

Sunday, 15 May 2016

## Jack Benny, 1940

The U.S. wasn't at war in 1940 but Americans did their part in helping Brits and others fighting against Hitler's forces in Europe. That includes the stars. It seems like Jack Benny spent almost as much time during the year taking part in benefits as he did on the radio.

Things were fairly straight-forward for Jack in 1940. He continued his Sunday night show for Jell-O (though General Food continued to try to get him to hawk something else; it eventually succeeded). One movie was released and he shot another.

Here are some stories from *Variety* dealing with Jack that year. We haven't included all of them. There are squibs about him being in the audiences of performances and people being signed for his films or he and his writers taking jaunts to put together a script. We've breezed past them. Columnists chuckled out one-liners about him and Fred Allen shooting *Love Thy Neighbor*; it was all free publicity. There were also different reviews of *Buck Benny Rides Again* in the Hollywood and New York editions; we've only republished one. *Variety* adeptly points out the problems with *Neighbor*. It's a contrived comedy based one on joke, and needs to be padded with material one doesn't associate with Benny or Allen. Frankly, I think Benny's later writers—Tackaberry, Josefsberg, et al, put some life into the feud and handled it better than its originators.



Interestingly, one critic panned Al Pearce for doing a show ripped off from Benny, complete with stand-ins for the Maxwell, Rochester and Carmichael the polar bear. We've left that out. But we have included a story about whiney radio listeners who think someone in power should ban shows they don't like instead of using their own power to change the channel. Jack's show came in for some vague criticism from, well, it could have been one person. And there was a to-do about Benny using the word "jerk" on the air.

### January 4, 1940

Wiser if not sadder bear, Carmichael, the polar expatriate from Clinton, Conn., zoo, has gone back to hibernate after working with (more or less) Jack Benny and Rochester for six weeks in Paramount: 'Buck Benny Rides Again.' Parting was said to have been amiable.

### January 6, 1940

New York World-Telegram annual radio pool acclaimed Jack Benny topper of comedians and Bing Crosby leader of ether crooners. Kate Smith headed the femme contingent of radio entertainers in the selections.

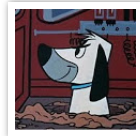
### January 8, 1940

Barbara Stanwyck is reported having been given a sable coat instead of coin for appearing as guest star on the Jack Benny program last night.

### January 9, 1940

Greatest collection of air and film stars ever assembled for a coast-to-coast benefit program will participate in March of Dimes broadcast (20) from KNX. Eddie Cantor again emcees and Vic Knight repeats as producer. So far only Mutual has spared time for the full hour show. KNX takes the first half and NBC is having difficulty finding time on either the red or blue for the special broadcast.

## About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

## My Blog List

### Old TV History

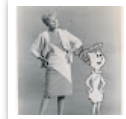


May 1940 - You couldn't blame David Sarnoff if he

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

## Blogs to See

### News From ME

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...

2 hours ago

### Fernando Llera Cartoons



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

fernandollercartoons.com  
3 hours ago

Star-studded cast for President's Birthday Party airer to aid infantile paralysis fund comprises Connie Boswell, Mickey Rooney, Bob Hope, Rudy Vallee, Burns and Allen, Frances Langford, Bob Burns, Frank Parker, Fanny Brice, Bing Crosby, Fibber McGee and Molly, Kenny Baker, Jack Benny, Mary Livingston, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, Sidney Fields and Meredith Willson's orchestra. Program airs here from 8 to 9 p.m.

#### January 12, 1940

Masquers are preparing for record turnout of male stars Thursday night, when club tosses banquet honoring Y. Frank Freeman and William LeBaron . . . enlisted as entertainers are Jack Benny and his radio troupe, including Andy Devine, Phil Harris, Eddie Anderson, Dennis Day and Don Wilson.

#### January 15, 1940

MARY LIVINGSTON is wearing a gorgeous new platinum wedding ring with 13 ruby hearts in the setting . . . engraved in the band is the inscription '13 years of love and happiness and we're only starting. Love. Doll' . . . 'twas a gift from Jack Benny, yesterday, which, as you may have surmised was their 13th wedding anniversary . . . and Jack must have been excited judging from the line he missed in his broadcast.

#### January 18, 1940

NBC has granted permission to Young & Rubicam agency to levy an admission to the Jack Benny broadcast in Oakland (28), thereby marking the first time that a commercial program on the Coast will have played to a paid audience. Proceeds will go to President Roosevelt's anti-paralysis fund. Both east and west broadcasts will originate in Civic Auditorium there, which has seating capacity of around 3,000. All ducats will be priced at \$1.

Benny will fly his entire crew to the Bay City, including Phil Harris' full orchestra. Comedian and his troupe will give the payees a stage show in addition to the broadcast, which is expected to net over \$5,000 for FDR's pet charity.

#### January 19, 1940

Masquers, some 350 strong, last night paid tribute to William LeBaron, Paramount's managing director of production, and wouldn't let him forget that he was once a songwriter. William Frawley kept reminding him of it; Jack Benny pointed his shaft wit that way; Rudy Vallee reminded him that it was his ditty 'On Miami Shore' that started him on his career 20 years ago; Victor Young's Paramount Recording ork played three of his best lyrical efforts; Dennis Day sang one of them and had the mob join, and Joe Cunningham pointed it up in his hilarious resume of the evening's proceedings.

Nor did Toastmaster William Collier, Sr. pass over it any too lightly.

Gala affair proved a field day for Jack Benny. He had the sitters howling through his monolog and later when his Jello cast performed a travesty on 'The Women.' At the conclusion of Benny's single, Collier remarked that it was one of the finest talks he'd ever heard and the mob applauded.

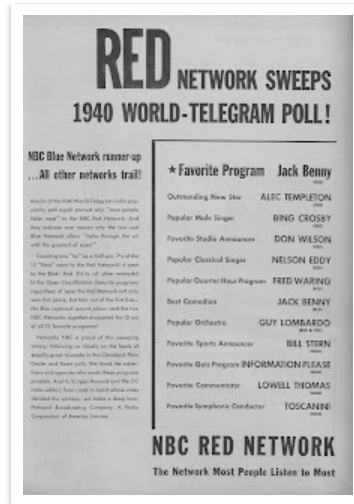
Y. Frank Freeman came in for his share of the kidding although he wasn't on hand. Benny said the reason he doesn't get good pictures is because LeBaron doesn't believe he can act and Freeman doesn't like him because he's a Northerner. Benny went on to quip 'If Waukegan was in Georgia I'd be the greatest actor on the Paramount lot.' He said that if Freeman makes that Civil War picture he'll lay 8 to 5 that Richmond takes Grant. Benny spoofed himself by saying he's tired of trying to steal his own pictures from Rochester. He said he heard that his next picture would be 'The Life of Booker T. Washington' and added that if Paramount decides to build its new studio at Central Avenue he'll quit.

#### January 22, 1940

Jack Benny and his Jello outfit will have charge of the program tonight for the annual Beverly Hills civic banquet at the Beverly Hills hotel. Phil Harris will furnish the music. Forty top names of stage, screen and radio have made reservations and will take a bow when Benny introduces them.

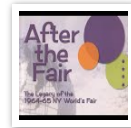
#### January 23, 1940

Washington, Jan. 22.—Salaries earned during 1938 by picture people and others in show business declined over the previous year, according to figures released by the Treasury. Among those missing in the higher brackets are Louis B. Mayer and other top earners. Fifth fattest compensation among the nation's 399 residents receiving more than \$75,000 in 1938 went to Claudette Colbert. Her earnings reached \$301,944.



**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

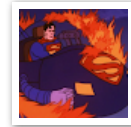
#### **Termite Terrace headlines**



Today's Post: The 1964 World's Fair Documentary 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

#### **Pete Hale**



My First Carl Barks - I decided to become a cartoonist last year, so

I started reading some old "animal" comic strips and books for study and enjoyment. I've already tried out...  
1 day ago

#### **Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog**



Tomorrow Afternoon at Niles: Silent Era Animation and Jerry

Beck -  
2 days ago

Warner Baxter \$279,807.  
Darryl Zanuck \$265,000.  
Bing Crosby \$260,000.  
Spyros Skouras \$254,000.  
Jack Benny \$250,000.

#### January 26, 1940

Ban on preferred list for annual ball of Associated Actors and Artistes of America at Cocoanut Grove Feb. 22 was announced yesterday at Ambassador luncheon. Edward Arnold, who presided at luncheon, stated tables would be allocated in order in which reservations are received. Was also announced that those volunteering their services for two-hour show include Eddie Cantor, Bette Davis, Claudette Colbert, Boris Karloff, Adolphe Menjou, Vivien Leigh, Rosalind Russell, Loretta Young, Jack Benny, Carole Lombard, Gary Cooper, George Murphy. Guy Lombardo will furnish music for entertainment.

#### January 27, 1940

San Francisco, Jan. 26.—Murray Bolen, producer of Jack Benny show for Y. and R., visiting former co-workers at KFRC where he spent several years in general production work. He is up with the Benny company for the infantile paralysis benefit at the Oakland auditorium. Benny's two Sunday broadcasts will originate there before 9,000 paid admissions for each show.

#### February 1, 1940

TOP CROSSLEY rating changed hands this week for the first time in two years when Jack Benny passed Charlie McCarthy's Chase & Sanborn recently amputated hour show. Jello program pulled up with 41.4 against an even 40 for the javaree. In the hour division Kraft Music Hall is out front, closely followed by another J. Walter Thompson show, Lux Radio Theatre. Although most commercial programs picked up ground, some as much as five points due to wintry blasts in the east, most spectacular rise was that chalked up by Lowell Thomas, an all-time high for him of 20.

#### February 3, 1940

ALTHOUGH reports are gaining currency that Jack Benny will split with his Jello sponsor and make another tie-up in the fall, grapevine from the front office carries word that all differences have been ironed out and monicker of the top Crossleyite adorns the contract which keeps the combo intact for another spell, duration of which has not been disclosed. Understood only change from present arrangement is that Benny will have complete charge of the program, severing production ties with Young & Rubicam agency. Matter of coin also has been amicably adjusted, it is said.

Buildup for Paramount's announced pairing of Jack Benny and Fred Allen in a forthcoming feature will be laid in New York next Tuesday when the Manhattan hillbilly records an insert for 'Buck Benny Rides Again.'

