

Sunday, 26 January 2014

## Jack Benny's TV Rumour

You'll all recall how the Jack Benny Easter show of April 13, 1952 mentioned Jack had been interviewed by *Radio-Television Mirror* magazine. Okay, take my word for it.

Anyway, the dialogue was true. Jack was profiled in the May 1952 edition of the gushy fan magazine. The premise of the article was "don't be surprised if Jack Benny quits radio for TV."

Why anyone other than the terminally clueless would be surprised is, well, surprising. By 1952, while some of the long-in-the-tooth shows were on still on radio, it was now clearly the junior home entertainment medium in prime time. Television sapped away stars and, more importantly, ad revenue. But the article was wrong. Jack Benny never quit radio. When the 1954-55 season ended, he expected to return next year with more reruns included in the mix, but the deal broke down over money and radio was Benny-less.



Of course, Benny dipped his toe in the television pool and eventually (and despite concerns about coming up with content) went weekly. He was a TV success because the Benny character traits are universal and were easily displayed on a visual medium (and, in some way, enhanced, as the home audience could see his reactions just like his radio studio audience could.

So here's the feature story, which is probably full of old news to Benny fans.

### THROUGH THE YEARS WITH JACK BENNY

*For the forty-three years he's been entertaining, he's done some crazy things — crazy like a fox*

By PAULINE SWANSON

Everybody loves a rumor. And a guaranteed gasp-provoker going the rounds in Hollywood at the moment is that Jack Benny — Jack Benny! — will quit radio for good to devote all his time to television.

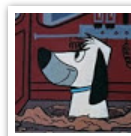
It's a monstrous notion. Jack Benny, after all, is radio, on the top for at least eighteen of the twenty years he has been hello-ing everybody within earshot on Sunday nights—some 25,000,000 everybodies, at latest count. Two thousand of his show business pals crowded into the New York Friars Club last November, on the occasion of his twentieth anniversary on the airways, to call him the greatest — Mr. Show Business himself. You readers of *Radio-Television Mirror* have been voicing this sentiment in your own way, year after year voting him your Favorite Radio Comedian.

Why, Jack Benny even has an Act of Congress to guarantee that the 7 P.M. Sunday night hour on the air is his forevermore.

Jack Benny quit radio? It's a nasty rumor, and it shocks everybody — everybody, that is, who doesn't know Jack Benny.

His close friends aren't shocked. Most of them have known Jack for almost all of the 43 years he has been in show business (he's been entertaining people, you know, for four years more than the 39 he grudgingly admits to — Who's Who says he's 58). Friends have seen him do some crazy things. Crazy like a fox. Like quitting vaudeville, when nobody could top his earnings or his audiences, to take a flyer in the new "talkies" — then as

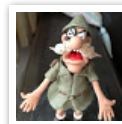
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Vehicle Verification Centers of Mexico City will reopen in August with COVID

[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..."

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

immature and brassy a medium as a lot of people think television is today. Like quitting films in turn, when he had an iron-clad, gold-lined contract for something approximating life, to go back to the stage because he couldn't stand being cut off from direct contact with the audience, with the people out there in front.



And, of course, everybody knows by now the legend of Jack's third big walk-out — when he left the stage where he commanded a weekly salary in four, figures and the biggest, brightest lights on the marquee, to "go into radio."

Legend by now, too, his first broadcast back in 1932 — a guest shot, for free, with Commentator Ed Sullivan. Jack walked up to the terrifying mike, his jitters concealed by dint of heroic effort, and said, "Hello, folks. This is Jack Benny talking. . . . There will now be a brief pause while you all say 'Who cares?' "

Twenty-five million of you cared, it turned out . . . Jack Benny floated, with apparent ease, to the top of the heap again. Radio was his. His mother, had she lived to see it, would have been pleased. It was she who had dinned into her young son's head the maxim he has lived by: "It is not enough, Benny, to be good enough. It has to be as good as you can make it."

The last words she said to him, as he sat beside her deathbed, were: "You'll keep on studying."

A new medium, new techniques, a whole field of younger, fresh competitors ... of course he would have to accept the challenge, and

never stop "studying" until he had licked it — not just when it was good enough, but when it was as good as he could make it.

