

Sunday, 13 September 2015

The Feud Ends

On March 14, 1937, Fred Allen and Jack Benny were to end their 2½-month-long feud on a Benny broadcast from New York City. It never happened. The feud was so popular, Benny and Allen took shots at each other for years afterward (it even found its way into a 1940 movie called *Love Thy Neighbor*).

The feud got better with time. The early days were filled with a lot of childish name-calling "Town Hall Buddah!" "Waukegan Whippersnapper!" Jack spent one show picking on a ten-year-old violinist who had inadvertently started the whole thing. On the broadcast, Benny comes across as mean and petty, not funny. But when the '40s rolled on, the material got sharper on both programmes; the feud's best moment may have been on Allen's "King For a Day" broadcast on May 26, 1946 where the stage crew apparently removed Benny's pants live on the air. After Allen's radio show ended in 1949, the feud still continued, but Jack softened a bit. Allen's health problems were well-known, as was his lack of a success on television; Benny perhaps didn't want to seem like he was beating a man when he was down. Instead, routines made them out to be old vaudeville compatriots who snipped at each other. It still works really well, especially in an April 26, 1953 programme where Allen and Benny butcher "Tea For Two" on a clarinet and violin for agent Mickey Rockford (played by Mel Blanc, though Rockford really was an agent at MCA).



Allen appeared on Benny's TV show a week earlier. The show was, like a number of Jack's television broadcasts, a reworking of a radio show, this one from October 1, 1944. Since this was the first appearance of the two feudsters together on TV, it was a perfect opportunity for publicity. Here's what the Associated Press wrote in a story published April 15, 1953.

Benny and Allen Feud Pays Off At Boxoffice

By BOB THOMAS

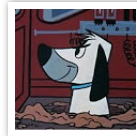
HOLLYWOOD (AP) -- The feud that launched a thousand quips is still going strong after 18 years. Fred Allen and Jack Benny have been mining pay dirt from their alleged dislike for each other for nearly two decades, and the end is not in sight. The comics will continue their tiff when they appear on Benny's TV show Sunday.

It will mark their first TV appearance together.

I dropped in at CBS for the first reading of the show. My purpose was twofold: 1. To see the inception of the TV program; 2. To observe what happens when these two terrible-tempered men meet.

Pleasantly Sour

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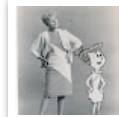


May 1940 - You couldn't blame David Sarnoff if he

mumbled some uncomplimentary comments at the F.C.C. in May of 1940. The Commission made two rulings, basically tell...

1 day ago

Yowp



Wilma - Jean Vander Pyl didn't have a big name on

television when she was cast to play Wilma Flintstone in 1960. The others were a bit different. Bea Benaderet ap...

3 weeks ago

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Mushroom Soup Monday -

My "to do" list has enough items on it that I need to put up one of these soup cans that tells you not to expect much (if any) posting here today. A friend...

1 hour ago

Allen was there when I arrived. He looked as pleasantly sour as ever, so I asked him how he felt. "Pretty good," said the Boston wit, who suffered a relapse in his battle with health a few months ago. He was forced to give up his proposed TV show to Herb Shriner. Allen indicated he would resume the helm of the show next fall.

"It's a quiz-type show," he explained. It's not the comedy kind of show that is killing comedians. You don't have the lines to memorize or the machines to contend with. The machines have taken over the comedy business. They'd better watch out if the actors ever get control again."

Allen was kidding about his current estate. "This shows you how far I have fallen," he remarked. "I

used to have my own show and was on a par with Mr. Benny. Now I'm working for him!"

Despite his own comments, Allen is the envy of his fellow comics. He has been playing the guest-star circuit and raking in much moola without the headache of having his own show. Allen claimed, however, he was merely the middleman in the transfer of the checks to the U.S. Treasury.

How long has he known Benny?

"About 30 years," he remarked. "We go back to the vaudeville days. We never played the same bill, because we both had a monologue act. Vaudeville was better organized than TV."

The origin of their feud? He couldn't remember. "I'd have to consult my files," he said.

Benny breezed in, accompanied by his three writers and others. He and Allen exchanged greetings that would indicate their feud is only script-deep. Allen mentioned that he would have to rent a clarinet for their show.

"I don't usually carry my clarinet from coast to coast, hoping someone will ask me to play," he commented.

Plays Role to Hilt

Benny played his role as the stingy comic to the hilt: "Well, don't rent one until we find out if we really need it in the show."

I dutifully asked Benny how he felt. "Fine," he replied. Illness forced him to cancel a telecast six weeks ago.

Benny had a better memory on the feud's origin.

"It was 18 years ago," he recalled. "Allen had a boy prodigy on his show, and the kid played 'The Bee.' Allen made a slighting remark about my violin playing. I answered him back on my show, and that started it."

Far from, cutting down his activities, Benny is stepping them up. Next Tuesday he opens a three week stand with a vaudeville show at San Francisco's Curran Theater. He is now doing one TV show every four weeks, plus his radio program. Next fall, he'll be on TV once every three weeks and continue on radio. "But I'll be able to film five of the TV shows this summer," he added. "That will help relieve the load."

They sat down and started to read the script. Benny droned on while Allen looked over his material. If the audience laughs as much as the writers, the show should be a wow.

One critic—and I can't find a copy of the review now so I don't know who it was—was unhappy with TV show, feeling the feud was part of the past, considering Allen was no longer a major force on the networks, and that some of the dialogue was demeaning to him. You can see for yourself. The show below is missing the commercials, has a whistle on the audio track and is victimised by some uploading thing that treats the picture like it's on a rocking boat. But you can see for yourself. As far as I know, this was the only time the two old friends appeared on TV together and their radio appearance a week later was the last time they were on the air together. The feud had finally come to an end.



The Exposure Sheet



Craig
Kellman's
Hanna
Barbera
Redesigns:
Old Faces,

New Looks - Every famous cartoon character, from Mickey Mouse to Bugs Bunny, has been redesigned and reimagined many times over the decades, and the classic character...

2 hours ago

Fernando Llera Cartoons



Israeli army
breaks
Gaza Strip
into two
parts. -
©2023

fernandollera.com
3 hours ago

Cartoon Research

Two Must-Have Cartoon Collections - David Gerstein was pivotal to both these projects - both are close to his heart: Disney Comics and Flip The Frog.
9 hours ago

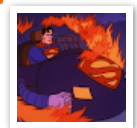
Termite Terrace headlines



Today's
Post: The
1964
World's Fair
Documenta
ry and other

64 World's Fair stuff - This documentary is quite good. Most of you have probably already seen it, but I'm sharing it here anyways. While I'm add it, why not share some ...
22 hours ago

Movies with Michael



The World's
Greatest
Super
Friends:
Lex Luthor
Strikes

Back (1979) - A wonderful episode. In this episode, Lex Luthor escapes from prison by switching places with Lois Lane. After escaping he captures each of the Supe...
23 hours ago

Posted by Yowp at [06:51](#)



Labels: [Bob Thomas](#), [Jack Benny](#)

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cartoonist
last year, so

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books for study and
enjoyment. I've already tried
out...

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only to encounter a spy
from the kingdom of
Brigandia, who wants to
steal all the p...

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