Jean Hersholt has been named chairman of program committee which will have charge of 'Gambol of the Stars' ball Feb. 22 at Cocoanut Grove. At same time it was announced that Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, C. Aubrey Smith, Carole Lombard, Norma Shearer, Jeanette MacDonald and Bette Davis will work with Hersholt in staging annual ball of Associated Actors and Artistes of America.

Two-hour \$ 1,000,000 talent show will feature such entertainers as Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Jack Benny, Mary Livingston, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, Mary Healy and other film, stage and radio celebrities. George Murphy will act as emcee. General ball committee is headed by Ralph Morgan, prexy of Screen Actors Guild.

#### February 6, 1940

Andy Devine ends his personals four at Pittsburgh (10) and heads for the Coast to start work in a Universal picture. He'll be written into the Jack Benny airshow (18).

#### February 7, 1940

Jack Benny's new deal with General Foods will most likely be closed this Friday (9). Several angles are still open for settlement, but the indications are that none of these will hold up the signaturing. The agreement will be for two or three years, will bring Benny a lump sum of \$18,500 per week and make him the lone and direct employer of everyone on the show.

Benny's present contract expires at the end of June. It is understood that General Foods is interested in inserting a clause which would give it the privilege of attaching a product other than Jello-O [sic] to Benny's program. The food processor tried to do this last season, but Benny objected, not because he was leery about getting behind something different, but because he was inclined to the belief that the average

#### **AFRTS Archive**



Your audience awaits! - Many of us saved a tape or

acetate or two. There are a lot of people that would like to hear them again. The airchecks from AFN/AFKN/SCN etc usually t...

2 days ago

#### **Mark Kausler's CatBlog**

**Felix Vs. A Spy From Brigandia** - In these Felix strips from 4-24 to 5-7-32, Felix returns from the Moon, only to encounter a spy from the kingdom of Brigandia, who wants to steal all the p...

1 week ago

#### **Prydain on Film**



1972 Interview with Chronicles of Prydain author

Lloyd Alexander, Illustrator Evaline Ness and Ann Durell - from the Free Library Rare Book Department YouTube channel,

3 months ago

[Show All](#)

## Why Not Read...

[Cartoonerific](#)

[Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)

[Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)

[Format Films Roadrunners](#)

## Blog Archive

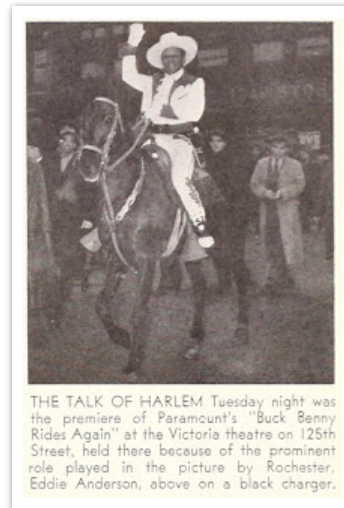
- [2023](#) (321)
- [2022](#) (382)
- [2021](#) (380)
- [2020](#) (389)
- [2019](#) (376)
- [2018](#) (379)
- [2017](#) (380)
- ▼ [2016](#) (396)
  - [December](#) (34)
  - [November](#) (33)
  - [October](#) (31)
  - [September](#) (32)
  - [August](#) (33)
  - [July](#) (34)
  - [June](#) (32)

listener would think he had lost his old sponsor for a new product.

Benny went on General Foods' payroll Oct. 14, 1934. His new lump will be the largest ever for a half-hour variety show. Young & Rubicam is the agency.

#### February 13, 1940

PARAMOUNT is negotiating a new contract with Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson, calling for equal number of pictures per year to match those for which Jack Benny is committed. Deal is understood to more than double comic's salary received for last two pictures at studio, final one being 'Buck Benny Rides Again.' Reported Par is making move to protect itself on Anderson's future services in the Benny starrers, studio having passed up chance a year ago to place player under a term contract at about one-fourth the salary that new pact will call for. Figuring in contract negotiations will be Benny's okay, as latter has Anderson tied to a straight 39-week contract for radio services which calls for approval of Negro's picture assignments as protection for Jello's 'Rochester' characterization.



#### February 15, 1940

Barbara Stanwyck tossed birthday party for Jack Benny last night at her Bevhills home. [Mary Livingstone threw a party at the Victor Hugo].

Screen and radio stars have promised to participate in Finnish Relief Fund benefit at Grauman's Chinese Saturday midnight. Among those who have promised to appear are George Burns and Gracie Allen, Gene Autry, Jack Benny, Rudy Vallee, Bob Hope, Eddie Cantor and Tito Schipa. Tickets are on sale at theatre b.o., Roosevelt Hotel and all agencies without service charge.

#### February 26, 1940

Mary Livingston wearing a new pin, gift from Jack Benny. Gold jewel contains ivory inset of head of their daughter Joan.

#### February 27, 1940

Jack Benny and Orson Welles yesterday were trying to get together on a reciprocal guest deal. Welles would make a call on Benny's program in return for the Jello comic doning 'June Moon' with him on Campbell Playhouse in a couple of weeks.

So far, no deal, but Benny yesterday closed with Gracie Allen for the guest spot Sunday. She'll carry on her campaign for the presidency and may bob in and out of other shows with the comedy bit.

#### March 6, 1940

Phil Harris mused a laugh so obviously on the Jack Benny show Sunday night (3) that it almost threw the rest of the cast off step. Talking about last week's Academy Award to Robert Donat, Benny said he had considered himself a dark horse. Harris hopped forward with a line about Rochester (Eddie Anderson) that was clearly expected to draw a howl, but he failed to wait for Benny's laugh to die down, so the audience missed it. Rarely is heard such a clear example of mis-timing ruining a gag. Benny show itself continues to hit a top average of comedy.

#### March 14, 1940

Jack Benny signed a new contract yesterday to continue his broadcasts for General Foods (Jello). New pact becomes operative in the fall after his customary summer layoff. New series starts off Benny on his seventh year for Jello and his ninth in radio. Expiring contract, which spanned three years, was the first long term non-cancellable contract ever signed in radio.

Although details of the new deal were not disclosed, understood that Benny gets an increase over his previous stipend and will be given greater leeway in the production.

#### March 15, 1940

Ciggie outfit to bankroll Al Pearce when he winds up with Dole pineapple next month is understood to be Camel. Asked for confirmation, Dick Marvin, radio director for William Esty agency, said 'I can't talk now.' Inner radio circles yesterday buzzed with the report that Marvin made a desperate attempt to sign Jack Benny for Camels before the Jello deal was closed. It is said he made Benny an offer of \$2,000 a week more

#### ▼ May (34)

[Tex's Trip to Mars](#)

[Foxy Blast](#)

[Jack Benny Vs Fred Allen, June 1, 1947](#)

[The Duck Man Speaketh](#)

[Cats Don't Like Castor Oil](#)

[Histrionic Horse](#)

[That Old Guy on TV](#)

[Your Safety First](#)

[The Six Heads of Screw Squirrel](#)

[The Pals That Weren't](#)

[Cartoons of 1955, Part 2](#)

[Before He Talked to Mr. Ed](#)

[Opening of The Tell-Tale Heart](#)

[Farm of Tomorrow Opening](#)

[Brits, Backus and Magoo](#)

[Wally Walrus Mail Call](#)

[Cartoons! Fah!](#)

[Behind the Man Who Fired Julius LaRosa](#)

[Jack Benny, 1940](#)

[Lillian Friedman](#)

[Pun of the Camel](#)

[Living Ladder](#)

[Unmasking the Host of Masquerade Party](#)

[Rudy the Roach](#)

[Bill Schallert, The Man Who Played Old](#)

[Stop That Beer](#)

[Blah About Benny](#)

[Cartoons of 1955, Part 1](#)

[Snafu Thwacks a Nazi](#)

[What Is That Thing, Anyway?](#)

[Pies, Co-Stars, Baseball and Bill Frawley](#)

[Cartoon Drunks](#)

[Dance of the Fairy Godmother](#)

[Mary Livingstone Meets Jack Benny](#)

#### ► April (34)

#### ► March (36)

#### ► February (31)

#### ► January (32)

#### ► 2015 (389)



than his new contract with General Foods calls for. Failing to land Benny, say the insiders, Marvin got down to business with Pearce.

While the coin paid Benny on his new contract has not been disclosed, it is said that he got a substantial increase over the previous figure. Friends of Benny say he didn't want the added stipend for himself, but wanted to make up for the increased salaries paid members of his cast. Deal is for the package, with the comedian paying his supporting players from the lump sum he receives.

#### March 16, 1940

Interchange of guest appearances between Jack Benny and Orson Welles was 50% completed yesterday when Benny agreed to appear on Welles' soup show on March 24. Event will signalize opening of the Campbell broadcast to the public for the first time. It probably will be staged in CBS' studio auditorium.

#### March 20, 1940

Orson Welles made an unannounced guest appearance last Sunday (17) on the Jack Benny show over NBC red (WEAF), and his presence turned it into a very comical occasion. Everybody concerned took a severe ribbing, with Welles and Benny absorbing the major share. Session built it to an uproarious climax. Some of the ribs at Welles (such as his many secretaries, assistants, etc., and his hectic rehearsals) may not have been completely understood by uninitiated listeners, but they were funny on their own. As a comedian, Welles bullseyed. It was announced on the show and later on Welles' own program that Benny will return-guest on the latter stanza next Sunday (24) playing the lead in the Ring Lardner-George S. Kaufman 'June Moon.'

#### March 23, 1940

Jack Benny and his Jello air troupe will do their April 21 and 24 broadcasts from New York City if plans to stage the world preem of 'Buck Benny Rides Again' at the Paramount theatre there on April 24 hold.

#### March 26, 1940

Premiere release of Paramount's 'Buck Benny Rides Again' will be held in New York the week of April 21-28 with Jack Benny and his air-troupe making the trip east for opening and doing two broadcasts from there. Picture will go into national release May 3.

#### March 27, 1940

Sam Hearn, back this week from 30-week personal appearance tour, has been set by Jack Benny for appearance on the Jello broadcast Sunday (31). Leo Morrison agented.

