit of Mankind's Daily Frustration," and (by George Burns) "The Quiet Riot."

In some respect, each of the designations is true, but—even taken all together—they don't encompass the actor, his act, or the man responsible for both. Actually, Jack Benny is one of the great short-story writers and one of the great editors of our time; his yarns have gone over the air, instead of down on paper, which makes him a throwback (with microphone) to the days of the traveling minstrels who brought gossip and song to the scattered populace. The radio and TV Jack Benny is a character created over the years, his idiosyncracies deepened, his foibles and traits sharpened until he steps out of speakers and tubes as real as those risen-from-ink myths of Sherlock Holmes, Paul Bunyan, Pollyanna, Elsie Dinsmore, Philo Vance, and Scrooge. Especially Scrooge.

Not long ago the following classified advertisement was run in the Sacramento (California) *Union*: "Two women about Jack Benny's age would like small unfurnished house. Would like to pay what Jack Benny would like to pay." To at least one hundred million Americans, this description of prospective renters and their financial status was perfectly clear. Children by the dozen have written Jack to ask for options on any cubs



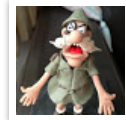
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Peter Gray's Comics and Art



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...
2 hours ago

Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollera.com
4 hours ago

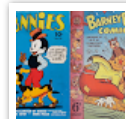
Movies with Michael



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...
7 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

produced by Carmichael, the bear that roams the Benny premises—in radio scripts only. During the war, the conservation board hit upon an ideal way to call public attention to the need for scrap iron: They asked Jack to donate his completely fictitious 1924 Maxwell to the scrap drive.

It is clear that, in times to come, "Jack Benny" will become part of our language, along with such meaningful names as Steve Brodie and Annie Oakley. A "Jack Benny" will be a gently swaggering, mildly four-flushing show-off who always gets his comeuppance; a tight-fisted, harmlessly vain, perpetually frustrated and somehow likable "fall guy."

Long ago, when Jack was still in vaudeville, slowly bringing the Benny character to fully realized form, the drama critic for New York's erudite Times commented, "Jack Benny's is the most civilized act in vaudeville." A celebrated actress, after having lost a movie plum she had believed certain, after having banged up her five-thousand dollar automobile, and after having staged a battle with her husband that sent him to a hotel to recoup, announced to a friend, "I feel exactly like that newspaper etching of Jack Benny—you know, the one advertising his TV show."

This economical sketch, reproduced throughout America, depicts a pair of tragic eyes, a pair of crossed Mona Lisa-like hands, and an expression of profound frustration. Essentially sad, it is also essentially funny because nearly everyone recognizes one of his own moods in that projection of bewildered dejection. We all get "sassed back" by salespeople, taxi drivers, and police officers. We all overstep our knowledge of our abilities and fall flat on our faces. The "Jack Benny" character, suffering such disaster with us, reduces our fate to a subject for laughter.

So much for the myth that makes us smile. What of the living, breathing man who has created the legend? First of all, he wasn't born in Waukegan, Illinois. He debuted into this world in Chicago, on Valentine's Day, just 39 years ago (or in the year 1894). Much of the time he looks somewhat younger than 39, having—as General MacArthur phrased it—"a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions," that keep him timeless.

His proud boast that he is the world's worst violinist is open to challenge. His show-business start came as a direct result of his proficiency with the fiddle. At 16, he toured for two vaudeville seasons with a pianist, a woman old enough to be his mother and having a mother's conviction that the Benny lad had talent—even if he had been kicked out of school for exasperating his teachers. In 1916, with a male partner (Lyman Wood), Jack Benny and violin played the Palace, that famous goal of all vaudeville artists. Benny wasn't asked back until 1924—and, by that time, he was carrying his fiddle onstage merely as a prop—but his musical abilities cannot be denied.

During the war, Jack was invited to do a benefit for Greek War Relief. In white tie and tails he strode onto the stage, tucked his violin into place, and played a highly involved concerto arrangement of "Love in Bloom." Finishing his performance, he bowed solemnly and strolled backstage, where a friend congratulated Jack effusively, saying that he'd never realized that Jack had not been kidding about his violin lessons all those years. Jack's deadpan response: "Listen—when I was younger, they used to call me another Heifetz . . . not this Heifetz—another Heifetz."

Second most persistent of the legends with which Jack libels himself is that he's a slow man with a nickel. This gag started during Jack's 1924 Palace engagement. It seems that the country was suffering from a mild post-war slump, prices were high and money scarce. Looking over his audience, Jack realized that there were many couples in attendance only because the escort had been living on peanut-butter sandwiches for a week. Wistfully, he said that he had been thinking of taking his girl to a movie—because, down the street there was theater where, in blazing lights on the marquee, it said: "The Woman Pays." This produced such understanding howls that the character of the man clinging devoutly to his dough was born.

