



Sunday, 19 July 2015

## Burns On Benny (Again)

Cagey, clever and quick, that George Burns. He allowed old age to turn him into a celebrity raconteur with a zillion funny stories that netted him a pretty publishing penny. He told all kinds of tales about Jack Benny in his various books. Like a vaudevillian testing out a new act in Altoona, Burns reeled them out in interviews. The ones that went over best were kept and later found places in his best-selling remembrances.

Here's an interview that ended up in *Family Parade*, a weekend newspaper supplement, of November 27, 1960. If you've read Burns' books or seen clips of him on old Johnny Carson shows, some of these tales will be familiar. But they're always fun to read again.



### My Friend Jack Benny

By **GEORGE BURNS**

as told to *Peer J. Oppenheimer*

IT SEEMS LIKE only yesterday that I was sitting in my dressing room in Chicago and received Jack Benny's wire from Milwaukee: "Am arriving at 10 a.m. Meet me at the station."

I promptly wired back: "Glad you're coming to Chicago. What time do you arrive?"

A couple of hours later, Jack's second telegram was delivered. "I'll be there at 10 o'clock."

My second message went out by return wire: "If you don't tell me what time you're coming, I'll see you later at the hotel."

Three hours later, about 35 wires, sent by actor-friends of Jack, arrived simultaneously from all over the United States: "Jack Benny will be in Chicago at 10 o'clock."

I didn't meet him at the station, but I plastered the telegrams all over my dressing room. When Jack came to my room the next morning and wanted to know why I hadn't met the train, I said: "Because I didn't know what time you were coming in."

Jack and I exchanged such crazy—and expensive—communications for years until my Gracie and his Mary—his wife of 34 years—insisted we'd go broke if we didn't stop. So we switched to the telephone.

I would call him from almost anywhere, then hang up in the middle of the conversation. After a while it ceased to be funny, but I continued doing it because if I didn't Jack would think I was angry at him.

When Jack played Milwaukee once, comic Benny Rubin was there in a show and Jack made Rubin a \$25 bet that if he phoned me I'd hang up in the middle of the conversation. Rubin took the bet, went to his room, called me, and told me about it. He went back, and Jack phoned me. I talked to him for about half an hour. Finally Jack said: "George, aren't you going to hang up?"

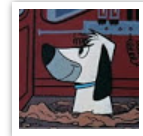
I said: "No, I've got half of Benny Rubin's bet."

A few years ago, Gracie and I played the Palladium in London. Unknown to us, Jack flew all the way to England to surprise us on opening night something of an accomplishment because it isn't easy for anyone as prominent as Jack to sneak into England without reporters and photographers spotting him.

The night before the opening. Val Parnell, managing director of the Palladium, gave a party in our honor. The affair was about half over when Val came over and said there was a phone call for me. When I picked up the receiver, a deep voice with a Cockney accent said a Mr. Benny was calling from Beverly Hills, Calif. A moment later, I heard Jack's voice clearly.

"Hi, George," he started out, "how do you feel? How's Gracie?" And he hung up. I went back into the living room and told the other guests what a crazy fool Jack was, calling me all the way from Beverly Hills and then hanging up on me. And who was mingling among the guests? Jack—who had made the call from the kitchen! This little gag of his should prove at least one point about Jack—he's not stingy at all. Flying back and forth for

### About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

### 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 People..."

56 minutes ago

#### **Termite Terrace headlines**

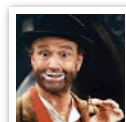


**Question for All You Cartoon Collectors!** - OK so I've been doing some

looking around. Bosko apparently had a comic book and I'm wondering if any of you know of additional covers you could share! ...

9 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...  
23 hours ago

#### **Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons**



**'Cozy Bear' Group Tied to Hacks on Covid Vaccine Research.** - ©2020

fernandollera.com  
1 day ago



for a checkup. Actually he spends four days a year at the hospital just to get a rest. Mostly he watches TV. After his first night at the Cedars, Jack usually sneaks home for dinner and then returns to the hospital. It's expensive to eat at home and watch TV at Cedars of Lebanon for four days.

