



Sunday, 16 November 2014

Radio Emergencies

One wonders how Mary Livingstone managed to work with her husband on stage in vaudeville. In radio, there was a seemingly constant concern she'd pass out in the middle of a broadcast.

It was revealed to the world in a feature story in the *Rochester Democrat Chronicle* of September 13, 1936. It's part of a piece on unexpected things happening during radio broadcasts. I've transcribed the whole story. My favourite is the clueless client; such people, I understand, still populate the radio industry.

Blanche Stewart was an unsung heroine of the Benny show of the '30s. She performed all kinds of roles almost every week for a number of years, she made animal noises, she could scream on cue. For whatever reason, she faded away from the Benny show and ended up as a regular with Bob Hope before returning for periodic appearances toward the end of the '40s. She never had the chance to be a secondary player with a character, like Mel Blanc, Bea Benaderet or Frank Nelson, but she was just as talented as far as I'm concerned.

Saving the Situation By RUTH ARELL

Radio Headliners Speedy Thinking Keeps Air Alive

THE time was 7:11 of a certain Sunday night. Jack Benny had just gotten a snappy answer from Mary Livingstone in their half hour of radio fun. In an aggrieved tone he replied, "Oh, yeah?" at which the studio audience howled with glee and Mary stepped forward to take a bow. She beat slightly at the waist but, instead of straightening again, toppled over in a dead faint.

Not waiting for an introduction, Johnny Green immediately swung into the next musical number as Jack pulled a bottle of smelling salts from his pocket to bring Mary back to consciousness. While this dramatic by-play was going on, the program continued smoothly on the air.

Those in the studio saw a young lady come forward and stand beside a mike.

In the meantime, the smelling salts began to penetrate the fog that surrounded Mary. Groggily, she got to her feet, realised where she was, and walked over to the mike, waving the young lady away. Johnny Green's music came to an end. Jack announced the name of the song, and he and Mary went into their next bit of comedy dialog.

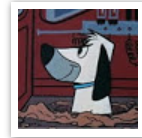
As far as the radio listeners were concerned, everything had gone off smoothly. Only those actually seeing the broadcast knew about those anxious moments as Jack gave restoratives to Mary. Despite her hearty voice, she is a pretty frail person. So much so that Benny always carries a bottle of smelling salts with her for emergencies. And because of Mary's heeling-over habits, Blanche Stewart, a minor member of the cast, serves as perpetual understudy.

This time Mary's faintness lasted just for the musical interlude and she recovered in time to pick up her cue. If she hadn't Miss Stewart who had come to the microphone while Mary was "out," would have jumped in in her place and imitated her voice to carry on the program.

THAT'S how it is in broadcastland. Every once in a while on the best run programs, something happens that isn't in the script. It comes suddenly and unexpectedly. When this occurs and the program is on the air, there is only one rule of conduct: The show must go on. And it must go on in such manner that the armchair



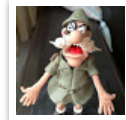
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Peter Gray's Comics and Art



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
3 hours ago

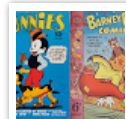
Movies with Michael



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..."
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

audience at home never guesses that anything out of the ordinary has happened.

"Lights Out" is a popular song, and is played a lot in the studios. If "Lights Out" had only stayed a song title, all would have been well. Instead, the studio lights actually did go out during a broadcast, and then it was a case of plain sweating agony until they came on again.

Leading his men in a very difficult concerto, Erno Rapee was in the middle of the composition when all the lights in the studio were doused. Rapee breathed a prayer, folded his arms, and left it up to his men. There was nothing else he could do, since they couldn't see his direction. The last half of the concerto was played in total darkness. But so well was the orchestra rehearsed that each man knew his part well and there wasn't the slightest slip-up. As far as the tuner-in could tell, everything was as it should have been. The ability of the musicians had saved the day.

Lights also went out accidentally once during the broadcasting of the Crime Clues program. But one of the actors had the presence of mind to pull out his pocket lighter and use it as a torch. Two others followed his example and those without lighters used match after match. By such flickering light did the show go on. The following episodes took place during rehearsals, but are funny enough to be used as examples of what can happen while a program is being prepared. Lou Holtz, the comic dialectician, is probably the most nervous guy on the networks. And this despite the fact that he has been on the stage for years.