A switch on world premiere stunts is being mulled by Paramount for 'Buck Benny Rides Again,' which may be given a special opening in Harlem, N. Y., at a theatre to be selected if plans are approved. Angle is Rochester (Eddie Anderson), colored stooge for Jack Benny on the air, who's in this picture.

Present intention is to route 'Buck Benny' into the Paramount, N. Y. April 24 with Jack Benny and Rochester, together with others, coming on that week to do their regular broadcast from the east, as well as to participate in preem plans.

Should 'Buck Benny' be given a special opening in Harlem, that would probably occur a night or two prior to its regular N. Y. Par engagement.

#### April 11, 1940

Eddie Beloin and Bill Morrow drawing trip to Mexico City in July from Jack Benny, as bonus on script of 'Buck Benny Rides Again.'

#### **Buck Benny Rides Again**

*(Comedy)*

Paramount production. Stars Jack Benny. Features: Ellen Drew, Andy Devine, Phil Harris, Virginia Dale, Lillian Cornell, Dennis Day, Theresa Harris and Rochester. Balance of cast: Kay Linaker, Ward Bond, Morris Ankrum, Charles Lane, James Burke, Merriel Abbott dancers. Produced and directed by Mark Sandrich. Screen play, William Morrow and Edmund Be loin; based on an adaptation by Zion Myers of a story by Arthur Stringer. Musical direction for production, Charles Henderson. Incidental music, Victor Young. Songs by Frank Loesser and Jimmy McHugh. Indian adagio and acrobatic routines by Merriel Abbott dancers. Other dance numbers staged by LeRoy Prlna. Photography, Charles Lang. Art director, Hans Dreier and Rolund Anderson. Edited by LeRoy Stone. Costumes, Edith Head. Previewed at Westwood Village, April 10. Running time: 82 mins.

► [2014](#) (390)

► [2013](#) (388)

► [2012](#) (397)

► [2011](#) (106)

## Labels

[Aline Mosby](#) (20)

[Art Davis](#) (46)

[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)

[Bob and Ray](#) (17)

[Bob Clampett](#) (116)

[Bob McKimson](#) (82)

[Bob Thomas](#) (66)

[Chuck Jones](#) (186)

[Columbia](#) (68)

[Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)

[Cynthia Lowry](#) (36)

[Dick Thomas](#) (18)

[Don Patterson](#) (24)

[Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)

[Earl Wilson](#) (19)

[Erskine Johnson](#) (44)

[Felix the Cat](#) (38)

[Film Daily](#) (50)

[Fleischer](#) (211)

[Frank Tashlin](#) (43)

[Fred Allen](#) (57)

[Fred Brunish](#) (13)

[Friz Freleng](#) (193)

[Gene Deitch](#) (24)

[George Pal](#) (12)

[Grant Simmons](#) (11)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (131)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (10)

[Hans Conried](#) (5)

[Hardaway-Dalton unit](#) (7)

[Harman-Ising](#) (101)

[Henry Morgan](#) (14)

[Irv Spence](#) (12)

[Jack Benny](#) (622)

[Jay Ward](#) (35)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (108)

[John Sutherland](#) (41)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (42)

[Johnny Olson](#) (5)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (9)

[Laugh-In](#) (18)

[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (7)

This one makes it two hits in a row for Jack Benny, and two for the producer-director, Mark Sandrich, with 'Buck Benny Rides Again' topping 'Man About Town' for all-around entertainment. A smart show from the novel oral credit announcements to the final fade gag, this highly amusing travesty on the trite and true western again sticks close to Benny's radio personality with a line of laughs and chatter familiar to his ether hordes as well as screen addicts. It is typical Benny material, set to fast pace and rootin', tootin' rhythms in a combination of Manhattan and Nevada dude ranch stuff which clicks solidly. Box assay is high. Rochester has a rich and ample slice of the comedy, going to town with a hot and hoofing romance with Theresa Harris and using his generous footage to full advantage in song, sentimental foolery and fanciful footings.

The buffooned western stuff is a natural for Benny. Excellent screen play by William Morrow and Eddie Beloin brings him to Nevada under adroit persuasions by Phil Harris after Benny has fallen hard for a radio singer who, with her sisters, lay it on thick how they love a real western man. Benny has to make good in the buckskin breeches and on the wild mustangs—and how good. He puts on heroic demonstrations of the tough ranch owner for benefit of the gals, and finally runs counter to a couple of genuinely tough hombres who aren't in that gag. In the final herculean battle between the city radio slicker and the cactus cowhands the hilarity reaches high pitch as Benny accidentally becomes a greater hero than even he has envisaged. Another highlight in the thrill comedy is Benny's accidental rescue of another heroine when both their horses run away.

Mark Sandrich as producer-director hits a steady clip of laugh socks, realizes the full possibilities of satire in the crowned western situations and mingles his quips and gags, his songs and dance routines, and spectacular production numbers with a deft hand, sticking wisely close always to Benny's radio manner and methods.

Song which impresses among the several tuneful and varied numbers written by Frank Loesser and Jimmy McHugh in 'My Kind o' Country', a swell range ditty for the crooners and whistlers. It is sung by Benny and Dennis Day. 'My, My,' is chanted by Rochester and Theresa Harris. Lillian Cornell sings 'Drums in the Night,' and the trio, Ellen Drew, Lillian Cornell and Virginia Dale sock 'Say It.' Indian adagio number is picturesque and novel in pattern. This and acrobatic routines are smartly executed by the Merriel Abbott Dancers. Ellen Drew neatly does her reserved dramatic assignment opposite Benny. Virginia Dale and Lillian Cornell ably complement the ambitious sisterhood who seek to use Benny to promote themselves.

Phil Harris handles his foil material okay, and Andy Devine is well cast for the ranch owner comic. Kay Linaker gives color to her divorcee role. Dennis Day makes a short role count. Ward Bond and Morris Ankrum lay the villainy on thick as required. Charles Lane delivers as a snooping newspaperman and stooge for Fred Allen who is heard, but never seen, in his feud with Benny. James Burke has a good bit as a taxi driver. Charles Henderson ably handles the musical direction and Victor Young supplies the incidental music. Charles Lang's photography is top-notch, and Edith Head's costumes are appropriately evident. Production is lavish and uses the western scene picturesquely.

#### April 15, 1940

Jack Benny winged east last night, TWA, for the New York premiere of his Paramount picture, 'Buck Benny Rides Again' (24), and to make broadcasts from Radio City. Easting with Benny are Dennis Day, singer who makes debut in the picture, and Benny's airshow writers and authors of the screenplay, Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin; his secretary, Harry Baldwin, and Hillard Marks. Group hits Chicago early today and Benny will be feted in his home town of Waukegan. Plane was held some time to permit Benny to complete his broadcast. Also flying to Chicago is Eddie Anderson (Rochester), he and his wife planing out today. Chicago's Negro community has planned reception for Rochester, who will stay over there until Wednesday. Harlem also plans big turnout for Rochester upon his arrival in New York Thursday.

Another contingent moves east on the Chief today, Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Mary Boland and a group of radio technicians, also due to reach New York Thursday.

Final party pulls out by TWA Thursday, including Don Wilson, announcer of Benny show, who returns here immediately after Benny's broadcast from Radio City on Sunday, and returns east again for second broadcast a week later.

#### April 16, 1940

New York, April 15.—Jack Benny will make a guest call on Kate Smith's program (26) while here for the premiere of his picture, 'Buck Benny Rides Again.'



- [Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)
- [Magical Maestro](#) (10)
- [Maurice Noble](#) (12)
- [Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)
- [MGM](#) (746)
- [Norm McCabe](#) (10)
- [Pat Matthews](#) (13)
- [Paul Julian](#) (16)
- [Sara Berner](#) (6)
- [Screwy Squirrel](#) (42)
- [Spider-Man](#) (3)
- [Terrytoons](#) (117)
- [Tex Avery](#) (652)
- [The Cat That Hated People](#) (10)
- [Toby the Pup](#) (4)
- [Tom and Jerry Human](#) (46)
- [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (21)
- [Ub Iwerks](#) (126)
- [UPA](#) (78)
- [Van Beuren](#) (141)
- [Vernon Scott](#) (52)
- [Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)
- [Walt Disney](#) (209)
- [Walter Lantz](#) (325)
- [Warner Bros.](#) (879)
- [Who Killed Who](#) (13)

#### April 18, 1940

GRACIE ALLEN'S guesting on seven radio programs in furtherance of her gag campaign for the Presidency will net Boys Town around \$375. . . . First installment of \$57.32, representing her wage at American Federation of Radio Artists minimum on the Jack Benny program, was mailed yesterday.

#### April 23, 1940

Jack Benny has decided to pass a third week in New York and will do two more broadcasts from there. He checks off for the summer June 16.

#### April 25, 1940

Gracie Allen just can't stay away from trouble now that she's been bitten by the political bug ... not satisfied with a Presidential campaign, she's just brought about the recall of Jack Benny as honorary mayor of Las Vegas and slid into the spot herself.

#### May 1, 1940

Kate Smith-Jack Benny exchange on the singer's Friday night (26) hour was one of the snappiest guffaw sessions heard recently in connection with one personality 'visiting' another personality's home lot. The 'Romeo and Juliet' hoke panned out very well, it being Bennyesque in the surefire sense. Of course, the mere at-home tuner-inner couldn't share a lot of the humor, but they were popping vest buttons in the studio itself. There was a reference in the dialog to the missing (in the hospital) Ted Collins.

#### May 3, 1940

WITH the skedded appearance of Jack Benny as guest artist on the Bob Ripley 'Believe It or Not' radio show tonight with a plug for 'Buck Benny Rides Again,' Paramount winds up the most extensive air-selling campaign ever given a picture preeming in New York. In addition to the Benny guest broadcasts of the last three weeks, and the three Jello programs originating from New York April 21, 28 and May 5, all heavily laden with 'Buck Benny Rides Again' bally, Benny did a guester with Kate Smith April 26 with additional credits for the feature. Others who have filled guest spots on air shows to carry 'Benny' exploitation include Phil Harris, spotted on the 'We The People' program; Fred Allen, who has been etherizing the film for some time; Jimmy McHugh, composer of the song hits from the film, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson and Dennis Day.