In actuality, Jack is not profligate (never gambles, cares nothing for betting on the horses), but his checkbook is always open to worthy causes. During the war, he spent well over a hundred thousand dollars for telephone line charges to bring his shows to servicemen. He pays the highest salaries of any comedian in the broadcasting business, and recently sent a generous check to Walter Winchell for the Damon Runyon Cancer Fund—with the understanding that the fact would not be publicized.

Many a man, professionally generous, is personally parsimonious, but Jack could never be accused of domestic penny-pinching. The Bennys live in unostentatious but unmistakable elegance. Their Beverly Hills home cost \$250,000 when built in 1939, and it is furnished in a deceptively simple style best described as "comfortable contemporary."

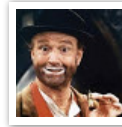
Their Palm Springs home was purchased in 1951, at a cost of \$75,000. The main house consists of living room, dining room, kitchen, servants' quarters, and three family bedroom suites. There is also a pool, a palm-shaded patio and a guest house which always seems to be occupied.

In small things, as in great, Jack is not inclined to scrimp. When his daughter, Joan, reached the age of telephinitis, he had a private line installed for her (use unlimited—as long as she did her home work). Both

additional covers you could share! ...

16 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...

1 day ago

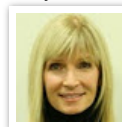
Cartoon Research

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 -



Daughter Joan and wife Mary Livingstone would be the first to swear that Jack's no tightwad.

Jack and Mary have always had their own private lines so that Jack's often-lengthy business calls would not interfere with Mary's active social life.

The women in the Benny family have always been considered among the best-dressed in Beverly Hills, and Jack himself is considered by his tailor, Eddie Schmidt, to be one of the 10 best dressed men in the world today. At latest inventory, Jack owned around 80 cashmere sweaters, about 40 cashmere jackets, some 100 sport shirts, 20-odd pairs of gray flannel slacks, a blue capeskin sports jacket (greeted by whistles from the entire personnel at CBS), and around 20 business suits, along with an array of tuxedos and full-dress suits for both professional and personal use.

Another charge leveled at Jack Benny, the character, by Jack Benny, the man, is that he can't act. "The Horn Blows at Midnight," a Benny motion picture, has come in for much caustic comment from Jack. Truth is that "Horn" made Warner Brothers a nice piece of change.

Jack's ability as an actor is so subtle that it often escapes notice, but—like air—if it were missing there would be obvious discomfort. All comedians suffer from a quaint human practice: The layman tells the doctor how to cure the common cold; he tells a professional musician about his uncle who played piccolo for Sousa; he explains his hatred of modern art to painters—and he tells jokes to comics. It is likely that Jack has now heard, in multiple versions, every joke perpetrated. But his laughter rings out in hearty enjoyment of any and every story, quip, pun or gag inflicted upon him. He looks as if he enjoyed it, he laughs as if hearing it for the first time, he thanks the teller as though this gambit might save the Sunday show.

Statistics about the number of Maxwells

manufactured are clouded by time and unsteady reporting, but they must have rolled off the assembly line like doughnuts at Hallowe'en. Wherever Jack goes to make a personal appearance, someone has thought up the great gag of meeting him at airport or station with a vintage Maxwell. Without fail, this breaks Jack up. He examines the relic with tenderness and gives every indication of being grateful for the implied familiarity with his program.

When he was on USO tour, wherever he went—no matter how mud-choked or artillery—raked the camp—Jack was greeted by a convulsing sign: "Welcome, Fred Allen." He never failed to make a big thing of this acknowledgment of his long-famous feud. He never failed to get in some mention of the sign in the show.

Jack still owns and operates a pretty good head of hair, but no Christmas passes for which he doesn't receive a toupee from some local prankster. Such a gift is acknowledged with a correspondential merry-ha ha.

The "Jack Benny" of radio and TV characterization would seem to have no emotional nature beyond a tender regard for his own ego and the welfare of his wallet, but the man behind the mountebank is—in every sense—a gentle-man. In speaking of the people connected with his show, Jack always refers to them as "those who work with me"—not "for me." When meeting times are being set for discussion of the next show, Jack never mentions an hour and adheres to it arbitrarily. He says, "What time would be good for you?"

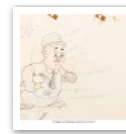
He and Mary Livingstone were married in Waukegan, at the Hotel Clayton, on January 14, 1927. (She fainted at the end of the ceremony, a fact that has troubled Jack ever since.) When Jack is away from Mary, he writes every day, telephones whenever possible. In Korea, he lined up with the GIs in order to send flowers to Mary, just as the other men were doing for their wives. Sometimes he tells Mary, "For your birthday, go buy something you really want," but usually he plots her gift for weeks in advance, presents it with a small boy's heart-filled grin.