Mrs. Kubelsky would have understood. So, for the record, does the other woman who has molded Jack Benny's life . . . his wife for twenty-five years, Mary Livingston.

It was for Mary, really, that Jack in the early thirties took his first flyer in films. They lived a normal life for a while. They had a house — rented, but it stayed in one place — and they actually went to bed at night for a change, and got up in the morning! Mary was in seventh heaven, until she began to feel that Jack was not. "You'd better go and see Mr. Mayer," she said, "and tell him 'thanks so much but I quit.' "

He did.

Mary's place in the radio show came about even more accidentally than her bit in the vaudeville act. An actress failed to show up for a broadcast, and Mary was on.

That was twenty years ago, and Mary has been a fixture on the show ever since. It could have been twenty minutes ago to Mary's stomach. She has never gotten over her stage fright, her show-time jitters — original source of her now famous giggle.

Mary would have begged off radio years ago if Jack — and their audiences — had permitted it. Now, especially, that their daughter Joan is a Stanford freshman, all pal and no problem, Mary would like to be free to enjoy their new comradeship.

Mary could see Jack go into television — and without her — without a pang. And the rumors that he might don't shock her one bit.

And, let it be said without further ado, they don't shock Jack.

They couldn't, inasmuch as he started them!

From the day he made his first TV appearance — those first shows, incidentally, may have delighted the audience, but they didn't satisfy Jack; they weren't "as good as he could make it" — Jack has hammered at everybody who would listen to him that he is fascinated with television.

"It's like going back to the theatre . . . you know you make contact . . . the audience is there," he says.

It's the old, intimate show business again, and Jack Benny feels thirty-nine again, experiencing it. But there are a few problems. A sponsor, a contract ... to say nothing of his high-powered and high-priced staff. Some of them have been with him for eighteen years. And TV doesn't pay their kind of prices.

It wouldn't surprise anybody who really knows Benny if Jack made the leap, anyway, and shelled out the money himself to keep his co-workers in the style to which they have grown accustomed.

People who buy the picture of Jack Benny — which he has created himself, of course — of the nickel-pinching skinflint, who exacts a lawn-mowing as well as a solo for Dennis Day's weekly twenty-five dollars, would simply never believe that Jack Benny is unmindful of the importance of the dollar. They would never believe he could exchange radio's lush profits for television's comparative peanuts cheerfully once he was convinced that, in the new medium, he could entertain more people more effectively. But it's true.

Some of his greatest shows he has done for considerably less than nothing— in Iran, for instance, and Egypt, and Sicily, Italy, New Guinea, Australia, the Marianas, the Marshalls, the Gilberts, the Solomons and Kwajalein, where he took his troupe during World War II.

Ask any G.I. if Jack Benny was funny under front-line pressure? And even they, probably, wouldn't believe the actual fact that Jack spent \$100,000 of his own money in telephone line charges in order to be able to get the show to them.

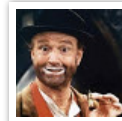
But he did; entertainment is giving.

Last summer, he took a troupe to Korea — when many a younger, hardier man was begging off — traveled

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

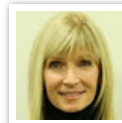
### Cartoon Research

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

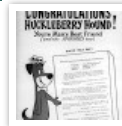
### The World of Knight



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 -

30,000 miles in everything from a jeep to a helicopter, slept — no more than four hours a night — in a dirt-floored tent, and gave.

He came home, a friend says, "Looking like hell . . . broken physically and mentally."

But he caught up on his sleep, told the world that it was the greatest experience of his life and he would go again at the drop of a hat.

He talked of nothing but "those wonderful guys" slugging it up and down Korean mountains.

And their wonderful jokes.

Their jokes — just as on the air it's always Rochester, or Phil Harris, or Mary, or Dennis Day who grabs off the big laugh, while the boss brings down the house with "We . . . ll."

A great entertainer, Jack Benny.

A giver.

And once he decides, if he does, that he can give you more on television than on radio — which has called him the Greatest and made him rich — you'll be seeing him regularly in your living rooms.




Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:22](#)    

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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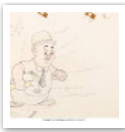
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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

for the ink and paint department. Release date: 12/20/41 Availability: Looney Tunes Gol... 3 weeks ago

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[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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