Talking about eating, if you eat with Jack, he's never happy with what he orders: he always wants what you order. Don't ask me why—he's just that way. If you order the same thing he has ordered, he's heartbroken. That "other-peoples'-pastures-are-greener" attitude even extends to the houses we live in. That was proved about 25 years ago when I built an Early American-style house for Gracie, our son Ronnie, our now-married daughter Sandra, and myself in Beverly Hills.

When Jack saw our house he said: "Would you like to sleep in my bedroom?"

I said: "No, then you'd want to sleep in mine." He likes what the other fellow orders, no matter what.

Jack hasn't really changed much since I first met him 38 years ago, before I married Gracie. By the way, it was Gracie who introduced us. She used to live with two other girls, one of whom was a friend of Jack.

He was already doing well as a single, making \$400 a week. We hit it off as soon as we met. I laughed at him on stage, and he laughed at me off. He was even telling stingy jokes then, and I remember one of his favorites about taking his girl friend out to dinner: he said something funny, and she laughed so hard at it that she dropped her tray.

Other comedians have gotten rid of their old material. Jack is a courageous comedian. When he gets a gag rolling, he keeps it going for years—like gags about his Maxwell and his money vault.

Our families have always been close. His daughter calls me "Uncle George," and my children call him "Uncle Jack." Our wives, Gracie and Mary, are very good friends, too. Mary's a sharp businesswoman, and Jack talks over everything with her and has a high regard for her opinion. Of course, Jack himself has a keen mind for business and is a good judge of people.

UNLIKE MANY close friends, we don't play cards together. The reason? Simply because I don't play gin, and Jack doesn't play bridge, and this is one time he doesn't want to sample my favorite.

We always go to each other's opening night, no matter what part of the country it's in. Jack usually drives his car, and I fly. Jack likes to drive—why, I'll never know. I drove with him about 10 years ago, and he smacked right into a wall. I looked at him and said, "Jack, you still drive better than you play the violin."

For the past 20 years, everything that has happened to Jack has been big, important things. So they ceased to be important, and the little things became important. Recently he was at his lawyer's to sign a contract for probably a million dollars. When he got home, he was very excited he had found out that if you drive down Wilshire Boulevard at 20 mph, you miss every red light!

That's my friend Jack Benny—he misses the lights but hits the walls.

that opening must have cost him several thousand dollars at least.

In fact, he is probably the most generous guy in the world, although you'd never know it from him. He just doesn't talk about it. I don't know of any charity he has ever turned down. He has collected over \$2 million for musicians' funds for symphony orchestras in numerous cities and has flown back and forth to New York City six or seven times a year to play charity concerts on the behalf of musicians. This takes about six or seven weeks a year out of his time, and at Jack's salary that's giving up a lot. THERE ARE many misconceptions about Jack—like the one that he is a hypochondriac who's constantly worried about the state of his health. This isn't true at all. The idea is probably based on his yearly visits to the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital



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



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

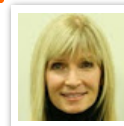
#### News From ME

**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 would...

3 days ago

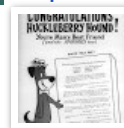
#### The World of Knight

**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



**bgrauman** 20 July 2015 at 14:52

George always had assistance from whatever writers were working for him at the time to fashion these articles [and later, his various books]. I believe Norman Paul and brother Willy were among those who helped him on this one.....

[Reply](#)

Enter your comment...



Comment as: Garth (Google) ▾

[Sign out](#)

[Publish](#)

[Preview](#)

☐ Notify me

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

**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?\\_\\_nk=&\\_\\_armrs=1&\\_ipg=&\\_from=](https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/graphite47/m.html?__nk=&__armrs=1&_ipg=&_from=)

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

**Blog Archive**

- [2020](#) (215)
- [2019](#) (376)
- [2018](#) (379)
- [2017](#) (380)
- [2016](#) (396)
- ▼ [2015](#) (389)
  - [December](#) (33)
  - [November](#) (30)
  - [October](#) (33)
  - [September](#) (32)

