



Sunday, 25 January 2015

The House of Benny

It was never explained on the Jack Benny radio show why a notorious cheapskate who lived in underground dumpy hotels on trips to New York City would have an attractive mansion in Beverly Hills which obviously cost a lot of money. But does it really matter?

In real life, Benny, his wife and daughter lived for years at a home at 1002 Roxbury Drive. It was featured in a photo spread in the November 1947 edition of *Radio Mirror*. The article was plugged (like other Benny magazine pieces) in the October 26, 1947 show. Kind of.

Mary: *I was just reading the Radio Mirror. There's a picture of you here on page 28.*

Jack: *Oh, yes. That's the one I had taken when I was in the service.*

Mary: *Gee, you were handsome in that uniform.*

Jack: *Yeah.*

Mary: *Jack, whose arm is that around you?*

Jack: *A fellow from the Draft Board. (audience laughs) He didn't turn me loose until we got to Europe.*



The "picture on page 28" is the one you see above. It's of Jack, Joan and Mary. He's not in uniform. As Jack wasn't married with a daughter on his show, the writers had to come up with something fictional.

Here's the *Radio Mirror* feature piece. The photos below accompanied the article. Unfortunately, they're low resolution scans from newsprint. You can click on them to make them bigger.

Come and Visit JACK BENNY

A place of his own for everybody—that is the Benny formula for happy, harmonious family living.

By POLLY TOWNSEND

UNDER one roof: a house for everybody, and for everybody a house of his own.

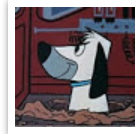
This is Mary Livingstone's recipe for a harmonious family life, and it works like a talisman—even in Hollywood where (despite the well-paid efforts of half the psychiatric brains in the country) more marriages explode in the headlines than go on year in year out in a sort of a miraculous serenity.

Of course, if you're living in Quonset hut with your bride and her mother and planning to put Junior in the dresser drawer, a description of the Jack Bennys' serene and well-roofed existence will only hasten your trip to the divorce court, or to Washington to have the heads of the housing expeditors.

But even in such dire straits as that you will be thinking and planning for your dream home of the not too distant future and a look-in at a housing system which is different — and which works — may come in handy. As any good architect or builder will tell you, you must start planning your house by thinking hard about the way you live, about what sort of people your house must provide for, and what sort of work and play and rest and hobbies make up their lives.

For work is not just work — nor rest just rest, etc., etc. And people — and if you're living in a Quonset hut you have found this out — are not just people. Every individual has a way of living all his own, and if it is blocked

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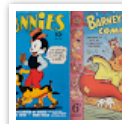
Blogs to See

Movies with Michael



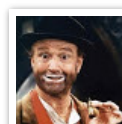
Cowboy Church #67
- Hello my friends and welcome back for another service of cowboy church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry singing "Dear Hearts and Gentle Pe..."
1 hour ago

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 additional covers you could share! ...
10 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
(f...
1 day ago

Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons



'Cozy Bear' Group Tied to Hacks on Covid Vaccine Research. - ©2020
fernandollera.com
1 day ago



work than pounding the pillow. His hobbies — well, unless you count golf and gin rummy and seeing his friends (which he gets around to during the radio season only when Mary insists that he leave the woe to the writers for a spell), his hobbies are more work. Jack's housing needs, then, are simple: quiet, privacy, the right to turn on the lights in the middle of the night — a room of his own.

Then there is Joan, the Bennys' daughter — twelve years old, healthy, active and gregarious. Her work — the teachers at El Rodeo School pile on the home work, to hear Joannie tell it — so there must be a place to study. Her hobbies are horseback riding, swimming, playing the phonograph and the piano with the more friends around the merrier. Her rest — black out! The sort of exhaustion Joan's life promotes is not like her father's; it makes for good, sound sleep, nine until seven, with no interruptions. Her needs; a place for hollering — alternating with sleep — preferably far away from her father's retreat and suitably soundproofed, i.e., a room of her own.