#### May 4, 1940

New York, May 3.—Jack Benny is breaking his New York-Hollywood jump with a stopover in Chicago, where on Tuesday he will do a p.a. at the Chicago theatre in conjunction with 'Buck Benny Rides Again' Comic leaves here immediately after his broadcast Sunday night. He will be accompanied by Bill Morrow. Eddie Beloin, Harry Baldwin, Dennis Day, Murray Bolen, Frank Remele and the Eddie (Rochester) Andersons plane from here Sunday night, arriving on the Coast Monday. Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Hilliard Marx, Charles Bagby, George Kennedy and Bill Fletcher train from here Monday, and are due in Hollywood Thursday. Benny and Morrow fly out of Chicago Tuesday night, reaching the Coast Wednesday.

#### May 8, 1940

Ed Beloin, radio and picture writer for Jack Benny, was married Monday night at Community Church here to Lynn Hayden, NY Powers model. Wife of his scripting partner, Bill Morrow, also was a model.

NBC's continuity acceptance department has asked agency radio department to curtail if possible the inclusion of the word, 'jerk,' in their comedy scripts. What brought up the matter was the use of the word as a personal moniker ('Logan Jerkfinkle,' played by Charles Cantor) on the Jack Benny and Fred Allen programs.

Network has taken the attitude that while the word has lost its original connotation and has been accepted as everyday slang, it still sounded 'cheap' and its use ought to be kept from getting out of bounds on the air.

Boston, May 7.

(Best Exploitation: Met)

'Buck Benny' is riding to top money here this week, with 'Abe Lincoln' aiming at second place, and holdover of 'Tom Edison' rating third.

RKO-Boston will end current vaude season May 26, but there is possibility of a big-name booking for a full week, starting May 30, and a good chance that talent will be booked in during the summer if and when conditions make it attractive to play stage talent. Otherwise the house will go to split week, dual film

policy, until late summer or early fall, as usual.

Reaping the biggest harvest of newspaper publicity in at least two years, the metropolitan press team (Paul Lewis and Marty Glazer) really cleaned up on 'Buck Benny' last week. Springboard for the socko news breaks, which soon mushroomed to national publicity, was the appearance of Rochester in town for two days. Slated to appear at a Harvard University smoker night before the film opened, Rochester was kidnapped by a gang of students from M.I.T., who took him off the plane in Providence while representing themselves as the Harvard committee.

Ensuing riot in Cambridge got page one coverage in all Boston papers on opening day of 'Buck Benny.' Then Rochester appeared twice onstage, was given a parade through the center of the town and another parade and all-night party in the colored sector of the city. A press breakfast, distribution of flyers, tieups with grocery stores and several gratis radio plugs all added to the volume of publicity steamed up by three days of college kidnap stories.

#### May 9, 1940

'Love Thy Neighbor' will be title for Paramount's Jack Benny-Fred Allen-Mary Martin triple starrer which Mark Sandrich will produce and direct. Allen yesterday completed plans to transfer his air activities to Hollywood in readiness for his picture chore. In addition to Allen, his wife, the Merry Macs and 15 other members of his radio cast will make the trip.

Allen broadcasts will originate from NBC studio here June 12, 19 and 26, prior to start of picture in July.



#### May 13, 1940

Lineup of film names to appear at Temple Israel's 13th annual charity stage show at the pantages theatre at midnight (25) has been announced by Samuel Briskin, chairman. On list are:

Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Edgar Bergen, Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallee, Ginger Rogers, Gary Grant, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Mischa Auer, Hugh Herbert, Pat O'Brien, Frances Langford, Linda Hayes, Billy Gilbert, the Ritz Brothers, the Lane Sisters, Bob Hope, Allan Jones, Ken Murray, Bert Lahr, Robert Young, Jean Arthur, Martha Raye, Don Ameche, Eleanor Powell, Ben Blue and others.

#### May 15, 1940

The long-expected (in New York) kickback from a national advertiser against local stations which cancel out network programs to accommodate local commercials has taken place. It forms, by itself, a most significant development and is interpreted among advertising agencies in New York as symptomatic of a growing resentment. Advertisers spending millions of dollars for time and entertainment resent as overplayed the local station defense that 'local public interest, convenience and necessity' alibis web cancellations: for baseball, etc. They retort that a network program can't be in the public interest 39 weeks a year and not in the public interest the next 13 weeks.

#### **Detroit the Scene**

The matter came to a head when General Foods ordered NBC to shift the Jack Benny program to WXYZ, Detroit, after the local red network outlet, WWJ decided to pass up the show for baseball after much palaver.

The stanza remains on WXYZ, blue network affiliate, as a paid-for broadcast, while WWJ is free to carry it if it wants to also. The move to WXYZ was General Foods' device for retaliating at those network stations that would shelve its programs for local seasonal sports commitments.

Bill Scripps, or WWJ, fought the issue at both NBC and General Foods in a visit to New York. On the call to NBC's home office Scripps had his lawyer with him and there was talk about cancelling his contract with the network. It was Young & Rubicam, agency on the account, that had suggested the strategy and General Foods, after approving it, refused to budge. NBC took the position that it had no alternative but to protect its accounts. Because of a church broadcast commitment on the part of KSD the Benny show has been switched to the blue outlet in St. Louis, KWK. It is understood that WWJ will cut its baseball broadcast should the later interfere with the airing of the Benny program. The same status will prevail in Detroit and St. Louis when Benny goes on vacation next month and 'The Aldrich Family' replaces him.

New York, May 14. — Gertrude Lawrence and Richard Hayden, respective leads in 'Skylark' and 'Two For the Show,' are making a series of half hour transcriptions with guest names to be aired by British Broadcasting



Co. for entertainment of British troops at the front. Stars who have contributed their services so far are Harry Richman, Reginald Gardiner, Hildegarde and Peggy Wood.

Among those promised are Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Burns and Allen, Lily Pons and Lawrence Tibbett, with other names being sought. Series is tabbed 'Broadway Calling.'

Jack Benny hops to Bakersfield today via United Airlines for a benefit show.

#### May 18, 1940

Jack Benny and Rochester are framing a skit for the Temple Israel benefit at Pantages theatre midnight (25). Among others who will help the charity cause are Edward G. Robinson, Mickey Rooney, Burns and Allen, Edgar Kennedy and the Three Stooges.

#### May 22, 1940

Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin reported at Paramount yesterday to prepare the screen play for the Jack Benny-Fred Allen picture, 'Love Thy Neighbor.' Team, which writes his weekly Jello airshow, also dished up the shooting script for 'Buck Benny Rides Again.'

Red Cross has obtained the two to three o'clock period, New York time, on NBC, CBS and Mutual this Sunday afternoon (28) for a broadcast which will be studded with names from radio, legit, films and the concert field. Eddie Cantor will do the m.c.ing from the New York end. Attempt is being made to have Queen Elizabeth take part in the program with an appeal shortwaved from London. President Roosevelt is also expected to participate.

Already set for the show are Bob Hope, Judy Garland, Lawrence Olivier, Vivien Leigh and Frank Black, Others figured on are Kate Smith, Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, Fibber McGee & Molly and Paul Robeson.

#### May 23, 1940

Hollywood portion of Red Cross program Sunday will be emceed by Jack Benny. Others appearing on the special from this end are Edgar Bergen, Judy Garland, David Broekman's orchestra and chorus and Don Wilson. Show also carries talent and speakers from New York and Washington and is heard locally on all major outlets (KECA for NBC) for one hour from 10 a.m.

Young & Rubicam production staff handles the show, with Carroll O'Meara officiating at this end and Ben Larson in New York.

#### May 28, 1940

Edgar Bergen soared above Jack Benny in the latest national ratings and later in the week bids for more altitude by taking his first solo flight.

Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone, accompanied by the Myrt Blums, sail for Hawaii June 21 and will remain on the Island for 16 days. On their return Benny will check in at Paramount for his picture with Fred Allen, who heads for the Coast after his June 5 broadcast, washing up his current series of three programs from here. Making the cross-country jaunt with Allen will be Portland Hoffa, Harry Von Zell, Merry Macs, Peter Van Steeden and Might Allen Art Players. Vocalist Wynn Murray is held east by American Jubilee at N. Y. World's Fair.

After the Jello season finale June 16, Phil Harris and his band, and Vocalist Ruth Robin go to Frisco for a stand and then swing through the northwest on a tour of one-nighters. Following a Denver engagement the crew moves to New Orleans for a week at Roosevelt hotel, and then settles down at the Hollywood Dinner Club in Galveston for a month.

#### May 29, 1940

Eddie (Rochester) Anderson has been set for two weeks at the Paramount, New York, starting June 19. He'll be free from radio then, Jack Benny's air program starting a summer vacash around the same time.

On the same bill will be Red Skelton, who played the house for a run of six weeks only recently. Band will be that of the McFarland Twins, unknown outfit in Broadway stage show houses. It's now on a long stand at Blue Gardens, Armonk, N.Y.

#### June 5, 1940

Phil Harris going on tour during radio layoff of Jack Benny's Jello outfit. Crew opens in Frisco, plays one-nighters through the northwest, moves to Denver for a brief stand, drops in for a week at Roosevelt hotel New Orleans, and then settles down to a month's stand at Hollywood Club, Galveston.

#### June 6, 1940

The Jack Bennys hope to pick out a four-year-old boy as brother-companion to Joan who currently rules the household.

#### June 11, 1940

'Person you didn't expect to meet' on Fred Allen's hour (19) will be Jack Benny. After the broadcast latter packs up for a month in Hawaii. On his return he starts his picture with Allen at Paramount. Benny yesterday cancelled air passage to Chicago where he was to make a personal appearance.

#### June 12, 1940

After July 4, 'The Aldrich Family' will occupy the 8:30 p.m. half of the Thursday 8-9 p.m. hour on the NBC red. This will follow a two-week fill-in of the Jello time commitment Sundays at 7 p.m. Jack Benny is quitting two weeks earlier this season and, following the commitment, the General Foods decision will leave the time to NBC sustaining, Jello is electing for the first time in its Sunday night broadcast history to observe a six-week hiatus rather than designate a regular hot weather substitute program. For the summer, another General Foods program, 'We, The People,' will switch from plugging Sanka to the ballyhooing of Grape Nuts.

Hollywood, June 11.

