



Sunday, 23 October 2016

Basil

Jack Benny may have pretended to be 39 on TV, but his show business career began long before he really was 39. He was a teenager when he was hired in 1910 to work in the pit orchestra at Waukegan's Barrison Theatre.

There aren't too many people connected with the Benny show—and I don't mean guests like Jessel, Groucho and Cantor—who were in the entertainment field around the same time. One was Verna Felton, who toured in stage plays throughout Western Canada and in the western American states. And another is someone whose voice was heard every show for a number of years, though you likely won't guess who it is.

The man was Basil Ruysdael, one of the announcers who pushed Lucky Strike cigarettes. Ruysdael pre-dated radio. He was a singer. The *New York Herald* of November 19, 1910, reported:

"Die Walküre," with two new artists, was sung last night for the first time this season in the Metropolitan Opera House...

The newcomers were Miss Lucy Weidt, a dramatic soprano from Vienna, and Mr. Basil Ruysdael, an American basso.....

Mr. Ruysdael is of gigantic stature and has a big impressive voice. As Hunding, he was good, and he made the rugged side of the warrior prominent.



Ruysdael explained how he got into radio to Robbie Cole writing in *Radio Life* magazine's issue of June 8, 1947.

READING a Lucky Strike commercial is as exacting and as much fun . . . as singing at the Met!" Oh, come now! But that's what the man said.

Startling words, indeed, yet they came from a man who does one, and has done the other. Nearly all of us have heard Basil Ruysdael, during his years with the American Tobacco Company-sponsored "Hit Parade" or Jack Benny show. We've heard him tell us about those Lucky Strike cigarettes being round and firm and fully packed. Some of us may have heard him as featured bass singer with the Metropolitan Opera Company during those golden years from 1910 to 1918 when the Met was featuring such voices in its company as that of the notable Enrico Caruso.

Mr. Ruysdael is a great big man, with a humorous, kindly face and a straightforward manner. And he has the most delightful and flattering interest in other people. One has only to meet him to find himself shortly telling all about his own work, interests and pastimes. Radio Life almost fell into this attractive pitfall, but we rallied enough to pull our switch and find out a little something about this announcer. And quite an interesting array of facts turned up.

Mr. Ruysdael had mentioned the "Met," and in answer to our surprised query, "Metropolitan Opera?", he answered almost matter-of-factly.

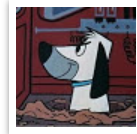
"Oh, yes, when I was in Berlin years ago I was engaged from there to sing with them. I stayed with the Met in this country from 1910 until during World War I."

"Was Europe originally your home, then, Mr. Ruysdael?"

"Oh, no. I'm a New Yorker." Here he laughed. "I'm one of those 'Cornell men' you hear about. I had just been in Berlin for further musical study."

He also explained how he came to leave the Met, that greatest of opera companies, after his eight

About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

Blogs to See

News From ME
Happy Jack Kirby Day! - Had he not left us when he did, Jack Kirby would be celebrating his 102nd birthday today. He also would be celebrating that he is increasingly getting the ...
5 hours ago

Cartoon Research
We, Robots! Part 1 - The 20's and 30's - Animal Automations - Who hasn't been fascinated by robots? The concept of a contraption of gears and wires springing into lifelike action is as spellbinding as watching cartoo...
5 hours ago

Rip Jagger's Dojo
Jungle Boobie! - The many misadventures of Bo Derek's boobs begin quietly enough in the film* Tarzan the Ape Man*, a movie not so much about its titular star, but about t...
7 hours ago

Movies with Michael
Movie Review: Good Boys - Michael's Movie Grade: B Often times when a raunchy comedy tries to be sweet, it doesn't work and feels at odds with the humor. This movie is certainly an...
12 hours ago

Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons
Left Wing party mutates into a new political group. - ©2019

years with it.

"Nineteen eighteen was during the World War, you know, and I joined the Marines. Well, I went back overseas with them, and it wasn't to sing, believe me. Then when we returned, and I left the service, I decided I would go into that thing called radio, so I got an announcing job at WOR." Just that easy . . . "got an announcing job at WOR." But Basil Ruysdael had been trained according to the rigid requirements necessary to an operatic delivery, and got off on the right foot in interpreting these lines of a different nature simply by adhering to a principle of his. He still employs this principle.

