

Sunday, 27 September 2015

He Was Jack Benny

Word association time: what comes to your mind when I say "Jack Benny" and "impression."

You probably think about Rich Little. For years, an impression of Benny was in his act. Of course, he wasn't the only one. As far back as the 1930s, KFWB announcer Jack Lescoulie did an impersonation of Benny; he even did it (uncredited) on a tribute to Jack's 10th anniversary on radio on NBC on May 11, 1941.

Many other impressionists must have done Benny, considering his fame. But none could have had a more unusual path to the comedian than Bob Blasser.

Blasser was a native of Fred Allen's home town, Boston. After graduating from high school, he studied at a Catholic seminary, but dropped out to attend Boston State College and then taught English in high school. Teaching didn't pay a lot, so he did impersonations in commercials and at parties. Then he hit on an idea to get noticed.

It's related in this syndicated newspaper column of December 3, 1963.

TV KEYNOTES

Clever Mimic Wins Benny Spot

By HARVEY PACK

NEW YORK — The first of the mysterious Jack Benny phone calls was received by Jackie Gleason. "I'd like to plug my personal appearance tour on your show Saturday night," Benny said. Gleason replied he would be happy to oblige, but he had already taped his program and was leaving for a week's vacation in Florida.

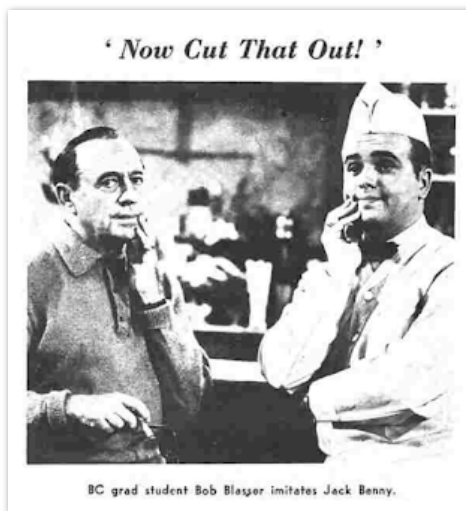
The next call was to Garry Moore. Benny wanted Garry to help perpetrate a joke on their mutual friend, restaurateur Toots Shor. "We'll have dinner at Toots' place, then I'll refuse to pay the check," he suggested. "I've hired an actor, dressed as a policeman, to throw us out."

During the next few days, several of Benny's friends received similar calls. But when George Burns answered the phone and found himself talking to Jack Benny, he was understandably confused. Benny was, at the time, seated in Burns' living room.

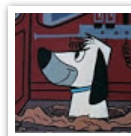
That was the first time Bob Blasser failed to convince one of Jack's cronies that he was, indeed, the famous comic. But instead of ending Blasser's hoax, it prolonged the imposture. Blasser, a Boston entertainer with an uncanny gift for mimicking Benny's vocal mannerisms, will appear on his victim's CBS-TV show tonight.

Long Chance Pays Off

"I took a long chance and it paid off," explained Blasser, a sandy-haired young man in his late 20s. "For 10 years, I tried to establish myself as a comedian. I worked in night clubs, summer resorts and local radio and TV stations all over New England. I sent press clippings, pictures, tapes and hundreds of letters to the producers of the top TV variety shows. But the answer was always the same, a polite brush-off. You know the routine, 'Don't call us; we'll call you.'" Finally, the frustrated comic obtained the phone numbers of some 30 top television personalities—and, one by one, he called them, claiming to be Benny. The reactions were interesting.



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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..."

44 minutes ago

Termite Terrace headlines



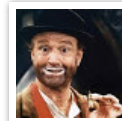
Question for All You Cartoon Collectors! - OK so I've been doing some

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

"Gleason pal'd me," Blasser recalled. "He said, 'Gee, pal, I wish we had time to tape a spot, pal, but I hate to blow this Florida trip pal.' Perry Como was taken in, too. When I finally broke down and admitted I wasn't Jack Benny, he screamed with laughter. Then he put each member of his staff on the phone to talk to me." Another comedian who fell for Blasser's adroit impersonation was Red Skelton. When Blasser confessed, he refused to believe it. "Stop putting me on, Jack, and tell me how Mary is," Skelton insisted.