When he made his very first microphone appearance, he knew nothing at all about broadcasting technique. He stepped up close to the microphone, as he had been told to do, and in a confidential manner read his lines into the mike's waiting ear. He didn't know that in rehearsals there is a "speak-back" attachment to the microphone so that the program director and the engineer in the control room can give instructions to the performer without leaving their booth. Evidently Lou was just a bit too close to the microphone, for he heard a low, rumbling voice say. "Stand back, fella; I can't take it that close!"

"Help! It's haunted!" shouted Lou, and his natural pallor turned a sickly green as he all but passed out. It took the entire studio staff to convince him that the microphone itself had not been talking, but only the engineer who wanted him to step back a bit.

WHILE a certain large orchestra was rehearsing for its commercial broadcast the sponsor came around for a visit to see how things were going. At that particular time the boys were playing a selection that called for string instruments only, which left the woodwind and brass players idle like the unemployed. Noting this, the sponsor jumped up and stormily asked the conductor: "What's the matter with those men that they are just sitting around doing nothing?"

Surprised, the conductor explained that the music called only for strings. But that left the man who footed the bill far from satisfied.

"Listen," he said. "I'm paying out enough money for an orchestra. It's larger than I wanted in the first place so, since I'm paying for all those musicians, I want you to use songs that all of them have to play instead of letting only half of them work."

But to get back to embarrassing moments on the air, Fred Allen's came when, on his April Fools Day program, he had a number of guest stars who pretended that they were competing in his amateur contest. One by one he introduced them and each did his bit. Then he came to a certain lady and he gave her a terrific build-up. He dwelt long and lovingly on her career on the screen, on the stage, and in radio. And when he came to mention her name, he plumb forgot it. He had to ask Irene Rich to tell the folks who she was. Was his face red!

SOMETIMES it happens that unfortunate things happen during a broadcast which cannot possibly be kept from going out over the air. When that is the case, they are covered up in the best way possible and every attempt is made to turn an embarrassing situation into a laugh.

Thus, when Ozzie Nelson once lifted his baton to begin the accompaniment to Harriet Hilliard's song, a large, heavy cigaret case slipped out of his pocket and fell to the floor with a resounding "bang." No mistake about it, that sound went out over the air. Quickly Ozzie turned to the mike and said, "Boy, set 'em up in the other alley!" That made it seem as if the bang was a planned sound effect to introduce his wife's vocal number. It got a big laugh from the studio audience and only those connected with the program really knew how unforeseen the big noise was.

While a well-known news commentator was airing his views, the page from which he was reading slipped out of his hand. Calmly he bent over and picked it up. And then to explain the split second of silence, he said:

"Pardon me, folks, but a blond just passed by."

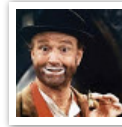
WILLIE AND EUGENE HOWARD, two boys who are fast on the trigger in an emergency, saved their program from the embarrassment of "empty air." Willie always puts his script on a music stand instead of holding it to read his lines. Making a sweeping motion with his hands to emphasize a certain word, he inadvertently swept the script off the stand, scattering the pages in all directions. Eugene looked petrified but Willie, quite as if it had all been planned in advance, switched into the patter of one of their memorized old vaudeville routines. Eugene caught on immediately and gave the proper response when he got his cue. In the meantime somebody got them another script pointed out the proper place, and they went back to their radio material. And the world at large was none the wiser.

Thus, when you listen to a broadcast and admire the clock-like regularity with which the show seems to go off, you seldom can tell if everything really is all right or whether something went wrong, but quick action, fast thinking or just plain luck prevented you from knowing that for a little while some other favorite was on the spot.

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

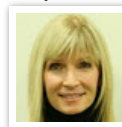
Cartoon Research

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 -



Posted by Yowp at 07:10




Labels: Jack Benny

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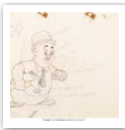
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Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twouble with color notations

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

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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