



Sunday, 15 December 2013

## Mary on Jack

Mary Livingstone began life as a fictional girl from Plainfield, New Jersey who was a fan of radio newcomer Jack Benny. She was played by Jack's wife, Sadye Marks, who later legally assumed Mary's name as her own.

Mary, the character, was a bit of an airhead (silly poems a specialty) through much of the '30s until the writers wisely decided to focus more on her sarcastic nature. And that's how she remained on the air until Mary, the wife, decreed she didn't want to be on the air any more.

Mary, the wife, also gave an early interview in print about Jack, the husband. This was in the *Albany Evening News* "Dialing In" column of June 29, 1936. If you're familiar with Jack Benny, not much will surprise you. Many of the same things were stated in interviews almost 40 years later—including some with Jack himself.



JACK BENNY, seen here with Mary Livingstone, was lucky to have a veteran vaudeville comedy writer named Harry Conn on his side when Jack turned to radio. Conn saw possibilities of adapting Jack's likable personality to radio, using the gentle, confidential style of patter Jack had used in vaudeville. In those early radio days the standard comedy style was a loud-voiced exchange of quips with a straight man. The Benny style was launched—in an accompaniment of warnings and head-shakings—in almost exactly the same pattern it still follows today.

### 'LOWDOWN' ON BENNY --- IN SARCASTIC TONE

By THE LISTENER

WIFE speaks up!

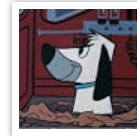
It is Mary Livingstone, talking about Jack Benny. We asked Miss Livingstone to take over this column today and give us the "low down" on Jack. We would have figured that she might be rather sarcastic about him if we had believed that her lines in the Benny radio skits were her own. But we recalled that Jack and Harry Conn write the skits, so the sarcastic tone may be Mary's but the direction is Jack's. Really Jack comes off very well in this estimate by Mary Livingstone. He often says on the radio, Oh, well, you can't please everybody," but he evidently pleases Mary. So here, then, is Mary discussing Jack.

By MARY LIVINGSTON

OTHER radio artists may have a little difficulty writing a guest column, but they just aren't fortunate enough to have literary ability the way I do. Of course, poetry is my specialty but my prose is pretty good, too—I hope. Your radio editor has been good enough to let me play any tune I want on the typewriter. So if it is all right with you. I think I will devote this essay to answering the question that is put to me most frequently. To wit: What kind of a guy is Jack Benny away from the microphone? On the air Jack portrays a rather quiet sort of fellow on whom the rest of the cast is constantly picking. He has nobody but himself to blame because he gets up the scripts. Off the air he is equally quiet, but hardly the browbeaten lad he pretends he is when showing off for you listeners. If he is browbeaten, he never lets on to me. Or perhaps I just don't notice it. When were home, he never tries to be the comedian, I am very glad to say. As a matter of fact he does a lot of worrying—he starts in worrying about next week's program the moment this week's is over. Sometimes even sooner. If you see him in the movies you may think he has black hair. Actually, there are a few streaks of grey here and there. If he were not doing radio, he wouldn't have those. And if he weren't doing radio, he wouldn't be in pictures. So he does not have to worry about that, anyhow.

The greatest fault I find with him is his perpetual good nature. He makes me furious because he is one of those people who always feels good in the morning and gets up early, feeling bright and cheery, no matter how late he has been up the night before. Another thing that gets me down is that he will never start an argument. We have our differences of opinion, just like any other couple. But somehow or other, I am always the one that starts things.

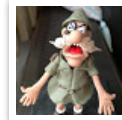
### About Me



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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...  
2 hours ago

#### Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com  
3 hours ago

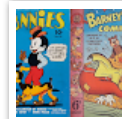
#### Movies with Michael



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..."  
6 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

People often ask if Jack tries to be funny when we have visitors at home. Apparently they think that because a man makes his living by getting other folks to chuckle that he never relaxes. It so happens that our closest friends are in the business of producing laughs also—the Freddy Allens, Burns and Allen, Block and Sully, the Jack Pearls, and so forth. Benny Rubin, Jane and Goodman Ace and the Eddie Cantors are people we see frequently too. Whenever we get together with any of them, Jack likes to take the part of the audience and let them do their stuff for him. He is a sucker for anything that George Burns says or does, for example. All George has to do is walk in the room and say, "hello," and Jack prepares himself for a fine evening of laughter—at no expense to him.

I'm very much afraid that our existence must be a great disappointment to the fan magazine writers because we do not go in very strongly for things they consider suggestive of "GLAMOUR." Our lives and tastes are very simple. Jack does not care a hang about flashy clothes, hates tea parties and nightclubs. He is much more fond of a quiet and easy-going life. If Jack wants to be exceptionally gay and giddy, he will suggest going to a show and top it off by taking in a midnight movie. Try to get glamour out of that!

We do not listen to the radio much, except to news and music. We seldom, if ever, tune in on other comedians. Jack avoids doing so because he doesn't want, even subconsciously, to be influenced by what the other boys are doing. He really loves fine music, though you would never guess it from hearing him torture "Love In Bloom." He is also pretty fond of golf, but plays a terrible game. He ought to give it up entirely. One of his greatest pleasures is getting together with his cronies at the Friars Club and just chewing the rag.

Our baby daughter, Joan Naomi, takes up a lot of his time. No matter how busy he is, he tries to take off an hour every day to wheel her. Last week he went around showing his friends the newest scratch she had given him on the nose. He seemed to get more kick out of it than springing a new gag on his pals. He enjoys driving a car a great deal, but I always prefer to hop the trolley. It's not that he goes in for speeding—to the contrary, he just crawls along. But he always seems to be thinking about something else rather than where he is going. He is an avid follower of sports and devours the sports page of every edition he can lay hands on. Horseracing gets a lot of his attention, but he picks 'em so badly, I have made him stop betting.

I hope this gives you some sort of notion of the kind of bird J. Benny is when he isn't working. In any case I am grateful to the editor for the opportunity to display my talent as a writer.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [09:32](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

## 2 comments:

 **bgrauman** 15 December 2013 at 17:47

I wonder if Harry Conn or Al Boasberg "helped" her with this column....

[Reply](#)



**Yowp** 17 December 2013 at 00:54

I don't know whether he'd bring in Boasberg just for a column in a Buffalo paper. Conn's a possibility.

[Reply](#)

Enter your comment...



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Garth (Google) ▼

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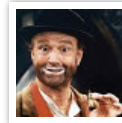
[Preview](#)

☐ Notify me

additional covers you could share! ...

15 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

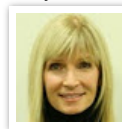
### **Cartoon Research**

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

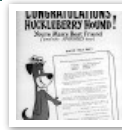
### **The World of Knight**



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**

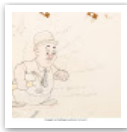
Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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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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