- [August \(34\)](#)
- ▼ [July \(32\)](#)
  - [A Bite of Beary](#)
  - [Fishy Bubbles](#)
  - [Television Needs Fixing](#)
  - [Hello, I Wish to Report a  
Jerry Beck Sighting](#)
  - [Chasing a King-Size  
Canary](#)
  - [He's 75](#)
  - [An Unglamorous Night  
With Jack Benny](#)
  - [Oona Who?](#)
  - [Paul Julian Rides Again](#)
  - [Pepper Makes Him  
Sneeze, You Say?](#)
  - [Don't Talk About  
Toscanini](#)
  - [Frankie! \(East Coast  
Version\)](#)
  - [They're Nuts](#)
  - [Burns On Benny \(Again\)](#)
  - [The Saga of Sinbad and  
Salty](#)
  - [Helpful Animator](#)
  - [Missing Mouse](#)
  - [How To Be An Announcer](#)
  - [Wild Bill](#)
  - [Say, It Is!](#)
  - [Am I Blue?](#)
  - [Heeza Bray](#)
  - [Picnics Are Fun But This  
Cartoon Isn't](#)
  - [Making Killer Food](#)
  - [Idiocyncracies of the  
Stars](#)
  - [People! Everywhere,  
People!](#)
  - [Not Bugs](#)
  - [Rochester In...](#)
  - [A Subliminal Moose](#)
  - [Patriotic Duck](#)
  - [He's Droopy, Too](#)
  - [A Canadian Looks at  
Rocket Robin Hood](#)
- [June \(33\)](#)
- [May \(33\)](#)
- [April \(31\)](#)
- [March \(33\)](#)
- [February \(30\)](#)
- [January \(35\)](#)
- [2014 \(390\)](#)

► [2013](#) (388)

► [2012](#) (397)

► [2011](#) (106)

## Labels

[Aline Mosby](#) (17)

[Art Davis](#) (33)

[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (9)

[Bob and Ray](#) (10)

[Bob Clampett](#) (82)

[Bob McKimson](#) (59)

[Bob Thomas](#) (53)

[Chuck Jones](#) (142)

[Columbia](#) (33)

[Counterfeit Cat](#) (8)

[Cynthia Lowry](#) (26)

[Dick Thomas](#) (14)

[Don Patterson](#) (17)

[Earl Wilson](#) (6)

[Erskine Johnson](#) (37)

[Felix the Cat](#) (27)

[Film Daily](#) (50)

[Fleischer](#) (154)

[Frank Tashlin](#) (24)

[Fred Allen](#) (43)

[Fred Brunish](#) (11)

[Friz Freleng](#) (137)

[Gene Deitch](#) (18)

[George Pal](#) (10)

[Grant Simmons](#) (4)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (99)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (2)

[Harman-Ising](#) (61)

[Henry Morgan](#) (13)

[Irv Spence](#) (8)

[Jack Benny](#) (453)

[Jay Ward](#) (30)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (17)

[John Crosby](#) (84)

[John Sutherland](#) (28)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (27)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (8)

[Laugh-In](#) (11)

[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (6)

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)

[Magical Maestro](#) (9)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

[Mel-O-Toons](#) (4)

[MGM](#) (553)

[Norm McCabe](#) (5)

[Pat Matthews](#) (10)

<a href="#">Paul Julian</a>	(13)
<a href="#">Paul Terry</a>	(2)
<a href="#">Sara Berner</a>	(5)
<a href="#">Screwy Squirrel</a>	(34)
<a href="#">Spider-Man</a>	(1)
<a href="#">Terrytoons</a>	(84)
<a href="#">Tex Avery</a>	(468)
<a href="#">Tom and Jerry Human</a>	(29)
<a href="#">Tralfaz Sunday Theatre</a>	(17)
<a href="#">Ub Iwerks</a>	(80)
<a href="#">UPA</a>	(57)
<a href="#">Van Beuren</a>	(94)
<a href="#">Vernon Scott</a>	(42)
<a href="#">Virginia MacPherson</a>	(14)
<a href="#">Walt Disney</a>	(145)
<a href="#">Walter Lantz</a>	(241)
<a href="#">Warner Bros.</a>	(586)
<a href="#">Who Killed Who</a>	(10)

Watermark theme. Powered by [Blogger](#).