Phoned Jack Benny

Blasser's final phone call, after the George Burns incident, was to Benny himself. "He wasn't there," Blasser noted. "So I left a message for Jack Benny to call Jack Benny, which really baffled his secretary. By that time, Jack knew all about the fake phone calls. He called back and invited me out to Hollywood." If Blasser's vocal mimicry was good before he went to California, it's even better now. For a week, he was coached by an expert on the subject, Benny himself. "We worked on words like 'Hmmm' and 'Well' for hours," Blasser said with a smile. "Jack insisted I had his reputation to uphold."

Although Blasser is delighted with the results of his brazen experiment, he doesn't want to be typed permanently as Jack Benny's alter ego. "Mimicry is a sideline with me," the improper Bostonian explained, "My real forte is satire, topical humor mixed with pantomime. The idea behind this hoax was to force people to listen to me. Now that I've got a showcase on the Benny program, I hope I'll get to do other things on the air as well."

As for Benny, he still hasn't recovered from the imposture. "At first, I was surprised by the nerve of the guy," he admitted, "Then, when I actually listened to him, I was shocked. It's an eerie feeling to hear your own voice coming out of another man's mouth."

Only one of Jack's friends, aside from Burns, insists he wasn't fooled by the hoax. That's Benny Rubin, who worked with the comedian in vaudeville, and has appeared sporadically on his show for 30 years. "I knew right away you weren't Jack," Rubin told Blasser, "because the call wasn't collect."

Blasser appeared on the Benny TV show in December 1963. He told syndicated columnist Alan Gill "They wrote me into a routine with Dennis Day, where Dennis is seeking some revenge on Jack. Then I've got three or four minutes at the end, where I do a couple of Red Skelton bits, some Frank Fontaine, Alfred Hitchcock and Liberace." Blasser told Gill in 1963 he had been trying to break into the national spotlight for ten years. But after he got there, he didn't seem to want it, or it didn't seem to want him. He made appearances on several talk shows in the '60s and then seems to have disappeared. During part of the time, he was taking post-grad courses at Boston College. Perhaps he achieved his goal, and moved on to something else.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:36](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

Anonymous 14 December 2016 at 06:21

I'm not sure where Bob Blasser is today; however, I had him as a College Professor at NH College (circa 1979)...now call Southern NH University (SNHU). He was an original who did many things including Comedy writing for Milton Berle, but his main character was Jack Benny (to a tee!) He showed us the episode noted in the above article from 1963 as well as his feedback interaction on Red Skelton/Milton Berle. Course was called "Laughter, the Universal Language!" Great Memories and excellent instructor

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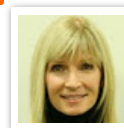
News From ME

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

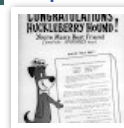
The World of Knight

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...
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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=&_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)

[The Joke's Over](#)
[Industrial Ed](#)
[Turkey of Tomorrow](#)
[He Was Jack Benny](#)
[Otto Who?](#)
[We're at the Mardi Gras](#)
[Heart of a Prince](#)
[The Unhappy Man With
the Confetti](#)
[The Hawk](#)
[Self-Referential Tex](#)
[Forever A Cub Reporter](#)
[His First Car Wasn't a
Maxwell](#)
[Radio on Record](#)
[Bob Clampett Drives
Parents Mad](#)
[Cat-Ass-Trophe](#)
[Unlucky Horseshoe](#)
[He Got a Million of 'Em](#)
[Let's Play Radio](#)
[Rubbery Wally](#)
[The Feud Ends](#)
[The Past, Present and
Future of Animation,
1936](#)
[Clementine a la Avery](#)
[The Cats Bah In-
Between](#)
[Liberace, Man of Letters](#)
[Dog Trouble Eye Takes](#)
[That Makes Me Mad](#)
[The TV Plunge](#)
[Bosustow as Disney](#)
[Rotor Head](#)
[Reused Indian Gag](#)
[How To Be a Lampshade
For Profit](#)
[Ptui](#)

- [August](#) (34)
- [July](#) (32)
- [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 Johnson](#) (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)

[Paul Julian](#) (13)

[Paul Terry](#) (2)

[Sara Berner](#) (5)

- [Screwy Squirrel](#) (34)
- [Spider-Man](#) (1)
- [Terrytoons](#) (84)
- [Tex Avery](#) (468)
- [Tom and Jerry Human](#) (29)
- [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (17)
- [Ub Iwerks](#) (80)
- [UPA](#) (57)
- [Van Beuren](#) (94)
- [Vernon Scott](#) (42)
- [Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)
- [Walt Disney](#) (145)
- [Walter Lantz](#) (241)
- [Warner Bros.](#) (586)
- [Who Killed Who](#) (10)