Producers are considering a proposal to send several big-name units on a personal appearance tour of the country, with the entire proceeds to be turned over to the Red Cross. It is understood plan calls for joint cooperation of producers, Screen Actors Guild and Red Cross.

Idea is to get biggest names in the industry, including Charles Chaplin, Greta Garbo, Eddie Cantor, Joan Crawford, Edward G. Robinson and scores of others whose following in the theatres runs into millions. Several different units would be formed and sent out, the territory being divided up so that a separate unit would be appearing in a different section each night.

Simultaneously, it was learned Jack Benny has already started checking his schedule to ascertain when he can spare time to take his unit into the Paramount, all proceeds to go to the Red Cross. Plans for big-name units still is in preliminary stage, but is expected to be rushed to completion in next few weeks.



#### June 14, 1940

Recordings of six Jack Benny Jello broadcasts are being shipped to England by Paramount in response to a request by British Broadcasting Co. to help give the British people 'relief from the grim atmosphere of war.' Platters will be Clippered to London.

#### June 19, 1940

Confirming the suspicions of many, initial findings of the Evaluation of School Broadcasts. Ohio State University, show that children prefer adult radio fare to the juve programs currently on the webs. Data, first of a series, was gathered from a survey of 551 pupils of a Junior high school in Zanesville, O. Kids listed 325 different radio shows and of the 21 named most frequently, 19 were adult-aimed. Heading the parade of preferences were Jack Benny, 'Mr. District Attorney,' and Charlie McCarthy. Two gave juve programs, 'Jack Armstrong' and 'Lone Ranger.' Boys as a whole voted more for comedy, horror and adventure, while girls went in heavy for quiz bees and emotional strip shows.

At the height at the 1939-40 radio broadcast season advertising sponsors of evening network programs spent, jointly, around \$190,000 a week for talent This does not include a number of the programs used on limited Mutual hookups which could easily account for another \$10,000.

Sunday night continued to prove the biggest spending night of the week, with Wednesday taking second place. In years past this deuce spot was held by Thursday night. Real marked rise in talent costs for any one night of the week was registered by the Tuesday schedule.

About the only program whose cost has undergone a substantial boost this year is Jell-Os Jack Benny stanza. As Benny's current season comes to a close the payroll for General Foods in this instance figures around \$14,000. Under Benny's new contract it will be \$18,500 a week. Al Pearce's price has taken a steady rise. So has Alec Templeton's. Tommy Riggs' and that of 'Information, please.' Other big money acts have either remained in about the same brackets or taken reductions when switching affiliations.

Following is an estimate of the cumulative costs of commercial network programs during a March week when such bankrolled broadcasting was at its peak:

Sunday \$98,000  
Monday \$61,000  
Tuesday \$74,000  
Wednesday \$85,000  
Thursday \$82,000  
Friday \$53,000  
Saturday \$36,000  
Total \$489,000

#### June 22, 1940

Dennis Day, warbler on the Jack Benny Jello air program, was sued in Superior court here by Columbia Artists, Inc., charging breach of contract. Day, who was sued under his real name of Eugene McNulty, is charged with breaching a personal representative contract last May that had nearly four years yet to run giving Columbia Agency exclusive managerial rights. Damages of \$25,000 are sought, it being contended by plaintiff that Day's earnings since March 3, last, have amounted to over \$5,150.

#### July 3, 1940

With the Royal Hawaiian band playing 'Love in Bloom,' Jack Benny, accompanied by Mary Livingston Benny and Joan, and Myrt and Babe Blum (latter the sister of Mrs. Benny), arrived here June 26. Crowd estimated at 25,000 jammed the galleries and street levels of three piers and adjacent blocks. Benny's reception topped Marie Dressler's record, previously the greatest here.

Benny made a personal appearance at the Waikiki theatre, convulsing an audience that seldom gets a stage show.

With the comedian, heading a gigantic July 4 parade for the Red Cross, thousands will flock to Honolulu from outside the islands for a glimpse of the star.

#### Washington, July 2.

Plaintive squawk from the Federal Communications Commission regarding what it described as 'pan mail' was registered Monday (1) in an apparently exhausted effort to put over the idea that the FCC has no authority to censor individual programs or performers.'

Long list of complaints was made public, with most of the alleged panning coming from California. Before getting down to so-called entertainment programs, Commish observed that 'air utterances' by numerous public and political figures and drawn the wrath of the knob-twiddler. The list included: Col. Charles A. Lindbergh, who has been making anti-interventionist speeches; Frank Gannett, red-faced ex-contender for the Republican presidential nomination; Hartford McNider, former minister to Canada and another Republican hopefuls until Philadelphia); Judge John A. Matthews, Montana legalite, 'and others.' Commish tore into some of the commercial regulars by asserting that California had screamed about H.V. Kaltenborn's news interpretations (CBS); 'airy statements' by Jack Benny; radio fare served by Bob Hope; Cab Calloway's band and the 'Dr. I. Q.' program.

Because Burns and Allen did not please a New Yorker, the Commish was requested to have the team 'barred from the air.' Another Manhattanite 'voices indignation at a Fred Allen wisecrack,' the FCC announced, while fellow-citizens were 'irked' by Walter Winchell, squawked about network presentations of 'Abe Lincoln in Illinois,' snapped at the 'This Amazing America' program and snarled at 'Information Please.' Pennsylvanians were next on the list of conscientious objectors. A keystone-stater objected to 'Confidentially Yours' (which he wanted to have 'publicly censured.') 'National Farm and Home Hour' got rapped, and two Philadelphians turned thumbs down on 'Stop Me If You've Heard This One,' and 'Great Plays.' One Oklahoman 'would like to see young ears closed' to the sobby marital difficulties of 'Stella Dallas'; a Tennessean was 'aroused' by the 'Court of Missing Heirs,' and a Connecticut Yankee yelped about the 'Green Hornet' series.

'Numerous contest programs invite numerous letters' from individuals who think they are entitled to prizes, the Commish wailed.

'Incidentally, by way of timely note, several Chicago letters protest advertising fireworks over the radio,' the statement added.

Fed-uppishness of the Government air-cops with complaints from citizens was demonstrated by a two-page release quoting yelps from various parts of the country. Purpose of the mimeographed papers was to publicize the we-can't-do-anything-about-it attitude which the Commish has rightfully taken regarding squawks from individuals who evidently feel that their prejudices and preferences must be forwarded to Uncle Sam, instead of to the originating stations.

#### July 8, 1940

New York, July 7.—Eddie Cantor was re-elected president, for the eighth consecutive year, of the Jewish

Theatrical Guild, founded in 1924 by William Morris. George Jessel was re-elected vice-prez, and remainder of panel, including Fred Block, Sam Harris, William Morris, Jr. and Jack Benny as vice-prezes was installed. Abe Lastfogel is treasurer and Sam Forrest financial secretary.

#### July 9, 1940

Frisco Chatter . . . Holiday weekend boosted Billy Rose's Aquacade into a \$54,700 week, with Folies drawing \$22,500 and Cavalcade climbing into black with nice \$16,200. Salici's Puppets and Stage 9 not keeping pace.

Sidelight on July 4 attendance of 131,176 is that record shattering crowd was attracted without extra entertainment expense. Independence Day for first year of Fair carried an extra nut of \$11,000, covering such attractions as Jack Benny and Benny Goodman, yet drew only 127,000 on the day.

#### July 10, 1940

Eddie Anderson on 'We, the People,' rang laugh bell consistently with studio group end probably with listening audience. Anderson, interviewed as 'Mr. Rochester' by a young Harlem hopeful, was the familiar, funny hoarse-voiced, perky Negro of Jack Benny program. Timing, as usual, was excellent. One difference, from regular routine, was that he sort of guffawed himself several times. Although 'needling' Benny a bit, Anderson expressed gratitude for what latter had done for him. Said he first auditioned for a porter's part with Benny three years ago. Anderson sketched career in show business—as a comedian, 'at first I was the only one who thought so,' and tap dancer—and what he said were in-between stints at driving horses and a truck. Closed by vocaling number from 'Buck Benny Rides Again.' Burgess Meredith substituted for Gabriel Heatter as emcee of 'We, the People.' Turned in a straight job. At times his voice was drowned out a bit by musical crescendos and applause as guests ended their stories.

#### July 15, 1940

Arbitration hearing on Harry Conn's action against Jack Benny, long pending in Superior Court, has been set for (29). Radio comedian will be represented by George Cohan, while writer's arbiter will be Jules Covey. Third, disinterested member of committee, is Senator Robert Kenny.

Conn's court suit against Benny has been inactive for some months under a stay of proceedings order. Writer is seeking damages for assertedly wrongful discharge as Benny's gag writer on the Jello program. Loyd Wright and Lester Roth are attorneys for Benny, while Nathan Freedman is acting for Conn.

#### July 16, 1940

Eddie (Rochester) Anderson has arrived from a five-week personal appearance tour in the east and reports at Paramount for start of his next assignment in 'Love Thy Neighbor,' Jack Benny-Fred Allen co-starrer. Picture goes Thursday.

#### August 5, 1940

Comedians and Leading Men report at Hollywood ball park tonight for a practice session under lights to accustom themselves to playing under floods. Jack Benny and Fred Allen have joined the charity game lineup, becoming members of the Comedians squad. Kay Kyser is another recruit, joining up with the officiating staff as an umpire.

#### August 6, 1940

Jack Benny has decided finally to completely ignore 'The Bee' as an object of his fiddling penchant and is now working with Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen on two new violin union to unreel in 'Love Thy Neighbor.' Incidentally, Benny writers Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin slip into grease paint to portray themselves in 'Neighbor.' They wrote their own lines.



#### August 7, 1940

Los Angeles, Aug. 6

Jack Benny and Harry Conn, writer, settled their breach of contract suit out of court. Action had been holding fire for several months.

Conn had sued Benny for \$40,000, charging the comedian with breaking a verbal agreement.



VICTOR HUGO  
(BEVERLY HILLS)

Beverly Hills, July 23.

Lou Holtz, Milton Berle, Jack Benny, Phil Baker, Jack Gwynne, Sid Gordon, Janice Chambers, Matty Malneck Orch (12); minimum, Saturday and Sunday, \$2; other nights \$1.50.