Mary's own habit patterns seem distinctly normal — humdrum, even — after a glance at the rest of the family, but on closer inspection they, too, make for a bit of planning. From long years in the theater, Mary has appropriated the custom of going to bed very late. This does not mean that she must be up and doing until dawn. The up-staying is just as pleasant if you're propped up in bed with plenty of pillows and a cigarette and some new books. But it means compromising on the other end of the night. Mary's maid knows that Mrs. Benny will want her breakfast tray before noon only if she has a vital business appointment. So Mary, too, needs a room of her own.



working at the house with the boss. They were up against a knotty script-cutting problem. Down the hall with her door ajar, Joannie was practicing her piano lesson. She plays very well, but anyone's practicing has a tendency to become monotonous. And besides, the counting — one-two-three-four — was distinctly audible, and distracting, in the script session.

Jack sent Producer Bob Allen [Ballin] to Joannie's suite with a message.

"Your daddy," he said, "wants you to practice downstairs."

Joannie sighed, Junior Miss Aggrieved.

"I thought he would," she said. Unsaid was Career Woman's age-old complaint. "And my work, I suppose, has

and thwarted too long by the external conditions of his life, he will explode with as much noise and almost as much release of radio-active poison matter as did the atom bomb over Bikini.

Mary Benny knew this when she planned her house, and she planned carefully for lebensraum for three as disparate human beings as ever found shelter under a single rooftop.

First of all, of course, the house had to work for Jack Benny. More of the sweat and toil which produces the Benny radio show every week goes on at the Benny home than in Jack's office or at NBC studios — so Jack's lebensraum had to provide for working space, shut off from the noise and confusions of the rest of the household. As for Jack's recreation — if there is work to be done, he doesn't get any. His rest, ditto — if the script is in trouble Jack Benny can get along with catnaps, spending more of the small hours awake and at



As a result the second floor of the Bennys' spacious Georgian home in Beverly Hills is laid out in three suites — so different in character and equipment that they could be three separate apartments, in three never conflicting worlds.

"Never?" As Gilbert and Sullivan put it, "Well, hardly ever."

Even with Mary's meticulous planning, Hard Working Jack and Hard Playing Joan sometimes manage a head-on collision.

At these moments, Rule No. One of family policy is invoked: "Daddy, if he is working, is always right."

Recently, Jack's producers and writing staff were

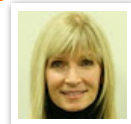
mc News From ME

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...
3 days ago

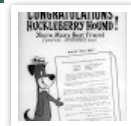
The World of Knight

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 -

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

no importance around here."

But she went.

Mary Benny often sits in with the writers and Jack on the radio conferences.

So, as a matter of fact, does Joan.

What's more, Joan isn't afraid to criticize her Daddy's jokes — and her Daddy isn't too proud, sometimes, to accept her criticism.

Once recently, however, when Joan objected to a particular boffola on the grounds that it was "corny" her father overruled her.

"Keep it in," he ordered. "It may be corny but it's funny."

"THAT'S what you think," Joan — not easily abashed — argued. "But you should be in my shoes. On Mondays, I have to face my friends!"

The joke was blue-penciled.

Jack's big room is a sort of bed-sitting room with a desk almost as big as the bed, with shelves for scripts and reference books, and big, bright working lights, comfortable chairs, man-sized tables at the bedside with sharpened pencils and paper, books and the inevitable box of sleep-promoters. The colors are masculine and unbedroomy — brown and beige. The suite includes a dressing room, done in brown leather, a porch overlooking the garden, and Jack's bath — where he may leave the top off the toothpaste tube if he feels like it.

Joan, who is the smallest member of the family, rates the biggest suite — because her activities are so varied she needs plenty of room to blow off steam.

Her "apartment" has a big bedroom — with two beds, one for her frequent overnight guests — a dressing room with one whole wall of perfume bottles, a private bath, and a huge playroom, this room farthest away from the family. The playroom is the heart of the place. It has the phonograph and record collection, the spinet piano, Joan's collection of dolls and toy horses, her books, the photographs of her friends, the clutter which goes with being young and alert and busy. Joan's governess, Julia Vallance, who has shared her life for five years, is the sort of calm, imperturbable woman who likes children and doesn't mind messes and who can provide efficiently for a little girl's health and safety without imposing too rigid a set of rules. As Joan would put it, "She doesn't go around saying no and shushing you all the time."



