



Sunday, 20 December 2015

Mary On Mary

Mary Livingstone was the first regular character developed for the Jack Benny radio show in 1932. The character became part-and-parcel of the woman who played her, the former Sadye Marks, who changed her name to Mary Livingstone. Sadye was Jack Benny's wife.

The character evolved on the show. She was dumb and silly until Kenny Baker came on board as the show's singer in 1935. He was made a bit of a dope, too, and the writers realised they didn't need two characters like that. Mary was soon wised up and the writers kept one aspect of her personality—the ego-deflater who needed one line to cut Benny down to size or point out his lies. She played the part to perfection. Unfortunately, she ultimately didn't want to perform and by the time the Benny radio show ended in 1955, was on the air only via tape recorded inserts or reruns when she appeared at all. Veola Vonn, later Mrs. Frank Nelson, picked up the female parts Mary might have done in the sketch portions of the show in earlier days and became Mary's stand-by.



Here's a piece from the Los Angeles publication *Radio Life* from January 27, 1946 where Mary talks about her character and her real life role. The photos accompanied the article.

Mary vs. Mrs. Jack Benny

By Mary Livingstone

WAY BACK IN 1932, shortly after my lawfully wedded spouse, Jack Benny, started to broadcast, he and his writers dreamed up a new female character for his program.

The gal was to be a Benny fan from Plainfield, New Jersey—one who was inspired by Jack's ether personality to write "pomes." She was to corner Benny, recite her poetry, tell him in a dizzy, but unabashed manner about her family, particularly about Mamma, a character who didn't share the daughter's enthusiasm for the comic. Arrangements were made for several radio actresses to audition for the part, but none of them quite made it. Then Jack suggested I try. But I wanted no part of his radio career and no part of the microphone for myself. The mere thought of that little box frightened the living daylights out of me. I was very happy not to approach it.

"But, Doll," Jack insisted, "you've worked with me in my vaudeville act. It's not much different. Try it."

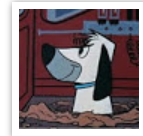
Tank Personality

He and his writers explained that unwittingly they had custom-tailored this particular gal to me. The reading they wanted was that of a fresh kid and they had always figured me a fresh kid. I didn't know whether to be flattered or insulted, but I was so darned scared I didn't have a chance to give it too much thought. Before I knew it I was playing Mary Livingstone, the "pome"-writing brat from Plainfield, with a Mamma who had a personality like a General Grant tank.

I don't think in the beginning they figured this kid would stay on the program very long. She would come in from time to time and that would be it. But somehow or other Mary Livingstone has stayed with the Benny show throughout Jack's thirteen years of broadcasting.

Things haven't changed much with that character. She is still a fresh, brash kid who heckles Benny. The poetry has disappeared except on very, very special occasions. As far as the program is concerned, Plainfield, New Jersey, is still her home and she still gets phone calls from Mamma who still has no use for Jack and who calls

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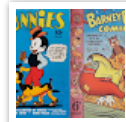


[Cowboy Church #67](#) - Hello my friends and welcome back for another

service of cowboy church. Today's musical selection begins with Gene Autry singing "Dear Hearts and Gentle Pe..."

27 minutes ago

Termite Terrace headlines



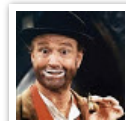
[Question for All You Cartoon Collectors!](#) - OK so I've been doing some

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



of mine more or less as a rib. I hope nobody ever confuses my own mother with the fictitious Mrs. Livingstone of Plainfield, New Jersey, however. My own mother is not a breaking-down-doors, name-calling Amazon. She's a quiet, warm person who, contrary to Mrs. Livingstone of Plainfield, is crazy about her son-in-law, Mr. B., an attachment that is extremely mutual.

As Mary Livingstone, I function two days a week: Saturday when we have our first rehearsal, and Sunday when we broadcast. I don't work in Jack's pictures, and other than appearing with him when he goes on hospital tours and entertains at the Canteen, I am no other part of professional life.

But as Mrs. Jack Benny, I function seven days a week. I am mother to Joan, now aged eleven, who, in the process of growing up, gives us many of those nice normal problems which most parents have. She stimulates and sometimes confounds us, the way all growing children stimulate and confound their parents. Joan's health, growth, school work, interests, habits and her personality are all a part of Mrs. Jack Benny's life. That's the kind of fun most parents enjoy. Nothing else is quite so real and exciting.

Before Joan and before California, we lived in a New York apartment and before that, while we were trouping the country, we lived in hotels. Radio changed everything. Now, we go into the homes of our audience over the air.

Home Life

We have a home of our own in Beverly Hills with a big yard for Joanie and plenty of room in which to live normal lives. I probably should say almost normal lives, because as Mrs. Jack Benny I also run Mr. Benny's gag writing headquarters.

Technically there's a big room downstairs where Jack, with his four writers and a script girl pace the floor till each week's material is ready. The truth of the matter is, they don't restrict themselves to the big room in the house. They chase each other through other rooms, their pacing carries them into the backyard. If I'm trying to catch a little extra sleep in the morning and a really potent idea hits

Jack, he runs upstairs and tries the gag on me. If, in my early morning state of semi-consciousness, the gag registers, Jack knows it's a howl. When Jack and the writers come to me for advice, they are coming to Mary Benny not Mary Livingstone. Mary Benny has ideas that are objective-those of a semi-layman. Mary Livingstone is just another member of the Benny troupe who reads lines each Sunday.

This is sort of a legitimate schizophrenia (this is a \$10.00 word meaning dual personality which I have thrown in at this point to set Phil Harris back on his heels). Being either Mrs. Jack Benny or Mary Livingstone would be a great source of satisfaction for any girl. Being both makes my life particularly wonderful. If only the mike didn't grow horns each Sunday evening and if only I would lose my nervous feeling just before we broadcast!!!

him a penny-pinching, no-good four-flusher. Through phone calls and letters Mary learns and tells the radio audience all about her family; about Mamma, about Papa and his various jobs, about her sister, Babe, who got her nose caught in a vacuum cleaner, and about her numerous brothers and cousins who are always in and out of jams and scrapes.

But more important, Mary-on-the-radio is the slightly cynical, wisecracking female who puts Benny in his place when he starts feeling too cocky. Also, Mary is a kind of girl friend of Jack's, certainly not his wife, because he still has his other sweethearts, like Gladys Zybysko. And Mary-on-the-radio is not above flirting with good-looking men.

Still Nervous

I was nervous when I first stepped up to the microphone. I'm still nervous. I'm all right once the broadcast starts, but I have lost none of that mike fright that first attacked me back in 1932. I really do have a sister Babe. She's Mrs. Myrt Blum, the wife of Jack's business manager, and Jack and the writers use her name to represent that female Li'l Abner character radio sister

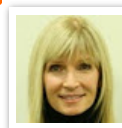
News From ME

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

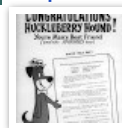
The World of Knight

TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT



4 days ago

Yowp

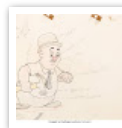


Hanna-Barbera Birthday Did-You-Knows - 63 years ago today, some

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

Posted by Yowp at 07:02



Labels: Jack Benny

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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?__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

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