



Sunday, 20 March 2016

Still a Small-Town Boy

Jack Benny a quitter?

Ah, you've got to love tabloids and their attention-grabbing opening sentences. The statement leaves the impression that he was some kind of loser but the article goes on to reveal anything but.

This story from the *Radio Mirror* of February 1937 is a long read so I won't waste time with a huge introduction. The old saw about Benny's first radio appearance being on Ed Sullivan's show is trotted out (it's not true) and there's an interesting tag of trivia notes about the show. "Al Burns," if I recall, was Jack's brother-in-law for a time (he married Babe Marks).

They're better than nothing, but the pictures with the article aren't that great because of a low resolution scan of this magazine.

GENIUS IN A FOG

By WELDON MELICK

JACK BENNY has been a quitter all his life. At every turning point in his career he has turned tail-but each such occasion has somehow advanced his fame and fortune.

I've heard actors, writers and comedians marvel that anyone could reach the top by the seemingly careless, unambitious, unbusinesslike methods that are Jack's. His Sunday half-hour recently forged ahead of Major Bowes in a national radio popularity survey, returning to the first place it lost two years ago. Yet Jack is easygoing, almost phlegmatic, and always takes the line of least resistance. When he gets into a violent argument he will suddenly give in to save himself the effort of keeping his mind on it.

His friend, George Burns, found him fuming one time over the incompetence of his vaudeville agent. Jack had determined to fire him. George didn't want to miss the fireworks, and went along, with his companion getting hotter under the collar and thinking up new vilifying epithets all the way.

As they entered the office, the agent called a cheery, "Good morning, Jack!"

"Is there any mail today?" Benny seethed.

"No, there isn't, Jack."

"Well, goodbye," the infuriated actor boiled, and on the way out mumbled, "I guess I told him!"

Another demonstration of his one-mouse-power temper occurred years ago at the Academy of Music in New York City, which boasted the most bloodthirsty audience since the Roman Coliseum. The house welcome to each new act was a prolonged raspberry-when tomatoes were out of season. Entertainers dreaded to play the spot, but egotistically gave everything they had for the applause of the barbarians, as it was equivalent in the theatrical world to a Congressional Medal for Bravery.

Jack sauntered in from the wings in his usual preoccupied manner at the first performance. His "Hello, everybody!" was drowned in the raspberry-flavored accolade which crescendoed to a thunderous roar as he shuffled deliberately across the stage, his eyes on the floor. When he reached the other side of the stage without so much as a change of expression, the raspberry subsided into ominous defiance, prefacing the real baiting and torture of a human sacrifice. Jack tossed them a genial "Goodbye, folks," sauntered on out of the theater and never came back.

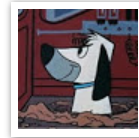
Benny has developed quitting to the perfection of a science. He quit high school in his sophomore year-by request. The principal said he wouldn't amount to anything and was only wasting the taxpayers' money.

Jack next quit his home for the stage. His father threatened to lock up the welcome mat if the boy walked out on him, but admitted he was only bluffing when he found out his son was serious.

Young Jack Benny was a violinist when he quit the stage to join the Navy. There were Seamen's Benefits, so he kept right on entertaining. When the world conflict was over, all that was left of a second-rate violinist was a first-rate comedian.

Laughs are not only Jack's career, they are also his existence. His closest friends are rival comedians-those

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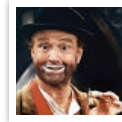


Some Cartoons For Saturday Morning #80 - Hello my friends

and welcome back for another selection of classic cartoons. Today's selection begins with one of the great Mickey, Donald and Goofy car...

5 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 (from Zieg...

6 hours ago

Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons

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

fernandollera.com



20 hours ago

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

who can make him laugh the most frequently and heartily-and when Jack Benny laughs heartily, he falls down, rolls on the floor, and clicks his heels. He matches laugh for laugh, reveling in a joke with the same abandon whether he's on the giving or receiving end.



ONE morning during a Winnipeg date, the Bennys' friend, Al Burns, telephoned from the hotel lobby that he was on his way up to their room. To give Al a laugh, Jack stood on one bed with a pitcher of water on his head and Mary stood on the other bed balancing a telephone book on her brow. At the knock on the door, Jack called "Come in!" and in walked the waiter with their breakfast. Jack doesn't go in for practical jokes. His idea of fun takes the milder form of telegrams and long distance phone calls.

When "Big Boy" opened in San Francisco, Florence Moore, who was playing in the same city, received a telegram from Jack Benny and George Burns to this effect:

"Jolson opens tonight. As we don't know Jolson, we are sending you a telegram. Congratulations."