Is Sold

"I won't announce any product unless I'm convinced it's the best in its line and I'm sold on it myself."

That sincerity is very real. We might have been dubious talking to anyone else, but in Ruysdael's good, basic, man-to-man way, sincerity shows up in every word.

"If you were selling soap from door to door, you wouldn't greet the housewife with a well-read babble of words concerning the soap. It's the thought behind the words that counts, and if you think it's a good product, you'll sound all right. That's why I enjoy my work so greatly . . . it just doesn't seem like work, talking about things in which you believe, to people you know will benefit by what you say."

Basil Ruysdael joined the "Hit Parade" as a regular quite by accident, thirteen years ago. He had been doing the voice of a cigarette in a commercial on the show and when an announcing spot was left open through illness on the part of the regular announcer [Andre Baruch], he took over the task. "Took over" is certainly the term. He's done their announcing since that day, with only two weeks of vacation from radio in thirteen years. That isn't exactly as confining as it may sound. The present work with the Benny show and the "Hit Parade" enable Mr. Ruysdael to commute to and from the six -passenger cabin cruiser he calls home while he is here on the coast with the shows. The big boat is anchored off Avalon, at beautiful Santa Catalina Island, and proves an ideal place for this ardent enthusiast to live.

It didn't need such a real taste of California to convert New Yorker Ruysdael, however. "I had been in California for two years around 1923, when I was engaged in instructing Lawrence Tibbett. I later announced on the same show Tibbett sang on the 'Hit Parade,' you know. But knowing a little about California, wasn't I glad to get back to the coast, though! More than by your sunny clime, however, I'm impressed by you people out here. No one in California is consumed by anxiety over themselves. They're friendly, helpful people."

Nostalgic?

Jack Benny's comedy show and the "Lucky Strike Hit Parade" in no way resemble a Metropolitan Opera Company production, and we wondered if once in a while Mr. Ruysdael didn't hark back with real longing to those old strains in the classical vein. We had recalled something humorous to him, and he laughed as he answered.

"Oh, no. I suppose I am a classicist in my musical tastes generally, but I sincerely like popular music. It offers a lot, and then too, I've worked with such wonderful people on both these shows, Benny's and the 'Parade.' And there is such freedom from strain on these programs. So when I do any reminiscing about my operatic career, it's not with longing. I am more often inclined to remember a rather frightening incident. It happened when I was singing with that grand old man, Toscanini. I didn't know at the time that he never, never gave singers a 'cue'. In my part I had to come in right in the middle of a bar of music. Well, not knowing any better, I asked Mr. Toscanini to cue me. He agreed to, finally, but I'll never forget the look he gave me. Later, when he and I became such friends, I learned what a precedent he had violated. So I guess my one claim to distinction is that I've been cued by Toscanini!" Unless, Mr. Ruysdael, you can count having your voice recognized by millions who can almost repeat your commercial verbatim as a "claim to distinction."

Ruysdael finally had enough of announcing. He jumped into acting and became successful enough that he handed in his resignation to the American Tobacco Company on November 28, 1948. No more would he insist to listeners "With men who know tobacco best, it's Luckies, two-to-one!" The Associated Press caught up with Ruysdael about two years later.

FAMED RADIO VOICE TO MAKE FILM CAREER AT 60

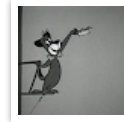
BY BOB THOMAS



fernandoller
acartoons.c
om

2 days ago

Yowp



Helicopter
Huck -
Huckleberry
Hound was
probably
never
animated

as gracefully than on the
little cartoons between the
cartoons on his show. It's so
nice to see Huck and the ...

3 days ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



This
Weekend in
San
Francisco:
Godzillafest
2019 - *As
of 5:00 p.m.

Pacific Standard Time on
August 23, 2019,
Godzillafest is back,
bombarding San
Francisco's B...

4 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

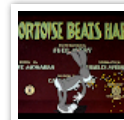
Close Up On The Eggs -

Here's the third part of
Cathy Hill's epic story:
Racketty Ann and The Lost
World! In pages 9 through
12, Racketty Ann continues
her story (I love how the ...

