



Sunday, 17 August 2014

Jack and Sid

The story goes that Jack Benny's first sponsor fired him because he kept making fun of the sponsor's product on the air—even though, by all accounts, the advertising was effective. But another explanation was making the rounds in early 1933 as to why Benny stopped working for Canada Dry.

The Canada Dry programme with Benny and Ted Weems' orchestra aired twice a week—Sundays at 10 p.m. and Thursdays at 8 p.m. His last shows for the sponsor were on January 22 and 26, 1933. The following Sunday, he was replaced with a concert orchestra broadcast and by "The Easy Aces" on Thursday. Yet the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported on January 3, 1933 that Benny was out, and would be replaced by one of his cast members.



Sid Silvers was known at one time as "The King of the Stooges." During the 1920s, he partnered with Phil Baker. Baker would tell the jokes on stage and Silvers would heckle him from a box in the theatre. This led to Silvers landing a contract to write talking films in Hollywood. He appeared with Jack Haley on Broadway. And for a while near the end of 1932, he was part of the Canada Dry programme with Benny.

This column in the *Eagle* picks up the story, although not all of it.

Reverting to Type

By ART ARTHUR

A ROVING REPORTER REVIEWS HIS RAMBLES

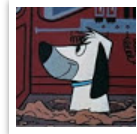
Jack Benny looks SO tired . . . I sat a few feet away from him on three successive nights and he appeared wearier each time . . . they tell me that he plans to holiday in Florida . . . he looks as though he needs it . . . the first time I spotted him was in Dave's Blue Room . . . sitting with him were his wife, Mary Livingstone, and Burns and Allen . . . Benny's hair was mussed and he seemed haggard . . . George Burns was wearing glasses and reminded me of my tailor, who is the father of seven children . . .

The next night the Club Richman opened . . . I strolled in and again found Jack a few feet from my table . . . with him was Mary and a party that included Chico Marx of the Marx Brothers . . . I didn't recognize Chico until he turned his head, so that I saw him in profile . . . it seemed strange to see him without that mangled hat and hear him talking without his Italian accent . . .

Ted Husing made an awkward break . . . Ted was acting as a makeshift Master of Ceremonies because Harry Richman was ill . . . he had introduced Jack Benny . . . and every one applauded . . . a few minutes later, he introduced Sid Silvers, who is succeeding Benny on that radio program . . . Ted declared Sid would show that he was "second to none" as a radio comedian and so on . . . necks craned to watch Benny's reaction . . . but his poker face didn't change . . . you see, Sid Silvers was working with Jack Benny on the air until Benny decided that he was getting too many laughs that belonged to Benny . . . so he demanded that his sponsors oust Silvers . . . he said that either he or Silvers would have to drop out . . . so they bought up Silvers' contract . . . now Sid is replacing Benny . . .

I always liked Benny's spontaneous humor . . . for instance when Husing made another fumble and said that both Chico and Zeppo Marx were present . . . Chico rose to take a bow . . . then everyone waited for some sign of Zeppo...so Jack Benny rose to fill the breach and took the bow for the absent Zeppo . . . a number of noted football coaches were present as guests of Ted Husing . . . Ted introduced Princeton's coach, "Fritz" Crisler . . . and somebody, mistaking him for the noted violinist, chirped, "Make him play something" . . . but Husing got

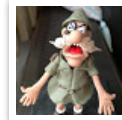
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Blogs to See

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 fernandollera.com
3 hours ago

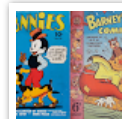
Movies with Michael



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

more applause than anybody... when he introduced himself as, "Ted Husing, the world's worst football announcer" . . . what? No putrid?

Arthur was quite right. There was bad blood between Benny and his stooge. Here's part of what *Weekly Variety* reported on December 13, 1932.

Sid Silvers Off C.D. Over Mrs. Benny's Squawk

Squabble which has been brewing for several weeks between the Jack Benny family and Sid Silvers over the lines that the latter as author arrogated to himself in the broadcast wound up last week with Silvers suddenly being dropped from the Canada Dry program.

