Sunday, 21 August 2016

A \$1,000,000 Violin

During World War Two, a reluctant Jack Benny handed over his beloved Maxwell car to the scrap drive. Of course, this was only a gag on the radio. But Benny really did contribute to the war effort, performing for soldiers around the world (sometimes in oppressive conditions) and emphatically plugging war bonds on his programme.

One of Benny's fans contributed a little something, too. A million dollars.

Well, perhaps we should qualify this a bit. We can't say for certain that Julius Klorfein was a fan of the Benny show. One of a number of press reports revealed his adult offspring were. Regardless, Klorfein achieved some brief fame when he pledged to buy \$1,000,000 in War Bonds. In exchange, he got a violin that Benny played on the air, on stage and as a child.

Klorfein was a little embarrassed by all the sudden attention, as you can see in this story from the *New York Herald Tribune* of February 23, 1943. He was one of those self-made success stories that Americans love—a poor immigrant who, through hard work, became a rich man and then gave back to his country.

Benny's Fiddle Puts Purchaser In the Limelight

Julius Klorfein, Who Paid Million in Bonds for Relic, Is Loath to Talk About It

Julius Klorfein, the man who created a sensation early yesterday at Gimbel Brothers' war bond rally by pledging himself to buy a million dollars worth of war bonds for the right to acquire Jack Benny's old violin, submitted reluctantly to his first press interview in a lifetime of anonymity. Mr. Klorfein, a genial, quiet-spoken man of fifty-eight, who is present of Garcia Grande Cigars, Inc., with offices in the Empire State Building, sent reporters scurrying to their files after he made his record offer, only to have them discover with amazement that there was not a single mention of his name in any of the accredited sources.

No Time for "Who's Who"

"I never went in much for publicity," Mr. Klorfein explained apologetically last night in his penthouse apartment at 411 West End Avenue. "I've just spent my life working hard and building up my cigar business, and I guess I didn't have any time to get in Who's Who or What's What or anything like that."

Jack Benny's old violin, the same fiddle the radio comedian played in Waukegan, Ill., when he was a youth, and played again almost twenty years later last month in Carnegie Hall, lay in Mr. Klorfein's lap as he spoke. Mr. Klorfein gazed at it fondly and strummed one of the strings. Asked whether he was a violinist, Mr. Klorfein smiled. "If I was a violinist I wouldn't be able to buy a million dollars worth of war bonds," he said cryptically.

Mrs. Klorfein, who married her husband thirty-three years ago when he was manufacturing the first Garcia Grande cigars in the window of a little shop in South Brooklyn, had to urge her husband to tell the reporter something about his life.

Cigar Maker at \$18

There was not much to tell, Mr. Klorfein said. He came to this country from Russia more than forty years ago. At eighteen he was sitting in a window making cigars and devising the formula for the Garcia Grande. The business grew, because the cigar he blended was mild and inexpensive. Soon there were factories making millions of Garcia Grande. Soon there were factories making millions of Garcia Grandes. Soon he was raising shade-grown tobacco in Connecticut, packing tobacco in Cuba, manufacturing cigars in Puerto Rico. Later he was a

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19 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... 23 hours ago

Cartoon Research
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Kalmus on Disney in
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member of the Stock Exchange and the owner of valuable Manhattan real estate, including the twenty-story apartment building where he now lives.

"My hobbies are work and finance," Mr. Klorfein said. "I am active in many Jewish charities, and once I backed a Broadway show, but it was a failure. That's about all there is to tell."

Wife Buys Some, Too

He added as an afterthought, "My wife bought some bonds at the Gimbel party, too. How many was it, dearest?" he asked Mrs. Klorfein.

Mrs. Klorfein said it was only \$175,000 worth—a mere bagatelle compared to her

husband's purchase. "But, of course, I've been buying war bonds all along," Mrs. Klorfein explained.

She told the rest of the story. There have three children, two sons, Boatswain's Mate First Class Arthur Klorfein, of the Coast Guarrd, and Jerome Klorfein, and one daughter, Mrs. Maxwell Rapoport.

Mrs. Klorfein had just returned from a neighborhood public school, where she obtained her ration books. She is active in war work as a member of the American Women's Voluntary Service, and is a hostess at the Stage Door Canteen and the Merchant Seaman's Club. "It was very exciting at the Gimbel party," Mrs. Klorfein said proudly. "When my husband's million dollar offer was announced for Mr. Benny's violin the auctioneer asked if anybody would top it. There was a hushed silence and then a lot of applause. My husband stood up and bowed. It was the first bow Julius ever took.