4 days ago

Supervised By Fred

Avery: Tex Avery's
Warner Brothers
Cartoons

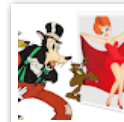


Tortoise
Beats Hare:
Protagonist
Loses;
Shreds
Opening
Credits -

Release date: 3/15/1941
Available on Looney Tunes
Golden Collection Vol. 2
(WHV DVD); Looney Tunes
Platinum Collection, Vol. 2
(WHV BR) You may
download a ...

4 days ago

Termite Terrace headlines



Top 10 in
My Opinion-
Little Red
Riding
Hood
Cartoons -
Today, I'll

be sharing what I believe
are the ten greatest
cartoons based on the fairy
tale Little Red Riding Hood.
But first... Honorable
Mentions: 1. ...

1 week ago

AP Movie Writer

HOLLYWOOD, Oct. 3.—The man with one of the most familiar voices in radio is on his way to becoming one of the most familiar faces in the movies.

He is Basil Ruysdael. It was his distinguished voice that delivered those repeat commercials on the Jack Benny, Kay Kyser and Hit Parade programs.

"People hated me," he admits. "Sometimes I even hated myself."

FOR 14 YEARS, RUYSDAEL DRONED OUT the catch slogans, flanked by tobacco auctioneers.

He was a favorite of the late George Washington Hill, whom he never met.

Ruysdael has had a number of careers since he finished studying electrical engineering at Cornell. He was a toolmaker in a machine shop (he now has his own shop and proudly displays patents on his inventions). He was a Marine in the First World War. He sang at the Metropolitan Opera House with his friend, Enrico Caruso. He cavorted with the Marx brothers in "Coconuts" and with the Duncan Sisters in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." At 40 he turned to intoning commercials on the air.

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, HE BEGAN his latest and most successful career at the age of 60. He had moved out to Hollywood to do his broadcasting. The brother of a neighbor turned out to be an agent, who suggested that Ruysdael try pictures.

"Not me," he laughed. "I tried it once—with the Marx brothers in "Coconuts."

But like any agents, this one wouldn't be dismissed. Ruysdael was on a deer-hunting trip when he received a call to test for "Colorado Territory" at Warner's. Much to his surprise he got the role and has been working steadily ever since.

"I've done 15 pictures in 23 months," he reported. "I've worked every day for the last 86 days."

Among his films have been "Come to the Stable," "Pinky," "Broken Arrow," "Raton Pass," "High Lonesome" and "Carrie," which he just completed.

I asked him how he accounted for his success. His reply was frank: "Good agent."

But he added: "I guess I'm something of a freak—I'm big (six feet, three) with a little pin-head. And I've got a good voice that can be understood and can learn lines because I'm an old stock man."

Ruysdael gave up radio and hopes to be in the movie business for a long time to come. He has no fears of being typed. Among his roles so far have been an outlaw, a priest, a general, an admiral, a lawyer, a western land baron, a psychiatrist and a saloon keeper.

Ruysdael's film and TV career lasted through the '50s. He died on October 10, 1960 at the age of 82.

By the way, Ruysdael was his mother's maiden moniker. When he grew up in Binghamton, New York, he was Basil Millsaugh. With men who know tobacco best, it's surnames, two to one.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:35](#)

Labels: [Bob Thomas](#), [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:



Pokey 23 October 2016 at 09:03

He did at least one cartoon voice—the Labrador who gets the Dalmaiton pups covered in snow to disguise them from the villains in "101 Dalmaitons", with his death making this his last. SC Steve

[Reply](#)

Enter your comment...



Comment as:

Garth (Google) ▼

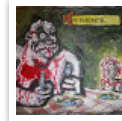
[Sign out](#)

[Publish](#)

[Preview](#)

☐ Notify me

The World of Knight



AT
PRESENT -

A new painting. *** Done with leftover paint at end

of day. *** I found the opening of PSYCHIATRICS a bit bare of human expressions, so I reworked ...

1 week ago

Peter Gray's Comics and Art



New blog on my Art work...Original art...prints for sale petergrayart

ist@gmail.com for prices

etc... -

https://petergrayart.blogspot.com/ Will update it like I do on facebook.

1 month ago

What About Thad?

[Chris Reccardi Interviewed](#)

- I don't want to start a practice of publishing an interview every time someone from Ren & Stimpy dies, but Chris Reccardi (1964-2019) was too important a f...

3 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...

7 months ago

Kids, Eh?