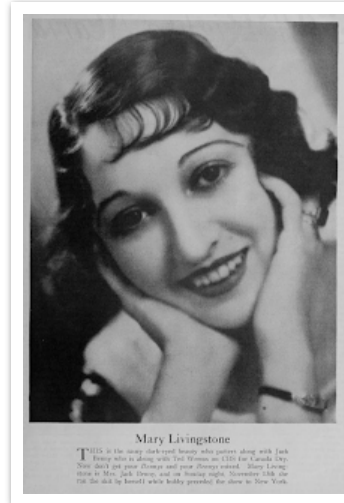
Account settled for the balance of Silvers' 13-week contract after Benny had handed in his ultimatum that either he or Silvers would have to go. Trouble over a claim made by Mary Livingstone (Mrs. Benny) that Silvers in preparing the script had as each broadcast unfolded cut down on her part and built up his own mike contributions with more lines. It looked to her, Mrs. Benny complained, as though it was Silvers' intention to eliminate her altogether.

Writer Denies Charge

Benny took up the cudgel for his frau and took the grievance to the commercial [sponsor] and its agency rep, N.W. Ayer. During a subsequent meeting of the cast in the agency's office Silvers heatedly expressed his resentment of the Benny family's charges, describing them as "unfounded and malicious." Verbal set-to came to a climax when Benny demanded an immediate showdown, that either Silvers was let out or he and Mrs. Benny would walk.

Silvers' contract with Canada Dry had seven more weeks to go and he was paid off in full. With last Sunday (11) night's stanza the continuity built around the experiences of a legit producer and authored originally by Silvers was abandoned, and the script portion of the session resumed the previous routine of crossfire and bit gagging. Preparation of the patter was turned back exclusively to Harry W. Conn.

Canada Dry stated that it has no intention of replacing Silvers with another gag man of similar standing, but to confine the payroll to the Ted Weems band and the Bennys.



Seven days later, *Variety* announced Canada Dry had taken advantage of a cancellation clause and was pulling the Benny show on January 26th.

The story is amusing in a perverse sort of way as Mary Livingstone insisted she never wanted to be an entertainer. That doesn't appear to have been the case in 1932, though it does seem she was right in that Silvers wanted to take the show in a different direction and I suspect her attitude may have been "if I'm ever going to leave, it'll be my decision and not Sid Silvers'." And word is that Mary didn't exactly get along with Harry Conn, either.

Benny was never one to hold a grudge. He had Silvers back on his radio show several years later. Silvers even stooged for him in the Oscar-nominated musical "Broadway Melody of 1936" (partly written by Silvers and Conn). The odd thing about Arthur's story is I've been unable to find a Canada Dry show in 1933 starring Silvers. According to *Variety* of April 18, 1933, the company decided to put off going back into radio. In fact, it ended up changed ad agencies. Silvers was writing a Milton Berle stage show in February, cut an audition for a radio show in April with Jean Sargent, Babs Lyon, Billy Hillpot and the Lenny Hayton orchestra but later in the month was on his way to Hollywood.

Hiring Silvers in the first place was not Benny's idea. Here's *Variety* of November 29, 1932:

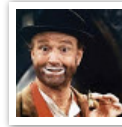
At the insistence of the advertiser the staff of authors for Jack Benny's material on the Canada Dry session has been augmented to three. Original gagman on the show was Harry W. Conn. When the show went to CBS, Sid Silvers was not only added to the cast as foil for Benny but given a writing assignment. While the program was being broadcast from New Orleans the account complained that the script was in need of strengthening, with David Freedman, collaborator (Cantor) on the Chase & Sanborn stanza [being brought in]

The Canada Dry firing hurt Benny, but only briefly. Benny (and Joe Cook) both auditioned to emcee a show for Old Gold Cigarettes to debut on CBS on February 7, 1933. Benny didn't get it. Why? *Variety* reported on January 31st that he was too closely associated with Canada Dry, becoming famous for kidding the soft drink on the air during commercials, to be associated with a new sponsor so soon. But Chevrolet took a chance. It signed him in February for a contract through April 7th and *Variety* announced on March 21st it had been extended. Benny lasted a year for Chevrolet.

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

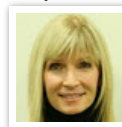
Cartoon Research

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

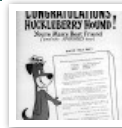
The World of Knight



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 -

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:52](#)




Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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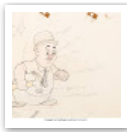
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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

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

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[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**
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2 days ago

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