



Sunday, 2 November 2014

## She Never Liked Acting

To use a Jack Benny analogy, a Maxwell will run without brakes—but the car works much better with them.

Jack Benny's television show was missing a few parts which made the radio show a large success. And while it lasted over a decade, it just wasn't quite the same, nor quite as good, as the radio version. Dennis Day didn't appear on TV every week. Phil Harris left during the radio days. And Mary Livingstone didn't really make the transition to television, either. Her appearances on the final year of the radio show were almost smoke and mirrors. A good percentage of the episodes that year were reruns. On the new programmes, either Veola Vonn (uncredited) performed the necessary female roles in sketches, or Mary's lines—read unenergetically—were recorded at home and spliced into the master transcription. She got a credit every show so it *sounded* like she was there. But her performance suffered because she didn't have a live audience to feed off of.

On television, the Benny show survived without Mary's biting sarcasm, Phil's fervent love for fermented beverages (and himself) and Dennis' weekly naivety, but you can't lose solid and proven comedy elements without the show suffering a bit. Phil and Dennis were both involved with personal appearances and other ventures. Mary's excuse was she simply wanted to stay away from microphones and cameras. It's a shame because she really was very good on the air, both on radio and TV.

James Bacon of the Associated Press wrote about it in his column published on October 4, 1958. It's interesting he should compare her to Gracie Allen, who retired from TV in '58. Mary apparently had a case of Gracie envy and set out to buy whatever Gracie had—only larger (a fan magazine wrote about it as early as the mid-'30s).

### Never Liked It, Anyway

### Mary's One-Show Stint Ends--After 26 Years

By JAMES BACON

Associated Press Writer

Hollywood—Mary Livingstone, who only meant to help out her husband for one show in 1932, is retiring from the act after 26 years. Hubby Jack Benny, who has started his new television series, said his wife never did like acting.

"But," he added, "she always liked show business. I think I'm going to find a show for her to produce. She has great taste and great comedy sense."

Mary thus follows the example of her best friend, Gracie Allen, who retired from the act that made her and George Burns famous.

"Mary isn't trying to copy Gracie," said Jack. "Actually, she's been retiring for four years when she begged off during live shows. This summer she made two films with me and then asked if she couldn't drop the filmed shows, too. I said okay."

The two films Mary made will be shown later in the series.

In 1932 Jack had a radio sketch with a part for a supposed fan from Plainfield, N.J.

"It was just a couple of lines," Jack recalls, "and we couldn't find a girl to read it right I asked Mary to help out. She did and then she wasn't on the next week and the fans started writing like crazy wanting to know when that girl from Plainfield, N. J., was coming back on the show."

"She's been a good sport about it, sticking it out 28 years, especially



MARY LIVINGSTONE

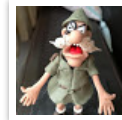
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### Peter Gray's Comics and Art



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...

1 hour ago

### Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



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

safety measures. - ©2020 fernandollercartoons.com

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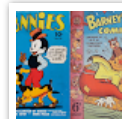


Cowboy Church #67 - Hello my friends and welcome back for another

service of cowboy church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry singing "Dear Hearts and Gentle Pe..."

5 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

when she never liked it.”

Mary is nervous about her parts on the show, often fainting from the tension.

Benny has been criticized for what appears to be a callous attitude toward his wife's fainting spells.

A friend, however, says that is not the case; Jack has just seen Mary faint so often and recover so quickly that he is always the least excited one around her.

“When we got married in 1927,” says Jack. Mary answered ‘I do’ and fainted. It’s something that you have to live with.”

Jack did convince her to appear several times after “retiring”—notably on his anniversary special in 1970—but she spent the bulk of her time on her second and far more enjoyable career: being Mrs. Jack Benny.

Posted by **Yowp** at [07:01](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

## 3 comments:

**J Lee** 2 November 2014 at 10:33

The episodes with Mary on TV -- done single-camera with no audience -- suffer the same problem of not having a live audience to feed off of, which is the most noticeable in the filmed episodes that aren't packed with gags. Because they have to stick to the script and not ad lib anything, the quiet moments are just too quiet (after Mary's retirement when the filmed shows go to three-camera live audience affairs, it feels much closer to the live TV shows, if not to the even greater freedom of the live radio broadcasts).

That said, when the filmed episodes with Mary were packed with gags, they are really funny, and the single-camera format does allow for some visual gags that were not possible either on radio or in the live TV broadcasts.

[Reply](#)

**Yowp** 2 November 2014 at 15:22

The laugh track on the TV show is really jarring. If you know Jack's timing from his radio days, you know he wouldn't step on laughs like you hear on the sweetened track. Some of the later transcribed radio shows suffer from this, too. You can hear the editing and the fading as Hickey Marks tried to fit everything into 29:20.

[Reply](#)

**wbhist** 17 April 2015 at 01:59

One of Mary's last gigs prior to her retirement would have to have been voicing a mouse version of herself in the 1959 Warner Bros. cartoon "The Mouse That Jack Built," where she, Jack, Rochester and even Don Wilson (but not, for whatever reason, Dennis Day) were represented as mice - and Mel Blanc doubled as both the ancient Maxwell and Ed the vault guard. Remember, cartoons were produced upward of a year in advance. Compared to her 1940's radio shows, Mary seemed as uninvolved in this 'toon as she did in her last years' worth of radio shows - and especially the final radio season.

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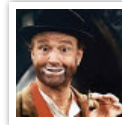
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additional covers you could share! ...

14 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

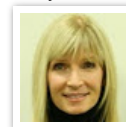
**Cartoon Research**

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.

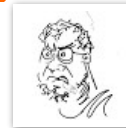


Normally when any of the jocks got a reaction, it'd be split.

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**

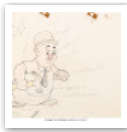
Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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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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