



Sunday, 1 July 2018

Canadians Love Jack Benny

Today being Canada's birthday and it also being a Sunday, the day when Jack Benny broadcast for many years on radio, let us combine the two and look back at when Benny's show aired from Vancouver on April 23, 1944.

Benny's appearance was part of Canada's Sixth Victory Loan push. His cast and his writers made the trip up by rail and put on their Sunday night broadcast from the Forum [right], at one time the home of the Western League Vancouver Canucks.



Joining the Benny regulars were a couple of incidental players. John Brown had been a part of Allen's Alley, but when Fred Allen went off the air for a year and a bit due to heart problems, Brown left New York and came to Hollywood. Benny used him for a while on his show. Sara Berner was later one of the telephone operators on the show. On the northern swing, she played Ruby Wagner, who was a real-life relative of Mary Livingstone. Mary grew up in Vancouver and the Wagners lived there, too. The Marks house on Nelson near Denman Street was torn down for apartments some time ago.

The three Vancouver papers covered the Benny visit and broadcast. Let's present a story and two columns from the *Sun* the day after the programme aired. It would appear, judging by the stories, there was only one broadcast, with no live repeat for the West Coast. Benny was broadcast at both 4 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., the latter time slot on Mutual/Don Lee stations, which were allowed to make a transcription of the NBC line feed for re-broadcast that season.

The Benny show was broadcast locally in Vancouver on CBR and CKWX at 4 p.m., but 1943-44 was the last season for Benny on Canadian radio. When he was sponsored by Lucky Strikes, he was removed because Luckies were not sold in Canada and the CBC felt the sponsor was so integrated with the actual comedy that mentions of the product couldn't be edited out satisfactorily. Listeners in Vancouver had to tune in to Seattle stations to hear Benny.

First, let's go to the unbylined story about the broadcast. BC's liquor laws are still antiquated (until 1986, one could not buy a drink on a Sunday), the tolls were removed in the 1960s conveniently prior to an election and the Grouse Chalet has been eclipsed by bigger ski resorts. Mayor J.W. Cornett has been dead since 1973. He owned a shoe store. He was not an actor, as is pretty clear if you listen to the broadcast. And, yes, English Bay and Stanley Park are still there.

Gag Experts Give International Publicity to City in Rollicking Show at Forum

Beauties of Vancouver Extolled by Benny Broadcast Before 9000

Thirty-five million Americans from California to Rhode Island to Montana to Texas now know that Vancouver is a beautiful city practically surrounded by a body of water called English Bay—and toll bridges.

They know it's a city in a "monetary paradise," where ten dollars (American) will get you eleven (Canadian) without even going near a race track.

And they've been tipped off, too, to some of our local restrictions governing the sale of spiritus fermenti. (Spiritus fermenti? That, according to Jack Benny, is the stuff that comes in pints, quarts and W.C. Fields.)

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And this, and Mayor Cornett, too, came to them on Sunday afternoon when Benny broadcast his weekly show from the Hastings Park Forum before an estimated crowd of 9000.

Vancouver, its Lions Gate bridge, Grouse Mountain chalet and its largest hotel, rated more plugs in the script than Don Wilson was able to muscle in for that breakfast food he peddles. You know, they're tempting and toasty-brown, and they come in the big new 12-ounce economy size package!

Benny, the world's most loveable heel; Wilson, Rochester, Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris and Dennis Day were accorded one of the greatest ovations a Vancouver audience has ever let loose for any visiting celebrity.

Some statistics might be interesting: Usually Benny allows about five minutes' slack in the script to take care of the laughs. Sunday they took up seven minutes. And, at that, he cut the laughs short time after time by diving back into the script.

The script was chockfull of local gags, the longest one centred about a supposed Vancouverite who announced he'd been appointed by the major to welcome Benny to the city.

"I've lived here all my life, and if there any places of interest you've missed I'll be glad to point them out to you," he offered.

Then the script went like this:

BENNY: Well, let me see, I've been through Stanley Park and then I . . .

VANCOUVERITE: Stanley Park? Where's that?

BENNY: Why it's right at the foot of Lions Gate Bridge.

VANCOUVERITE: Lions Gate Bridge? . . . They have one here?

BENNY: Of course, that's the bridge where Burrard Inlet meets English Bay.

VANCOUVERITE: English Bay?

BENNY: Certainly. That's the body of water that practically surrounds the city.

VANCOUVERITE: Oh! So THAT'S what that is.

The payoff on this gag came later in the program when Benny was telling Mayor Cornett that his emissary had lived here all his life and "didn't know that large body of water out there was English Bay."

"Oh, is THAT what is?" said the Mayor.

That five-day wait imposed on visitors before they can buy a liquor permit was milked down to the dregs for several laughs. Like when Benny told Rochester "money isn't all that important," and the little valet cracked back:

"Boss you talk like a man whose five days are already up."