The night George Burns and Gracie Allen got married in Cleveland, Jack called up from Vancouver at 4:00 A. M. "Hello-this is Jack Benny!" he announced. George said, "Bring up two orders of bacon and eggs!" and hung up. While George was playing the Palace in New York, Jack sent him this wire from San Diego, "I think your act is sensational. You've got the cleverest routine, the funniest gags

Broadway has ever heard. I think you're a genius - better than Chaplin!" He signed it "George Burns." Jack once wrote George a six-page letter. George was too busy to answer, so he switched the names in salutation and signature, and sent the letter back. Jack redoubled, and for a year and a half, that was the only letter that passed between them, but it passed frequently.

After George's first program on the air, Jack wrote him a fan letter: "I listened to your program last night and I think it was swell. I would appreciate it very much if you would send me a picture of Tom Mix's horse." George dug up a picture of a jackass and inscribed it "To my very dear friend, Jack Benny." Jack acknowledged it with "Thank you for your picture."

When Jack meets friends after the theater or in a restaurant, he can't refrain from a cordial, "Come on up to the house-we'll have a lotta laughs." Sometimes he comes home with thirty people. But Jack will never make a good night owl. He habitually rises before nine o'clock every morning, in aggravatingly jubilant spirits. So about the time the impromptu guests dispose of their wraps, their host is asleep on the couch.

He's never the life of the party. But whoever is the life of the party never had a better one-man audience than Jack Benny. He whoops at whatever strikes him funny.

Several comedians have risen from the minor ranks through his enthusiasm. He has sat in on radio auditions and used his compelling personality to persuade sponsors to contract comedy programs which would compete with his own, just because he wanted to help someone he used to know in vaudeville.

He is probably the only actor on record without a spark of professional jealousy. When Jesse Block first teamed up with Eve Sully, Jack loaned the pair his best piece of gag material, a sure-fire bit that was getting his biggest laughs on the road. He figured it might do them a lot of good while bookers were catching their act in New York, and wouldn't do him any harm, since they would drop it as soon as they started on the road themselves.

The bit was terrific. Block and Sully became sensations over night and were being held over in New York when Jack returned to play the Palace.

After his first performance, people said he was doing a Block and Sully. He took the bit out of his own act and told his friends to keep it when they went on the road.

Jack often gives a fair imitation of a lunatic on the loose. When he is not composing goofy telegrams, he is usually lost in a fog of concentration and petty worries. A sudden question will jar loose some words concerning the subject on his mind, making the most surprising answer. Sometimes he doesn't hear you at all, and other times he startles you with an answer fifteen minutes after you have forgotten what you asked.

Four years ago, Jack committed a stupefying act which convinced all his friends of his insanity. Without a single other prospect in view, he quit cold a job that was bringing him \$1400 a week. He asked for a release from his contract with the Earl Carrol Vanities road Company, thus throwing away \$20,000-and then and there quit the stage. Of all times that Jack has been a quitter, that remains his masterpiece. But as usual, his professional ascent was only accelerated by the halt!

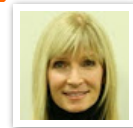
He had completed a cycle, and come again to the choice between his career on the stage and a home. But this time, he chose a home-for his wife's sake. Mary Livingstone had tried hard to forget the solid, comfortable security she had given up for a portable existence in hotels and trains. She had tried to get used to uprooting her life every few days-packing, unpacking, waiting alone in hotel rooms for Jack, or worse, visiting him backstage, and seeing chorus cuties swarming around him. The first year she had been miserably unhappy and had left her spouse ten times, but always her love for him outweighed her aversion to the merry-go-round of the theater, and drew her back.

By 1932, Mary was resigned to her fate, and had even overcome her dislike for the stage enough to appear in

Animation #276 Many references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)...

1 day 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

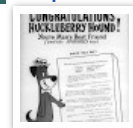
The World of Knight



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

3 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 Twoouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

Original animation drawing from Wabbit Twoouble with color notations for the ink and paint department. Release date: 12/20/41 Availability: Looney Tunes Gol...

3 weeks ago

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

Termite Terrace headlines

Porky's Hot Dog Intake - Western Publishing definitely isn't free of

Jack's act with him. But she was still a home girl at heart-and Jack knew there was only one way to make her supremely happy. He saw radio as a solution to his domestic problems.

THEY went back to New York and for three months Jack gave audition after audition to no avail. Then, one night, columnist Ed Sullivan invited him to make "a guest star appearance on his own program. For the record, these are the first words that the bland comedian uttered over the air:

"Ladies and gentlemen-this is Jack Benny talking. There will be a slight pause while you say 'Who cares ?' I am here tonight as a scenario writer. There is quite a lot of money in writing scenarios for the pictures. Well, there would be if I could sell one. That seems to be my only trouble right now, but I am going back to pictures in about ten weeks. I'm going to be in a new picture with Greta Garbo. They sent me the story last week. When the picture first opens, I'm found dead in the bathroom. It's sort of a mystery picture. I'm found in the bathtub on Wednesday night." He shortly had his first sponsor, Canada Dry, and amid the flood of old-style gags that deluged radio almost four years ago, the Benny brand of timely character humor sparkled like a Will Rogers quip in the Congressional Record.