Sunday nights along this sector have been what would be equivalent to the cinema's boxoffice poison'. It was just a slough night and no one made any bones about how bad biz could be. At one time Earl Carroll was all for closing down on the Sabbath, trade dropped to such a low level. Then came Grace Hayes with a modest pitch in the valley. By the simple expedient of calling on the professional talent that happened to drop in, a vogue was created that was to make the dread Sunday night the top coin-getter of the week. So. Walter Guzzardi, boss of the Victor Hugo, went on record as 'that's for us.' Now it's a trick to get into the bistro of a Sunday unless you're a biggie in alms or you've phoned in your reservation plenty early. On this catching Lou Holtz was emcee and talent grabber. Idea is to look around and go into a build-up for the quarry. Holtz didn't have to look past ringside to single out Milton Berle, Jack Benny and Phil Baker. Some others were bidden to the floor mike but begged off. For doing his own turn and 'knowing' people, Holtz was paid a guarantee of \$350 against all covers. Spot holds 550, which leaves not much room to unlimber the nethers.

Just in case there aren't enough performers around or they shy away from the metallic monster, the house has hanging around the edges a few turns to keep the mob amused. This coterie, all of whom performed, included Jack Gwynne, magician; Sid Gordon, comedy fiddler who even gets music out of the box by picking the strings with his teeth; Janice Chambers, moppet singer. To round out the show Matty Malneck puts his sextet out on the floor for a few numbers popularized by his recordings.

Berle and Baker really pitched in to help out Holtz. Benny cracked 'you'd think we come here for that purpose. If Holtz is not here next Sunday I'm not coming.' It was the Jello comic's second Sunday in a row at the spot. Berle got off a slew of gags, fast-like, and then went into an hilarious strip tease with Holtz, both peeling to the waist with all the woo-woo gestures. Baker gave an imitation of Charles Boyer addressing a lamb chop and finished with his impressions of chorus girls in various frames of mind.

On nights when biz is slack, usually Monday and Tuesday, the main diner is closed and all activity transferred to Paragon room just off the long bar. Auxiliary site seats 200. *Helm*

San Francisco. Aug. 6.

Bill Scripps, of WWJ, Detroit, tossed a surprise dinner for Niles Trammel Monday night at the St. Francis. Guestees limited to red web affiliates.

Occasion signalized complete harmony between Scripps and Trammell after the episode of NBC diverting General Foods to WXYZ, Detroit, because of WWJ's baseball commitments. General Foods was piqued at secondary treatment for no less a personage than Jack Benny and Trammell had to appease account.

#### August 12, 1940

JACK BENNY parted with \$10,000 to end the \$60,000 breach-of-contract suit brought against him by Harry Conn, his former scripter, in LA Superior court, but which was later tossed into the lap of a board of arbitration. Under terms of the peace pact both Conn and Benny have the right to use material contained in the 226 radio scripts Conn turned out for Benny during the years he was in the screen air comic's employ. Conn has left for New York, where he has been signed by Ken Kling, creator of the newspaper strip, Joe Asbestos, to write on Kling's ether program.

#### August 21, 1940

In accepting laxative accounts for the blue network, NBC plans to restrict its spotting to periods that it would otherwise have difficulty in selling because of the competitive strong programs on Columbia and the red. Case illustrative of this policy is the sale of the Thursday 9-9:30 p.m. period on the blue to Nature's Remedy. Bing Crosby is the opposition attraction and NBC has never been able to induce an account to go in against him on the blue.

NBC has also lent an attentive ear to a proposition from the Ray Spector agency about putting Serutan, heretofore confined to spot, on a blue hookup. Spector is interested in two quarter-hours a week. Among those also listed by NBC as hard to sell against era the blue are Jack Benny, Chase & Sanborn's Edgar Bergen, Fred Allen and Lux Radio Theatre, and it is within these opposite periods that the network proposes to limit the scheduling or laxative accounts.

#### September 11, 1940

Jack Benny planed last night for Albuquerque, where he will join Hilliard Marks for an auto trip to Chicago.

#### September 16, 1940

Prod. Dir. Mark Sandrich wound up filming on Paramount's 'Love Thy Neighbor,' Jack Benny-Fred Allen co-starrer, Saturday. He was three days under sked

#### September 18, 1940

Up went Benay Venuta on American Airlines Mercury. Down came Paula Stone on the sTWAto liner, back from Hollywood to begin radio rehearsals, but anxious for a two-day reunion with hubby Duke Daly, orch leader at the Hotel Biltmore, Providence, before starting work.

In on the same sTWAto liner, Fred Allen and Portland Hoffa, welcomed by studio representatives carrying huge signs announcing that Fred was co-starred in 'Love Thy Neighbor' with Jack Benny—in mammoth lettering. Asked what she and Fred would do until the Oct. 2 opening of their radio shows under the new sponsor, Texaco, Miss Hoffa said she didn't know what she would do, 'but Fred will spend the time worrying about the show.'

Pittsburgh, Sept. 17.

Walter Wanger is completely sold on radio as a pre-selling medium for his pix, UA producer told group of exhibs, distributors and newspapermen here at Variety Club dinner here last week during his one-day visit to town to talk up 'Foreign Correspondent' and 'Long Voyage Home.' Conversion came, he said, as result of private conversation with Dr. George Gallup in which latter told him that during a recent poll he discovered best pre-sold pix of year were 'Buck Benny Rides Again' and 'Road to Singapore,' direct result of steady plugging on Jack Benny. Bob Hope and Bing Crosby programs. According to Gallup, Wanger said, those two films had a waiting public of 80,000,000 possible customers before they were released.

#### **REDUCING JACK BENNY'S LINEUP**

##### **7 LOCALS DROPPED**

General Foods will test out a new theory it has about the advantages of a top rating show when it comes to station coverage when Jack Benny returns to the NBC-red Oct 6. The account has dropped from the Benny program's list a number of stations, whose coverage is overlapped by the signal of high-powered outlets; in the belief that the listening habit for Benny has become so strong that set owners in small towns will dial for this program on distant clear channel stations.

Seven stations which fall within the purview of such clear channel signals have been eliminated from the Benny show's station roster as a starter for the experiment. The food packer proposes to follow up this move with a two-fold probe. The Neilson Service will, after an ample interval, check the dealers in the area of the stations dropped to find out what effect the change in dialing habits has had on the sale of Jell-O, while the research division of Young & Rubicam, agency on the account, will make a special check on the listener count in these same areas. The fate of other small-powered stations on the Benny list which fall within the same category depends on the result of these two checks.

##### **First Such Test**

It is the first time that an advertiser has gone in for an inquiry of this sort. Saturation in sales, it was pointed out, has nothing to do with the project. Nor saturation in listener popularity. General Foods believes that Benny's popularity has been built up to the point where an overlap between big and little stations is no longer necessary. The account still reserves some doubt about this theory, and it figures that the only way to make sure is to drop some of the small stations and then institute the sales and listener checks.

General Foods is radio's second biggest spender for time and talent, being topped only by Procter & Gamble. In 1939, GF had combined network billings totaling \$5,270,000.

[Note: the show was on 81 stations, plus the CBC, in 1940-41].

#### October 2, 1940

Attempt to enlist services of Bob Hope for revamped 'comedy' version of 'Chariot's Revue' at El Capitan theatre, for benefit of British war relief, starting Monday, were called off late yesterday when it was ascertained comic would not be available. He was to have shared emcee chores with Jack Benny. Other additions to cast, starting next Monday, will be Groucho and Harpo Marx, who will present a comedy skit; Alan Jones, and Burns and Allen in a 10min. sketch. Fanny Brice remains in cast for third week.

#### October 9, 1940

##### **JACK BENNY**

With Mary Livingstone. Eddie Anderson, Phil Harris, Dennis Day  
Comedy, Songs, Band

30 Mins.

JELL-O

Sunday, 7 p. m.

WEAF-NBC, New York

(Young & Rubicam)

Jack Benny, after a 15 weeks' layoff, came back to radio last Sunday night (6), but it wasn't altogether with his best foot forward. He opened with a fantasy a la Disney. On paper it must have looked very funny. In performance this part of show turned out poorly. Fantasy was dragged out for eight minutes. Two more minutes and the audience might have lapsed into the somnolent state which the cast was play-acting in the fantasy. Once Benny and his troupe were rid of that fantasy and stepped into their old characterizations things started to bristle, and it wasn't long before the laughs were coming in the program's customary triphammer style.

Members of the cast are a complete carry-over from last season. The characterizations are likewise intact, and so are some of the gags. When Mary Livingstone gets too snippy with Benny he reminds her of that department store origin. Benny's fictional anemia is still Phil Harris' ace comeback, and the tete-a-tetes between Benny and Dennis Day or Eddie Anderson (Rochester)

revolve for the most part as usual on Benny's fictional parsimony. Listeners have become thoroughly familiar with these cute little family intimacies, and Benny is too shrewd a mike showman to resume his air stint with anything but the familiar. In teeing off as he did Benny insinuated the illusion of picking up from where he had left off from a point that might have only been the previous Sunday. What he quit the air with last June was still a top click, and if he must make variations or changes they can be woven in as the season wears on.

Day's tenor was in sterling form for the reopening occasion, and Harris' dance arrangements had their usual rhythmic tang. Ed Beloin and Bill Morrow continue as Benny's scriptists, and on the initial program theirs was a smooth piece of gag craftsmanship with the exception of that fantasy, by which it was hoped to reintroduce in novel fashion each member of the cast. It did succeed in being novel. Don Wilson is also still on hand for those smartly interpolated plugs.

This makes Benny's seventh season with this same account, again a record as far as comedians are concerned. No reason to suppose he won't score as high as ever week by week. *Odec*



Montreal, Oct 8.

Church services over local government station CBM have been cancelled to make way for the Jack Benny program. Due to daylight saving time still being in effect here, and with church services formerly occupying time from 7:30 to 9 p.m. it was impossible for the government station to adjust schedules without losing one of the two ace U.S. shows coming into Canada.

Splitting the 8 to 9 p.m. D.S.T. period here on the government station with Jack Benny will be the sensationally successful 'Let's Face the Facts' program which got its send-off by Dorothy Thompson.

Church services went off the government station for the first time in many years last week to make way for the Canadian Red Cross program.