Those toll bridges which are Vancouver's first line of defense against any invasion were worked to show Benny up for the cheap heel he is supposed to be. Mayor Cornett told him how beautiful the Grouse Mountain Chalet is and added that the toll charge is only a quarter.

"It's one of the beauty spots of Canada," said the mayor.

"Well, that settles it," replied Benny. "I'll take your word for it." Benny and the rest of the cast stuck meticulously to the script throughout, except once when the comedian ad-libbed a subtle crack about our weather.

When Mary Livingstone reminded him, "You're not wearing a toupee because it's cold," Benny came back with, "Sister, are you kidding?" It wasn't in the script but neither was that rain, or the sheet of ice that lay under the Forum floor.

Incidentally, Mary was well protected against the cold by an "ah-inspiring" mink coat.

The touching farewell to Dennis Day was more than "script." The singer could not withhold his tears and had trouble continuing with his lines.

* * *

The bagpipes probably have never been played to a larger audience than the one which heard their skirl over NBC on Sunday. The piper was Sergeant William Lamont of the Vancouver Seaforths.

* * *

Mary Livingstone's gag about her uncle Harry packed a double kick for one member of the audience—Harry Wagner, a native of Vancouver, who is her uncle.

A tireless showman, Benny returned to the Forum with his cast last night to entertain 7000 troops from all over Vancouver.

* * *



Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons



Public
Function
Secretary
creates new
online
platform to
fight

corruption. - ©2019
fernandollera.com
1 day ago

Cartoon Research

Pondering "Pocahontas" - I think Disney's Pocahontas will seem better as time passes. While it is flawed, there is still much to recommend in it. Here's my opinion.

1 day ago

Termite Terrace headlines



Popeye
Cans the
Spinach
(Commerci
al Corner) -
Due to the
Tom and

Jerry hiatus, the monthly commercials are returning. This month we'll look at Popeye canning the spinach and advertising with other a...

4 days ago

The World of Knight SATURDAY AFTERNO ON - Nice



view. I
actually
drew it into
a panel

today.
6 days ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



The Classic
Comedy
Rorschach
Test - ...

1 week ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Racketty Ann's Mystery
Flight! - Here are pages 5 through eight of "Racketty Ann and the Lost World". There's delightful fantasy here as Racketty Ann and Bla Bla take a ride on the back o...

1 week ago

Peter Gray's Comics and Art



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Fifteen minutes before and after the actual broadcast, Benny and his cast put on a show that packed more laughs than the radio script.

Phil Harris, who said he was taking over while "Jackson" was putting on his hair, apologized for not bringing his wife, Alice Faye.

"She wanted to come," he said, "but one of us had to stay home and have the baby."

Don Wilson told the story about the elm tree that was planted in Waukegan, Benny's home town, in honor of the comedian.

The tree withered up and died, Wilson explained, because, as Fred Allen said at the time, there was the tree in Waukegan while the sap was running around in Hollywood.

Two of the Monday morning columnists talked about the class of Benny and his cast members. First, let's hear from Pat Wallace, the Women's Editor at the *Sun* (she would move to the competing *Daily Province* later in the year. She talks briefly about Mary Livingstone. While Jack flew to various parts of the world in the off-season to entertain troops, Mary stayed at home, but was nonetheless helping to boost morale.

Talk of the Town

By Pat Wallace

Benny Meets So Many

After watching the JACK BENNY gang this week, we've come to the conclusion that it takes a lot more than talent to be a top-ranking celebrity.

They need the patience of Job, the charm of Cleopatra and the endurance of MacArthur.

Ever since the Grape-Nut and, pardon us, we nearly forgot, Flakes radio troupe arrived here last Tuesday night or Wednesday morning to be exact, to do a considerable chunk of pun-plugging for the Sixth Victory Loan, they've been hounded and harried by swarms of signature-seeking fans during practically every waking minute. Not once have they refused. And more important, not once have they appeared ungracious or bored as they signed, signed and signed again.

It's not only the autograph seekers which must stretch their civility to the snapping point, but the personality parasites—those hangers-on who stick their faces up to the outer rays of the lime-light.

* * *

Mary's Not Contrary

Sunday afternoon at the nationwide broadcast, with nine thousand packing the Forum to the rafters, both aforementioned types were out in full force. Yet exhausted as they all were, Jack, Mary, Phil, Rochester, and recently arrived DENNIS DAY, naughty boy of the show going nautical next week, had a word, a smile and a quick scrawl for anyone who asked, and believe you men, plenty did.

The whole troupe were feeling sort of low, too. Yesterday's number was Dennis' swan-song for the duration, and as Mary told us: "It's like losing one of the family. We are that you know." It's easy to see it. They worry about each other, do plenty of kidding back and forth, and most noticeable of all; they build each other up continually.

It's quite evident out in public that Jack takes the lead, and Mary usually retires quietly to the background. Mary's explanation: "I'm proud of being Mrs. Jack Benny."