It was by breaking from the tradition that called for a star comedian to grab all the laughs from his straight man that Jack Benny developed a smooth-running, eight-cylinder laugh machine while other comics were still wheezing along on one cylinder. Using the same fuel-that is, jokes no funnier and in many cases less clever than those of his competitors-he streaked to record popularity before the others could remodel their ancient vehicles.

He even dragged Mary with him, putting her into the scripts against her will. But she has grown to love the work and the audience loves her blithe assurance.

Although he worries and frets his radio material into shape, making a minor crisis of each broadcast, as soon as the show goes on the air, Jack does his best to befuddle the cast into garbling their lines. He thinks an unintentional slip of the tongue is always good for a laugh, whereas the original line may or may not be. Thus he kidded Don Bestor's spats into national prominence, and some of his ad lib remarks about Kenny Baker not only confuse the singer but have him blushing for hours afterwards.

The strangest thing about this good-natured fellow is that he doesn't react to the white heat of success in any way. He's still a small-town boy who can't hold his liquor (one cocktail sends him higher than a kite, so he practically never drinks) and to whom a midnight movie is an orgy. He has no business sense, and takes his wife's advice on everything but the selection of his clothes. Unlike most actors, he dresses conservatively (and he dresses himself-he wouldn't submit to a valet to pay off an election bet).

His diversions are those of a \$35-a-week bank clerk, though his pay check is in five figures. His chief delight is leisurely cross-country motoring. He gave his wife a sixteen-cylinder sedan, but refused to give up his own Pontiac roadster for a more luxurious car. He thinks he's a very good driver, but the temptation to tell a good story frequently takes his eyes from the road.

He's a panic on the dance floor when he pulls a Fred Astaire, but it's a bit nerve-wracking to his unsuspecting partner.

HE sometimes plays casino, but the best thing he does with a card table is to set dinner on it and invite Burns and Allen over. When he starts a meal, he always asks "What's the dessert?" and you have to keep it out of sight or he'll eat it between the appetizer and the soup. He has to taste what everyone else is eating, if it's different from his order. As soon as the dessert is on (once a day it's one of those "six delicious flavors") he asks, "What are we going to do tonight?" He stops eating when he feels uncomfortable and after dinner looks at himself in the mirror, makes a double chin and remarks, "Gee, I'll have to start on a diet tomorrow!" He always means it, and even bought a medicine ball and gym equipment once, using it all of twenty minutes before he gave it away.

Jack has two habits he can't break. He smokes several thousand cigars a year and bites his nails. Mary frequently slaps his hands out of his mouth, as it's a dreadful example to set for Joan. Jack likes to show you snapshots of his adopted baby - he always has some in his pocket - and if you suggest that she looks a little like him, he is the proudest papa-by-proxy in the world.

At least ten needy actors receive regular checks from Benny. if you see him fasten onto some obscure actor at a party and unobtrusively steer him toward the kitchen, it's a safe bet that radio's ace comedian is asking Joe Hoofer how things are going, and is backing up his interest with something to tide him over the tough breaks. While he was making a personal appearance in Boston recently, the boy who was kicked out of high school because he wouldn't study had an invitation to lecture on humorous writing to the literature classes of Harvard. Jack declined the honor. He explained to a friend, "I can't talk to all those smart guys. I'm only an actor. I wouldn't know what to say."

But if he doesn't stand in awe of his own importance, neither does he of anyone else's. During the same engagement, arrangements were made for him to meet the Governor at the State House. The Governor was late and Benny left-not from impatience after a long wait, but simply because he was due at a rehearsal. The others told him the rehearsal would have to be delayed-that he couldn't walk out on a governor.

Jack simply said, "He can be late. He's got a four year contract, but mine's only for thirteen weeks."



cannibalism when it comes to comics featuring Porky Pig. These are

just some of the covers in which Porky is ei...