Joan prefers to think of Miss Vallance as her "secretary." Not many of her schoolmates at public school can afford the luxury of a "governess" and Joan thinks the whole custom a little snobbish.

Mary Benny's personal rooms, in noticeable contradiction, are never cluttered, and they certainly are the prettiest rooms of all. The bedroom, in soft blue, rose and white is Victorian in feeling — without being stiff. The fireplace of black marble is for real fires—friendly and inviting. The chintz draperies and upholstery are in a cheerful floral pattern, which is repeated in the wall paper on two ends of the room. The blue-tufted oversized bed is pure feminine heaven, where a substitution of fat pillows for flat ones makes it easily as inviting for staying awake as for dropping off to sleep. Mary has, in addition, her private mirrored dressing room where vast cedarlined closets house what Howard Greer has called the smartest wardrobe in favorite bath oils and perfumes.

With such a plan, it is plain to see, there need never be

any conflict of personalities — any reason for any of the members of the household to be uncomfortable for the sake of any of the others. A reconnaissance flight over the Benny home at any eleven A.M. — which caught Jack hard at work on a script, Joan practicing for her piano lesson, and Mary blissfully asleep — would prove incontrovertibly that planning makes perfect. Planning makes freedom, too, complete freedom for every member of the family to do what he likes, when he likes — to be himself. And that makes for an adjusted, happy family.

THE rest of the house is planned just as systematically for living happily together — and don't think for a moment just because the upstairs levels are designed as they are that the Bennys live in complete isolation with no traffic from one "apartment" to another. It is here that Mary's impeccable butler, Oscar, has his innings. Oscar is the perfect butler, English, proper, and — and this is unusual — always affable. Oscar is always smiling. (He doesn't know, fortunately, that Jack's writers with typical lack of reverence for the Way Things Are Done refer to him always as "Smiley.") And here, too, the rooms have as many moods as there are



Upstairs, everything's private, but in the big, comfortable playroom the Bennys can be a family.

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

Peter Gray's Comics and Art



An early Tom Thug page for sale and other comic art by Lew Stringer go

to link and ebay.. -

<http://lewstringercomics.blogspot.com/2020/02/original-art-for-sale.html>
https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/graphite47/m.html?__nkw=&__armrs=1&_ipg=&_fom=

5 months 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...

1 day ago

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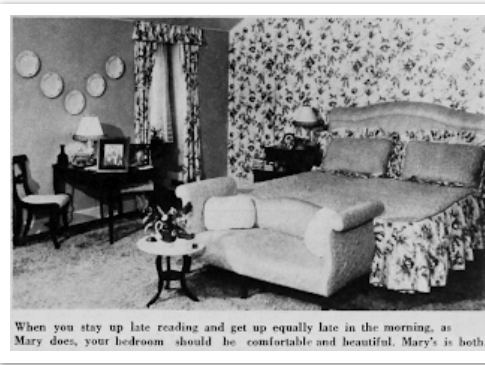
occasions which the Bennys enjoy as a family. The drawing room is quite formal, its furnishings handsome, some of them rare and priceless since the Bennys have not had to consider a strict budget in planning their home. Mary Benny would be the first, however, to concede that a formal living room can be just as lovely without real antiques, without Chinese jade lamp bases, and real collectors' items among the objets d'art. She has gone to a great deal of trouble, as a matter of fact, to detract from the museum aura of such fabulous pieces by doing her upholstered pieces with her first thought for comfort, and by a subtle use of color — pale green, rose, and ivory, and a real fire's happiest companion, brass.



The library, with its Dutch tile fireplace, is "family" too.

such a thing in a house. It expresses life as the Bennys like it — when convivial friends are about, and the pressure of work is off, and one can relax and play games, sit by the fire in winter or wander in and out of doors on a warm summer night. It is the gayest room in the house, with a huge brick fireplace taking up half of the wall, the walls paneled with mellow walnut and the sofa and big chairs upholstered in a splashy red and white apple print. In front of the fire are two deep chairs, also one in the apple print, and a massive red ottoman on which people can sit without crowding. The big rag hand-braided rug also is predominantly red. There are the inevitable card table and chairs and some early American Windsor pieces. As in all California homes the outdoors is part of the living space — background for many of the family's happiest hours. The house is set well forward on a commercial acre so there is room at the back of the house for a gently sloping lawn, swimming pool, cabana and terrace and a barbecue and complete outdoor kitchen and bar.