#1288: Bird Call - #1288:

Bird Call

11 months ago

Cartoons, Model Sheets, & Stuff



Pete Hothead Model Sheets -

Here are a few model sheets from

the first Pete Hothead short. Released in 1952 and directed former Tom & Jerry animator Pete Burness. Ted Parmelee was the...

1 year ago

Dr. Grob's Animation Review

[Swamp](#) - Director: Gil Alkabetz Release Date:

October 1992 Rating:

★★★★★ Review: With

'Swamp' Gil Alkabetz

showed to be a strong new

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

voice in the animation
world. M...
1 day ago

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

Blog Archive

- [2019](#) (247)
- [2018](#) (379)
- [2017](#) (380)
- ▼ [2016](#) (396)
 - [December](#) (34)
 - [November](#) (33)
 - ▼ [October](#) (31)
 - [Graveyard Swing](#)
 - [Benny in Boston](#)
 - [Cartoons of 1958, Part 2](#)
 - [A Horse's Musical Moments](#)
 - [Dancing With Bosko](#)
 - [The Italian Who Couldn't Eat Italian Food](#)
 - [Nyah!](#)
 - [Mouse Menace](#)
 - [Basil](#)
 - [Call or Wire Today for These Cartoons](#)
 - [Baby Elf Waltz](#)
 - [Catnip Capers Backgrounds](#)
 - [Audience Warm-Ups, 1943](#)
 - [Felix Fights](#)
 - [The Hands of Avery](#)
 - [The Van Gogh of Music](#)
 - [Cartoons of 1958, Part 1](#)
 - [Dance of the Alligators](#)
 - [Woody vs Buzz](#)
 - [Wacky Willock](#)
 - [Pilot to Co-Pilot: Boo!](#)
 - [The Pelican and the Turkey](#)
 - [Jack Benny, 1941, Part 2](#)
 - [How To Make Your Own Animated Cartoon](#)
 - [Anopheles Annie](#)
 - [I'm A-Dyin', Rabbit](#)
 - [The Problem with Radio Comedy](#)
 - [Ub Avery](#)
 - [A Beautiful Curve Ball](#)
 - [Advice From Don Wilson](#)
 - [The Making of Mr. Bug](#)
 - [September](#) (32)

- ▶ [August](#) (33)
- ▶ [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](#) (16)
- [Art Davis](#) (30)
- [Bad Luck Blackie](#) (9)
- [Bob and Ray](#) (9)
- [Bob Clampett](#) (73)
- [Bob McKimson](#) (51)
- [Bob Thomas](#) (53)
- [Chuck Jones](#) (134)
- [Columbia](#) (25)
- [Cynthia Lowry](#) (24)
- [Dick Thomas](#) (12)
- [Don Patterson](#) (16)
- [Earl Wilson](#) (6)
- [Erskine Johnson](#) (36)
- [Felix the Cat](#) (24)
- [Film Daily](#) (50)
- [Fleischer](#) (137)
- [Frank Tashlin](#) (21)
- [Fred Allen](#) (37)
- [Fred Brunish](#) (9)
- [Friz Freleng](#) (128)
- [Gene Deitch](#) (16)
- [George Pal](#) (9)
- [Grant Simmons](#) (3)
- [Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (92)
- [Hanna-Barbera](#) (2)
- [Harman-Ising](#) (54)
- [Henry Morgan](#) (13)
- [Irv Spence](#) (8)
- [Jack Benny](#) (405)
- [Jay Ward](#) (30)
- [Jimmy Durante](#) (16)
- [John Crosby](#) (79)
- [John Sutherland](#) (24)
- [Johnny Johnsen](#) (25)

Kenny Baker	(6)
King-Size Canary	(7)
Laugh-In	(10)
Maurice Noble	(12)
Mel-O-Toons	(4)
MGM	(504)
Norm McCabe	(4)
Pat Matthews	(10)
Paul Julian	(13)
Sara Berner	(5)
Screwy Squirrel	(32)
Spider-Man	(1)
Terrytoons	(68)
Tex Avery	(417)
Tom and Jerry Human	(25)
Tralfaz Sunday Theatre	(14)
Ub Iwerks	(67)
UPA	(52)
Van Beuren	(81)
Vernon Scott	(40)
Virginia MacPherson	(14)
Walt Disney	(126)
Walter Lantz	(214)
Warner Bros.	(526)
Who Killed Who	(10)