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=&_arms=1&_ipg=&_f rom=

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)
 - December (34)
 - November (33)
 - October (31)
 - September (32)
 - August (33)

DOTS AND DASHES ON JACK BENNY'S PROGRAM. . . . This merry-maker's program is now radio's number one according to the telephone polls, which make surveys of listening popularity, for advertising agencies and sponsors.... It finally shoved Major Bowes' amateurs into second place. . . . Jack's sponsors attribute this to their high-priced comic's flippant personality. . . . But the veteran comedian likes to think his success is due to his innovation of situation comedy on the air, rather than to gags. . . . Jack likes to kid the nation's latest crazes, its newest movies, its latest heroes. However, this type of comedy has its limitations. . . . Lampooning national affairs, international figures, politics, religions, is taboo.... To make up for this, Jack built up his company of funsters into definite personalities, so he could kid them instead. . . . When Harry Conn, \$2,500-a-week gag writer, left Jack to write for Joe Penner, the former fiddler hired another high-priced writer, Al Boasberg, and three assistants. . . . The writers bring in the rough draft to their boss early in the week. . . . Benny greets them in a silk dressing gown, silkier pajamas, and the inevitable cigar tucked in the side of his mouth. . . . Benny injects his own ideas. . . . The following Sunday the cast gives it a first reading. Suggestions are made by Mary, Kenny Baker and Phil Harris, to suit their personalities. . . . One of the hardest workers and biggest worriers on the program is Tom Harrington, crack production man, who has traveled over 75,000 miles, in connection with this show, between the West Coast studios and the New York advertising agency offices of his company, Young and Rubicam. . . . He gets gray hairs every Sunday when Jack upsets the planned routine.... It's Harrington's job to keep the program timed properly.... Young and Rubicam like comedians on their radio shows. They present Jack Benny, Phil Baker, Fred Allen, Charles Butterworth, Stoopnagle and Budd and Ed Wynn, weekly, to a waiting world. . . . Jack's man Friday is baldish Harry Baldwin, who cares for Jack's minor business affairs, arranges his appointments, handles Mary's charge accounts. . . . Phil Harris is Jack's sixth bandleader. . . . Most of the company dress informally for the broadcasts; Jack wears sweater and slacks, Mary a sports dress, but dimpled, thirty-year-old Harris dresses like a Wall Street baron. . . . The former West Coast drummer made a prize-winning short, "So This Is Harris;" his band has been one of NBC's aces for many years.... Has only one hobby; polo ponies. . . . He owns a string of them. . . . It was Rudy Vallee who first recommended him as a coming maestro. . . . A year ago Kenny Baker was unknown. Today he starts his first starring talkie, "The Great Crooner," Mervyn LeRoy's first independently produced picture. . . . Is the proud father of a two-months old boy. . . . Don Wilson's raucous laugh, usually heard above the rest of the studio audience, is not forced.... He still thinks Jack Benny is the funniest man in the world.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:10](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:



Blogger 11 April 2017 at 09:38

I got my first electronic cigarette kit at [Vaporfi](#), and I must admit they have the best kits.

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- [July](#) (34)
- [June](#) (32)
- [May](#) (34)
- [April](#) (34)
- ▼ [March](#) (36)
 - [Under Water, Over Acting](#)
 - [Hans Conried, Acrid Humourist](#)
 - [Poochini Ballerina](#)
 - [Popeye Take](#)
 - [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre – Slapstick](#)
 - [Benny vs Hope \(and Bud and Lou\)](#)
 - [The King of Smokingdom](#)
 - [Smokers, Stooges and Crooners](#)
 - [Putting Out the Dog the Van Beuren Way](#)
 - [The Second Wittiest Man](#)
 - [100 Years Ago in Animated Cartoons](#)
 - [A Few Quick Facts About Limited Animation](#)
 - [Dancing Fifi](#)
 - [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre – We Learn About the Telephone](#)
 - [Still a Small-Town Boy](#)
 - [A Cartoon Word From Our Sponsor](#)
 - [King-Size Canary Backgrounds](#)
 - [Czech That Pain](#)
 - [A Division of Gimbleco Enterprises](#)
 - [Hole in One \(Disney Mouse, That Is\)](#)
 - [He's in There](#)
 - [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre – Why Take a Chance?](#)
 - [Jack Benny, 1938](#)
 - [The Short Cartoon Career of J. Waldo Purrington](#)
 - [Baseball Bugs Backgrounds](#)
 - [Sorry, Dad, We're Only Takin' Jets](#)
 - [Life With Dawn Wells, On and Off an Island](#)
 - [Felix Gets Them Drunk](#)
 - [Pardon My Glove](#)
 - [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre – Tom Schuler, Cobbler Stat...](#)
 - [Quitting Radio](#)
 - [Cartoons of 1953, Part 2](#)

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[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

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[Schicklgruber Plugged In](#)
[Tex Avery Nails It](#)
[Johnny Carson Becomes a Habit](#)
[Looking For Jerry](#)

- ▶ [February](#) (31)
- ▶ [January](#) (32)
- ▶ [2015](#) (389)
- ▶ [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)
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)