\$2,775,925 Bonds Sold

Including Mr. and Mrs. Klorfein's \$1,175.000, a total of \$2,775,925 in bonds were sold at the rally which started shortly after midnight in the spacious Gimbel's bargain basement. Admittance to the rally, which was conducted by the American Women's Voluntary Services with the assistance of the War Savings Staff of the Treasury Department, was \$750, the price of a \$1,000 war bond.

Gimbel brothers contributed several items to the auction sale to match Mr. Benny's "Love in Bloom" violin—so called because that is the only tune ever to have been played by the radio comedian on the instrument.

Billy Rose, the atrical producer, pledged purchase of \$100,000 in war bonds for a letter written by George Washington dated July 28, 1780, and a man who asked that he remain anonymous pledged \$100,000 in war bonds for a Bible which belonged to Thomas Jefferson.

Mrs. Myron C. Taylor, co-chairman of the rally committee, announced that \$750,000 in war bonds were sold for admittance to the rally.

Danny Kaye, star of "Let's Face It," was auctioneer and master of ceremonies. Music was by Meyer Davis's orchestra. Brief speeches were made by Frederick A. Gimbel, managing director of the store; Bernard F. Gimbel, president; Mrs. Alice T. McLean, founder and president of the A.W.V.S.; Mrs. Douglas Gibbons, chairman of the war savings staff of the A.W.V.S.

Frederic Gimbel, in a short address, referred to the rally as "the world's greatest bargain sale." He quoted Hitler as saying: "A department store is a monument to decadent democracy," and added: "All I can say is that this is the best answer of democracy to Hitler."



The *Herald Tribune* didn't quite tell the whole story. A wire service piece from the *St. Petersburg Times* of May 23, 1943 quotes Klorfein:

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. -COPYRIGH T 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

3 days ago





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

forms were signed by George Sidney, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera creating what eventually became the biggest TV cartoon operation i...

1 week ago

Supervised By Fred Avery: Tex Avery's Warner Brothers Cartoons



Wabbit Twouble: A Small Addendum to An Outstanding Podcast -

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

3 weeks ago

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 "Benny's violin has caused me a lot of grief," he said. "Actually I didn't bid on it. I had previously subscribed for one million dollars in bonds during the February drive and somebody thought up the stunt of tying the violin in with the purchase."

Klorfein wasn't finished. He bought three million dollars more in bonds by September.

After the war, Klorfein busied himself with large real estate and stock exchange deals. He died at his home in New York on November 27, 1958 at the age of 79. The Associated Press obituary mentions how he arrived in the U.S. from Poland with \$35 sewn into his clothing, and his activity in several Jewish philanthropies, but nothing about Jack Benny or violins. Somehow, I suspect Mr. Klorfein would have liked it that way.

My thanks to Kathy Fuller-Seeley for passing along this clipping.

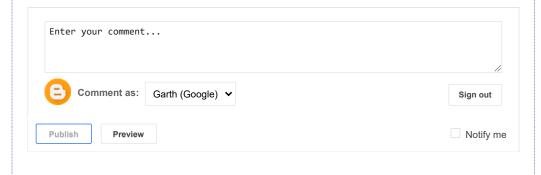
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MBLFO

Labels: Jack Benny

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

just some of the covers in which Porky is ei... 4 weeks ago

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to link and ebay.. -

http://lewstringercomics.blo gspot.com/2020/02/originalart-for-sale.html https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/ graphite47/m.html? _nkw=&_armrs=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)

7/18/2020 Tralfaz: A \$1,000,000 Violin

Soupy

Using His Head

Invasion of Terrytown

The Comedian and the Agent

Cartoons of 1957, Part 2

Inside Gags On the Way To a Fire

Brooklyn's Star, Marvin Kaplan

First Bad Man Meets First Self-Defending Woman

Monitoring Monitor

Proud As a Duck

Mickey's Perspective

A \$1,000,000 Violin

Oswald Posters

It's Mouse Man!

Fish Bites Cat

The Emotional Infant

You Know What...

Iwerks Surprise

Jack Dempsey and Jack Benny

Cartoons of 1957, Part 1

The Way of All Pests

Symphony in Slang Opening

Arnold the Pig, Method Actor

The Arrow That Loved His Job

Virgil Ross and Bashing Bugs Bunny

Tralfaz Sunday Theatre – V For Victory

Jack Benny Comes Out for Liberace

Selling Oswald

Jazzy Grandma

He Swims With the Fishes

The Lawyer Who Didn't Play One on TV

Gin! You Lose!

Bugs and Sam Ride Again

- ▶ July (34)
- ▶ June (32)
- ► May (34)
- ► April (34)
- ► March (36)
- ► 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)
King-Size Capary (8)
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)