The drawing room and the big dining room get very lonely during the good weather, which in California is a good part of the year — for all of the Bennys enjoy having their friends for al fresco suppers which they help to cook themselves. If the fog comes in — as it will, despite all the pull of the All Year Club — it is but a step to the playroom and a warm fire. And any movie fan who could find his way into that room would reap a harvest of autographs — Barbara Stanwyck and Bob Taylor would probably be there, and the Tyrone Powers, Annie Sothern, the Bill Goetzes, George Burns and Gracie Allen, plus a noisy crowd of Joannie's school friends. And if the unexpected callers were invited to stay they'd have a wonderful time and go home raving as Hollywoodians do about the Bennys' wonderful, cheerful house and Mary Benny's subtle understanding of what it means to be a good hostess. Mary understands the role very much as she interprets her job as the woman in the house — it is to let everyone do what he wants when he wants to, to be himself. The system needn't be restricted to the Bennys — or to the sort of people anywhere who have money and leisure space. For the system is a product of good thinking, and good thinking can be done in Hollywood, or North Platte, or Wichita Falls.



When you stay up late reading and get up equally late in the morning, as Mary does, your bedroom should be comfortable and beautiful. Mary's is both.

It is in this room that the Bennys welcome guests at their more elaborate parties. The drawing room's complement in character and style is the formal dining room, a beautiful room done in grey and gold, with a long table which comfortably will seat twenty, with massive silver pieces from old England and a crystal chandelier. These two rooms, along with a paneled library with dark blue oriental rugs and a Dutch tile fireplace are among the show spots of Hollywood.

A pair of rooms all three Bennys like much better, and live in much more, are the big, rambling playroom which faces on the garden and a sunny yellow and pale grey breakfast room in which green vines in silver urns bring the garden indoors.

The playroom is the keynote room — if there is

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At the behest of Mary Livingstone, Jack sold the home in 1965 and the two of them moved into a luxury apartment. We talked about it in [this post](#). Mary became dissatisfied with that and the two of them moved into another house in the Holmby Hills that Joan Benny described as “an imposing Mediterranean villa” that was run down until Mary got her bank book open.

Laura Leff, the president of the International Jack Benny Fan Club, got a look at the Roxbury home a number of years ago while it was being renovated.

I was able to see that they had painted Jell-O flavors and names of Buck Benny characters on the beams above the living room--wouldn't have been able to see that if the ceiling was intact! So let's say this...it's modest home by Beverly Hills standards. The dining room isn't huge (although it does sport a fireplace with delft tiles around it), love the dark wood library, and spiral staircase in the front hall. While many of the walls were down to the studs, you could see that Mary's room was enormous. It was a little hard to tell how big Jack's was in comparison, but definitely smaller.

The Benny home is still standing at Roxbury and Lexington Road. Here's a lovely view of the front as it looks today.



We wonder what the people living there today do every Sunday night at 7.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:32](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

3 comments:

Anonymous 6 February 2016 at 16:45

My parents purchased the home from the Benny;s in 1965. My favorite part of the whole place was the octopus done in tile at the bottom of the pool. Mary's mirrored dressing area had a window that looked right into Little Lucy's bathroom as Lucille Ball and Gary Morton were next door neighbors. It was an amazing house and I cannot imagine what people have done to it since we lived there so long ago.

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Julius 4 September 2016 at 07:54

In many of George Burns' books, he talks about how everyone loved Jack but just tolerated Mary because she was married to Jack. (Daughter Joan wasn't all that fond of her adoptive mother, either.) The Burns (George and Gracie) built their home first on Maple Drive before the Bennys had theirs. George said Mary was always in one upmanship mode and modeled the Roxbury house after the Burns' home, except everything had to be bigger. If the living room was 500 square feet in the Burns home, then the Bennys had to top that, etc.

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Gravydog316 22 October 2017 at 18:05

Www.BuckBenny.com has lots of Benny shows & lots of cool info, (plug plug plug, hint hint hint)

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