'Information Please' is another program which is no longer being heard here. Dropped from station CFCF schedule due to D.S.T. which gives Wrigley's Treasure Trail previous call on that period. 'Info' would have been lost to Canadian listeners anyhow due to new sponsorship by 'Lucky Strike' which does not use Canadian outlets.

[Note: American cigarettes were not allowed to be sold in Canada for many decades, likely to protect the Canadian tobacco industry].

#### October 16, 1940

Paramount will garner plugs on three releases through tripling of Jack Benny, Claudette Colbert and Basil Rathbone on next Sunday's Gulf-Guild airshow—'Love Thy Neighbor,' 'Arise My Love' and 'Rhythm on the River.'

#### October 18, 1940

Don Wilson's contract with Jack Benny permits outside announcing jobs but it's no go on stooging or banter. On last night's Maxwell House broadcast Dick Powell tried to engage Wilson in persiflage but the best he got in return was a commercial for the show's product. When Hanley Stafford shrugged off a sally from Powell, the emcee let go with 'you working for Benny, too?'

#### October 22, 1940

Burns and Allen spurted seven points in the latest Crossley. Jack Benny is the topper, followed by Edgar

Bergen and Lux.

Five years service with Jack Benny by writers Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin, and seven years by Don Wilson will be observed with fitting ceremony after Sunday's Jello broadcast.

#### October 23, 1940

Virtually a brand new slant on radio research is being formulated by Horace (Doc) Schwerin, now connected with the Raymond Spector agency. Under Schwerin's methods radio commercial messages (and to some extent, the programs themselves) are dissected in such fashion that sick spots can be improved or eliminated. Schwerin, after two years of research, is now testing his formulas under the rough-and-tumble conditions of actual broadcasting.

... Schwerin's tests have shown that listeners approve highly of the subtler Jack Benny (Jell-O) commercials. (This is not unique since Young & Rubicam [Benny's agency] has also been experimenting with improvements in commercials, and undoubtedly has findings corroborating the Schwerin tests).

#### October 24, 1940

Jack Benny emcees the Jack o' Lantern ball at Cocoanut Grove (3D. Proceeds go to League for Crippled Children.

#### November 4, 1940

Jack Benny planned to Chicago last night after his late show at NBC to visit his father, Mayer Benny, who is ill, in Waukegan, Ill. He is due back here Wednesday for rehearsals.

#### November 6, 1940

Montreal, Nov. 5.

Ghost of Andrew Volstead is giving hotel men, niteries and broadcasters a bad case of the jitters as the odious spectre of total prohibition hovers over Canada. A strong drive is now reported under way to give the Dominion, a taste of the prohibition laws which were to a large extent responsible for both of the bootleg and allied rackets in America and created nationwide disrespect for the laws of the land during the prohibition era.

In guise of a war measure minority temperance groups are active throughout the country advocating the adoption of prohibition. Reports persist that the Federal government is being strongly pressured to bring the ban on liquor into effect.

...Coupled with prohibition threat is talk of another movement under way to ban all Sunday commercials from the air. Though this report is unconfirmed, methods of bluenose groups are quite familiar and there is seldom much smoke before the fire suddenly Masons forth.

Elimination of Sunday commercials would deprive Canadian audiences of the best radio programs piped in here. It would mean discontinuation of Charlie McCarthy, Jack Benny, etc. And it would also spell the loss of virtually all Canadian listeners or Canadian stations, since it would be the logical thing to tune in on American stations.

#### November 7, 1940

Jack Benny returns today from Waukegan, Ill., after hurried trip to visit his father, who has been ill and is reported better.

#### November 13, 1940

Paramount panel of top executives headed by Stanton Griff is, Barney Balaban, Neil Agnew and Y. Frank Freeman yesterday continued conferences on studio product and sales policy. Group assembled at informal luncheon at the studio's commissary to resume discussions shaping programs for remainder of current season and for 1941-42.

Much of discussion hinged on current product in release and ready for distribution. Visiting executives last night headed for San Diego for first-hand reaction to preview of 'Love Thy Neighbor,' the Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Mary Martin production.

Sessions will be resumed today.

#### November 14, 1940

Five new programs for Columbia's Pacific network slide down the ways at KNX before month's end as Sunday competition to NBC's run of top-rated shows. Three of the programs are pitted against Jack Benny, Chase & Sanborn and 'One Man's Family.' All will be sustained by the chain and well baited for sponsorship.

Shoving off Sunday is 'I Disagree,' open forum show with Lewis Browne, author, presiding. Guest 'disagreeers' on the opener will be Walter Wanger. John Garfield, Melvin Douglas and Irving Pichel. Subject to be



discussed extemporaneously is 'Have Actors the Right to Take Part in Politics' Wanger will argue the negative. Other starters on that day are 'Hollywood Smarty Party' and Hollywood Showcase.' Former is a kid quizzier, with Art Baker tossing out the questions. 'Showcase' is half hour turn with five radio-tested performers and Lud Gluskin's orchestra. On the following Sunday Tom Breneman revives his one-man show and 'Calling All Cars' returns, with Charles Vanda producing, and Wilbur Hatch's orchestra.

#### November 19, 1940

As a reciprocal gesture to Maxwell House airshow for permitting Mary Martin to make a guest appearance with Jack Benny on Sunday's broadcast, Jello comic cuts himself a slice of repartee with Java crew Thursday.

#### November 20, 1940

New Haven, Nov. 19.

WELI's found an answer to the problem of what an independent station is to do when Jack Benny's on the air. Solution is 'Nobody Listens Anyway.' pop record program produced by Bud Finch.

Finch keeps saying nobody listens except his father and mother, but fan mail indicates otherwise.

#### November 22, 1940

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD'S Santa Claus Lane officially comes to life tonight at 7 p.m. with screen, radio and stage names lending their presence to the first parade. . . . Irene Rich opens the Lane . . . Rudy Vallee will ride with Santa Claus, along with Dorothy Lamour, Charles Vallee, John Barrymore. . . . Others in parade include Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna, Brenda and Cobina, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Jack Benny, 'Rochester,' Andy Devine, Don Wilson, Fanny Brice, Dick Powell, Mary Martin, Meredith Willson, Hanley Stafford, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Fibber McGee and Molly, Bob Burns, Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Roy Rogers, Edith Fellows, Smiley Burnette, Monte Montana and others.

#### November 27, 1940

New York, Nov. 26.—On his arrival here early next month Jack Benny will make representations to Young & Rubicam agency and General Foods (Jello) for a transcription rebroadcast of his Coast repeat program, similar to arrangement used by 'Information Please' during Canada Dry sponsorship. Understood Benny is miffed at the lack of enthusiasm of his troupe on the second show. He feels their second effort falls far short of the first and is reflected in the studio response. He contends the repeat broadcast would be just as effective as wax as the original.

Benny and his full cast leave the Coast for New York after the Dec. 8 broadcast and remain here two or three weeks. They'll make the return trip after the New Year's eve premiere of the Benny-Fred Allen picture, 'Love Thy Neighbor.' Benny is due back in Manhattan sometime in February for his customary rounds of the Broadway shows and to give his writers, Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin, new environment and locale. They'll do three or four programs from here on the second trip.

Miami, Nov. 26.

Scheduled world premiere of 'Love Thy Neighbor' in Miami Beach has been cancelled. Change of plans came as surprise to local Paramount representatives, who had just completed arrangements for first showing of the Jack Benny-Fred Allen opus on Dec. 20.

Reported that expenditure involved in bringing both Benny and Allen's entire radio companies here, and necessity of arranging two broadcasts, influenced decision.

#### December 2, 1940

Hollywood Inside...JACK BENNY is determined to force a decision by NBC on the recorded rebroadcast of his Jello program and will insist on a red network coverage, the same as his eastern show. Understood that the chain is opposed to

Benny's plan, with particular emphasis on a 'no go' for the red. Whether Benny and General Foods can swing it for the blue web hinges on discussions to be held in New York next week. Network execs insist that though a precedent was set for Canada Dry's 'Information Please' it is not to be construed as policy. Explained that plattered repeat was a moved to help strengthen the blue net at that time. Benny's reason



for the move is that his cast can't whip up the enthusiasm for the coast repeat that runs riot through the original.

#### December 4, 1940

The Paramount [theatre in New York] has juggled its bookings so that the Jack Benny picture, 'Love Thy Neighbor,' will be brought in a week before Christmas, with Tommy Dorsey in person. Plan now is to have a special opening the night of Dec. 17 with Benny and members of his radio troupe making appearances.

#### December 9, 1940

Pulling out on Union Pacific Streamliner today (Mon.) are Jack Benny, Mary Livingstone and Phil Harris for Paramount's New York premiere of 'Love Thy Neighbor.'

#### December 10, 1940

Main title on Paramount's Jack Benny-Fred Allen starrer has been done in cartoon animation style, job being turned out by Leon Schlesinger's Pacific Title and Art Studios.

#### December 11, 1940

'RUSSELL BENNETT'S NOTE BOOK'

With. Russell Bennett orchestra

30 Mins.

Sustaining

Sunday, 7 p.m.

WOK-MUTUAL, New York.

Arranger-composer Russell Bennett has grabbed a mammoth by the tail with this weekly 30-minute series of original compositions and arrangements. He's not only composing and arranging the music for the show, but is conducting the orchestra and is writing and delivering his own announcements and commentary. As if that weren't already a back-buster, the program is spotted opposite Jack Benny on NBC red (WEAF), [Drew] Pearson and [Robert] Allen and news from Europe on NBC blue (WJZ) and the foreign news roundup over CBS. Probably only a guy who'd survived a term in Hollywood could be coaxed into taking on such an assignment.

... 'Note Book' is a brutal task, both as to the volume of work it entails and as a competitor against Benny and the other current show. It's obviously a question how long Bennett can continue dishing it out (and taking it). But regardless of that, it's a provocative and listenable show. *Hobe*

#### December 17, 1940

Top film names will appear on the 'Bundles for Britain' broadcast over NBC's blue network Jan. 1. Hour program will be aired in Canada and shortwaved to England for rebroadcast by transcription the next day. Names lined up for the special show comprise Ronald Colman, Spencer Tracy, Tony Martin, Judy Garland, Jack Benny, Mickey Rooney, Meda Oberon, Claudette Colbert, Myrna Loy, Charles Boyer, Adolphe Menjou, Walter Abel and Charles Holland. Arch Oboler will write and produce.