Perhaps the unkindest dig of all is the charge sometimes made that Jack Benny, outside his radio personality, is not an amusing man. There has been an assumption that his admittedly tremendous abilities reside in situations built up to a payoff. Such phrases as "flawless timing," "masterful inflection," "an uncanny ear for the inner rhythm of laughter," have been tossed off to explain audience guffaws at Benny. One colleague once observed: "The only operator to get more out of a 'Well . . .' than Benny is the state of Texas."

Now would seem to be the time to give you a happy few minutes with Jack Benny, the man who doesn't need his writers to tickle your ribs. Having been interviewed by Cleveland Amory, author of *The Proper Bostonian*, Mr. Benny made good use of the time from the standpoint of both publicity and putting a show together. The following Sunday, a comic situation found Jack annoyed with Rochester and seeking reasons to rebuke him. "What is this copy of *The Proper Bostonian* doing next to the Kinsey Report?" he wanted to know. Eddie Cantor, in an affectionate moment, allowed as how he'd give Jack the shirt off his back any old time. Benny's instant response, delivered in a tone of solemn dedication, was: "And do you know what I'd do for you, Eddie? I'd wash it, iron it, and charge you only thirty-five cents."

Jack still likes to report the advice he received from Jimmy Durante when Jimmy heard that Jack was going into TV. "Jimmy sounded a real warning: He said, 'When you're in television, you're gotta speak distinctly.'" Benny said of his great and good friend George Burns, "He's the world's loosest man with an insult."

Returning from an appearance in Vancouver, one raw spring day, Jack was happily playing gin rummy with



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)
 - ▶ December (31)
 - ▶ November (31)
 - ▶ October (34)
 - ▶ September (31)
 - ▶ August (33)

Don Wilson when the plane began to struggle like a Mexican jumping bean. The pilot came back to ask for instructions, saying that dead ahead loomed Mount Rainier: The plane was icing up and they were losing altitude and something had gone wrong with the radio—he thought they were off the beam. Would it be all right if he set down at Corvallis? Many spine-chilling moments later, the pilot made a perfect landing at Corvallis, once again came back into the cabin to ask if there was anything more he could do for Mr. Benny. Very softly, Jack said, "Yes. Please get me a room in a nice one-story hotel."

During one of Jack's USO tours, he and two other members of the troupe were being jeeped back to their lodgings. An MP ordered the jeep to stop unexpectedly—calling from a dark corner—and when the driver didn't comply as fast as the MP thought he should, a fusillade of bullets whizzed over the heads of the jeepsters. Once all were identified and the difficulty straightened out, the shaken quartet climbed back into the jeep just as a black cat strolled across the street in front of the whitened travelers. "Now he tells us," snorted Jack. When he was asked by an interviewer if he were a handy man about the house, Jack admitted sorrowfully that he "couldn't push a thumb tack into a bulletin board without consulting a carpenter."

Well aware of the fact that he isn't supposed to be a quipster, Benny sometimes uses this misapprehension to his own advantage. He said wistfully, one day, "I really envy ad-libbers like Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. They're so well coordinated. I've been playing golf as long as they have, but I still haven't been able to break 80."

The tag line must be awarded to Fred Allen, erstwhile airwaves enemy of the Waukegan Wonder. Fred doesn't often speak the straight lines, so he is doubly impressive when he does so. Said Mr. Allen, in his book, *Treadmill to Oblivion*, "Jack Benny is the best-liked man in show business."

And funny, too.



Show folk all recognize Jack's professional talents—and his personal charm. Such notables as Bing Crosby and George Burns enjoy "getting into the act" with him.



He gives freely of both time and money to worthy causes. During wartime and after, Jack made many tours to battle areas and hospitals (above, with Rochester).



Posted by Yowp at 06:09




Labels: Jack Benny

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Hammered Elf

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Take Five, Jack

The Woolworth's of Animation

That Cow's Plane Crazy

Tweety Clobbers Dog

Inner Thoughts From the Inner Tube

Comedienne

A Day at the Races

Smog

An, Ugh, Commoner

The Loving Life of Phil and Alice

Let's All Make Silly Symphonies, 1934

Dog Doesn't Eat Dog

Wot a Skeleton

The Big W

Rabbit Transit Smears

Convict Concerto Take

Baked Potatoes and Traffic Lights

The Other Side of Jay Ward

Mickey Plays the Pig

The Robot's After Flip!

Elusive Radio Success

A Funny Feeling Comes Over Him

You Moved, Didn't You?

Not That Quiet Riot

Turmoil at Van Beuren, 1933

We Want 3-D in 1934

If I Had a Wrench

Log Rolling Olive

Bill Cullen, A Born Ham

Gallopin Gals

With Fiery Blasts Our Roaring Rockets Rise
- June (34)
- May (33)
- April (30)
- March (36)
- February (29)
- January (33)
- 2012 (397)

Newer Post

Home

Older Post

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[► 2011](#) (106)

Labels

[Aline Mosby](#) (17)

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[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) |

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