Franz Waxman will direct the music and sketches have been contributed by William Wilder, Charles Brackett, Milton Krims, Walter Reisch, Irving Brecher and Harry Tugend. Aiding Oboler on the production will be Louis K. Sidney.

Committee in charge of the broadcast is headed by Mrs. Milton Bren, Mrs. Ernst Lubitsch and Mrs. Mervyn LeRoy. Program is heard here at 7 p.m. over KECA.

#### December 18, 1940

Bankroll troubles badgered the two musical shows, 'All in Fun' and 'Hi-Ya Gentlemen,' which, were trying out in Boston last week, and both managements called on Equity, where money was on deposit, so that they could pay off Saturday (14) before the outfits started back to New York. 'Fun' was slated to open at the Majestic, N. Y., Friday (20), but the premiere is now dated for a week later (27). 'Gentlemen' will not reach the main stem boards until later word from Boston being that the show closed there. Plus road losses coin involved approximates \$100,000.

'Fun,' which represents more than \$80,000 to date, will be the first major revue ever offered on Broadway with a colored star, Bill Robinson, heading the cast. That is believed to be the principal reason he stuck with the show, beset with bickerings.

Personal allusions were made before the whole company, in lurid and unmistakable terms, aimed at Leonard Sillman, who produced 'Fun' with Phil Baker. Latter, however, stepped out of the cast and kissed his financial stake in the show good-bye. Comedian had put in \$17,000. Some of that coin may have come from other actors, for it is stated that the Baker investment also included pieces bought by Tyrone Power, Ben Bernie, Jack Benny and Fred Allen. Each went for amounts between \$1,500 and \$2,000, and it is

understood that when Baker walked their hunks also melted.

Jack Benny and his troupe leave New York immediately after next Sunday's Jello broadcast to return to the Coast, hopeful of arriving here in time to celebrate Christmas. Golden Arrow is being held 30 minutes to train him to Chicago. Benny and the crowd went east for the preem of Paramount's 'Love Thy Neighbor.' [Note: *Variety* reported on the 24th that Benny, Eddie Anderson and Harry Baldwin flew from N.Y. to L.A., Bill Morrow stopped in Chicago and Mary Kelley remained in N.Y. with the flu.

#### December 19, 1940

STUART CANIN, 14-year-old violinist, was amply rewarded yesterday for starting the radio feud between Fred Allen and Jack Benny back in 1936 when he appeared on an Allen show and played 'The Bee.' Two ether comics contributed \$500 each to aid the lad continue his musical studies, with the presentation taking place on the Allen broadcast from New York last night.

All phases of show business will be represented in NBC's 'Christmas Greeting to Britain' hour-and-a-half broadcast Wednesday. Hollywood portion of the program, to be emceed by Alan Mowbray, will have such names as Edgar Bergen, Gracie Fields, Bob Hope, Jack Benny, Charles Laughton, Rita Hayworth, Shirley Temple, Nelson Eddy. In the eastern contingent will be Lily Pons, Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz and Sophie Tucker. Pickups will be made for short talks by Prime Minister McKenzie King of Canada and Mayor LaGuardia of New York. Program airs here over KECA at 10 a.m.

#### December 20, 1940

PARAMOUNT has set 350 playdates during Christmas week for 'Love Thy Neighbor,' the Fred Allen-Jack Benny co-starrer, exhausting the supply of prints on the film. Figure is the highest ever reached for day-dates releases on a Paramount picture, according to studio executives.

#### December 25, 1940

##### **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR**

(WITH SONGS)

Paramount release of Mark Sandrich production; directed by Sand rich. Starring Jack Benny and Fred Allen; featuring Mary Martin, Eddie Andersen, Verree Teasdale, Merry Macs, Virginia Dale. Original screenplay by William Morrow and Edmund Beloin, Ernest Pagano, Z. Myers; camera, Ted Tetzlaff; editor, LeRoy Stone; songs, Jimmy Van Heusen, Johnny Burke. At Paramount, N. Y., week Dec. 18, '40. Running time: 81 MINS.

Jack Benny ... Jack Benny

Fred Allen ... Fred Allen

Mary Allen ... Mary Martin

Barbara Allen ... Verree Teasdale

Rochester ... Eddie Andersen

Virginia Aster ... Virginia Dale

Josephine .. Theresa Harris

Joe ... Richard Denning

Policeman ... Jack Carson

George ... Barnett Parker

Mr. Harrington ... Russell Hicks

Chambermaid ... Mary Kelley

Judge ... Chester Clute

The Merry Macs ... Judd McMichael, Ted McMichael, Joe McMichael, Helen Carroll, Merriel Abbott Dancers  
Hardly a picture for the critics, 'Love Thy Neighbor' will nevertheless hit socko biz among the commonfolk. The quartet of writers who pieced the yarn together have gone way overboard on that decrepit feud between Jack Benny and Fred Alien as source material for a feature film, but audiences in the more homespun sectors will overlook that in favor of the laughs.

There have also been months of high-powered plugging for the picture by both comics on their respective airshows. And, inasmuch as Benny's leads all other radio programs in popularity rating and Allen's show is among the first 10, that's money in the exhibitors' bank.

There's plenty of marquee value in the film, too, for aside from the two comedians, there's a fellow named 'Rochester' (Eddie Anderson) to tot up as 100% and. a gal named Mary Martin, who brings to the screen for its initial airing her version of Cole Porter's 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy,' which she introduced in 'Leave It to Me' on Broadway a couple seasons ago, This vocalization can be rated, without qualifications, as among the top vocal interpretations on any screen, any time, anywhere. Strip-tease, which accompanied the tune in the legit, has, of course, been Haysed-out and the lyrics scrubbed.

It's unfortunate that with such writing skill as Allen himself possesses, a story couldn't have been concocted

to take minor advantage of the phony feud business which has been built up—but not get tiresome in leaning upon the same theme for so many laughs. Why two separate pairs of Hollywood scripters were required on the yarn is clearly evident. It would take at least that many to torture out a four-year-old publicity stunt for 81 minutes of fast-moving film. Producer-director Mark Sandrich, with apparently few strings tied to his budget, has tossed in the works to overcome the story deficiencies. And as neither Allen nor Benny is weakling at ekeing maximum laughability out of a mediocre gag, the comedy is there. It's not what it should be or could be, but it's plenty in evidence. Yarn doesn't decoy the names of the two principals, but calls them in character Jack Benny and Fred Allen. It picks up the pair in a traffic jam awaiting the docking of the boat. Jack's in his Maxwell and Allen in a limousine and they get in a contest to see who can bump the other harder. The Maxwell falls apart. Allen has come to the boat to meet his niece, Mary Martin, and Benny has driven Rochester down to meet his gal, Theresa Harris, Miss Martin's maid, which sets the stage for further encounters.



Allen appears to be going nuts over the feud and Miss Martin decides to get a job in a show Benny's producing in the hope she can bring the pair together. Idea runs into complications, however, and the battle reaches the shotgun stage with Allen chasing Benny in a speedboat. There's a crackup and when both men come to, Miss Martin tells them that Jack dived in and saved Fred's life. That makes them pals until it develops that Allen has hired Rochester away from Benny, which starts it all over again. Meanwhile, Mary has fallen for Benny and enough time out is taken in the battle scenes to get them married for the finale. Among the standout sequences is Rochester at a masquerade party at the Harlem Social and Come-What-May Club. He's garbed as Romeo and duets with his Juliet one of the three Johnny Burke-Jimmy Van Heusen tunes in the picture, 'Dearest, Dearest I.' Another sock is the speedboat chase with sounds of auto brakes screeching and tires skidding instead of whatever kinds of noise boats would make spinning in the water. Miss Martin, as has been noted, can take care of herself with the best vocally and is pleasing on the looks angle. The tunes she shares with the Merry Macs are 'Do You Know Why?' and 'Isn't That Just Like Love.' Neither is more than mildly catchy. Verree Teasdale is self-effacing as Allen's wife and Virginia Dale registers excellently as a hoyden whom Allen hires to shower in Benny's tub just as the marriage between Benny and Miss Martin is to take place. Theresa Harris scores okay, too, as Rochester's playmate. Merriel Abbott Dancers are featured in the film's lone production number, supposed to be in Benny's show. It's a tasty sequence. Portland Hoffa and Mary Livingstone, respective wives of Allen and Benny and both important members of their husbands radio casts, are not seen in the film. Sandrich's direction keeps things running at a speedy tempo. He has apparently been wise enough, too, to let Benny and Allen take plenty of rein in developing the comedy along their own styles. *Herb.*

#### December 27, 1940

Admission tariffs in all Los Angeles first run houses, and several of the subsequent runs, will be tilted for New Year's Eve, with special shows being booked for majority of the houses. Only reserved seat performances will be at the Paramount and the Orpheum. Other houses will grind throughout the evening, with final shows dependent on the mobs.

Paramount will inaugurate the new Jack Benny-Fred Allen opus, 'Love Thy Neighbor,' with two complete reserved seat performances Tuesday night at 77c to \$1.50 admission. Stage show will run full hour and a half and be made up of 20 vaude acts, the Fanchonettes and other novelties. Regular performances of the Benny-Allen picture with part of the talent on stage starts following day.

#### December 30, 1940

'Love Thy Neighbor,' the Mark Sandrich production for Paramount, starring Jack Benny and Fred Allen opened in 347 situations around the country around Christmas week and in most spots is being held over for the balance of the yule holidays. Picture is doing biz equal to that of the C. B. De Mille Production 'North West Mounted Police,' which is the top coin pic for Paramount during 1940.

#### December 31, 1940

Jack Benny got past the NBC monitors on his Sunday repeat broadcast by ad libbing a crack that had the studio audience howling. After chirping a few lines of 'Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair,' he quipped 'that's all I can sing, the rest are Ascap.' On the eastern broadcast he flipped, after singing a few bars of 'Jeannie,' 'I'm sure up on my jive.' Any mention of Ascap in a script gets a fast clipping by the NBC purity squad.



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:05](#)



## 1 comment:

**Anonymous** [1 June 2016 at 11:37](#)

This was great - thank you!

[Reply](#)



Enter comment

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

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

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