* * *

A Plug for a Jug

In fact, when they're in Hollywood, Mary tells us she lives a pretty domestic life. "Except for rehearsals and the show at the week-ends, I spend a good deal of time at home. After all, my daughter JOANIE, who's 10, needs attention, and I've my war work. I go to the Hollywood Canteen once a week, to Birmingham Hospital to chat with the servicemen Tuesdays, and Friday is my day at the Fort MacArthur Induction Centre."

With their Vancouver stay up tomorrow morning, Mrs. Benny's chief disappointment is the fact she never did find a moment to do any sight-seeing or shopping for additions to her collection of Toby jugs.

"I've loved it though, and maybe I'll be able to sneak back again soon."

And now, here's Hal Straight, managing editor of the *Sun*. His column is a little odd; it comes to a very sudden end. The reference to pitching at the outset is kind of a little joke. Straight was a top amateur pitcher in Vancouver before pro ball returned to the city in 1937, and then covered the Vancouver Capilanos of the Western International League as Sports Editor. It's a shame he didn't talk baseball with Benny, as Jack was a fan.

.com/ Will update it like I do on facebook.
2 weeks ago

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



Coming Soon To This Blog...

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...

2 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...

6 months ago

Kids, Eh?

#1288: Bird Call - #1288: Bird Call

10 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

FernGully: The Last Rain Forest - Up until the rise of computer animation in the late 1990s, with powerful players entering the field (first Pixar, then Dreamworks, followed by BlueSky, Son...

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From the Sun Tower

By Hal Straight

The General Is Pitching

Jack Benny and his troupe, with their wonderful tribute to Vancouver, almost pushed the war interest into the background over the week-end, but not quite.

Glamorous and U.S. president-nibbling General MacArthur, staged a pretty fair show himself. By landing on both sides of Hollandia in New Guinea in a sudden, important invasion, he made the strategy of the south Pacific and far east look quite clear.

The Navy is bombing the small islands—Jap strongholds—into submission which will open the way for the army to reach out from New Guinea to the Phillipines. Then with forces striking through Burma, Mr. Nippon will be completely cut off and will be left to shrivel like a sunburned cadaver which won't take much sun.

A Fellow Named Benny

Like everybody else in this profession, we met Jack Benny. Before doing so we vowed we would not punish him with clichés, with the usual line of guff that must fatigue him, for instance:

"Always listen to your broadcasts. Must be wonderful to be so successful! Are you really so stingy and do you really drive a Maxwell?"

But our good intentions were in vain. We exchanged "J'do's," both looked stupidly at each other and dug right into the frayed bag containing shopworn conversations.

"Saw you back in the Orpheum days when you HAD to play a violin," we offered.

"Did you?" That was fourteen years ago. Time flies."

"Saw you in Los Angeles a few years ago. You've lost weight."

"Really! You notice it?"

"Yes. You're quite a bit thinner."

"Been on a diet. Was the only one who toured the war fronts who gained weight, 28 pounds. Quite unusual. I really am thin now."

"Yes. Quite slim."

"You've lost weight yourself," twinkled Benny. "Oh, pardon me, I thought you were Don Wilson. What the devil, let's relax and have a drink. Fellow can't live on breakfast food forever." Which we thought was nicely done and the reason, probably, that Benny is "up there."

Pin-Ups Not So Nude

Subsequently somebody mentioned something about pin-up girls. Benny, in grey-haired seriousness, explained that home folks had the wrong impression of servicemen's "pin-ups." "They are not so naked. You'd be surprised at the modesty," pointed out "Mr. Love-in-Bloom," referring to servicemen's quarters he saw overseas. Which brought us right into the conversation. On our Alaska Highway tour we bunked in army quarters and saw many walls papered with many pin-ups. At Dawson Creek the four walls of our room were covered. And there were no nudes.

Like most displays we saw, pretty girls, some of them completely clothed, others just decently, were predominant, but there were also pictures of the world war leaders, male actors and prominent people in general.

One place where we stayed there was a display of the famous Varga girls, the drawings that put Esquire magazine into the courts. But this display was on the back of a cupboard door, not open visibly.



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:04](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

4 comments:



Gregg Hammond 2 July 2018 at 08:11

I love the photos of Jack and the gang in Canada. Wonderful stuff. I look forward to Jack Benny Sunday each week. So many fantastic stories about our favorite 39 year old!

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R. Araya 1 August 2018 at 17:11

What team Jack rooted for? Greetings from a regular reader from Chile (which might make me the only OTR fan in the Spanish-speaking world).

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Yowp 2 August 2018 at 02:55

That's an interesting question. He mentioned baseball several times on his radio show, and Leo Durocher was a guest while managing the Brooklyn Dodgers and then the New York Giants. I understand he went to Dodgers games after they moved West and attended Pacific Coast League games (Hollywood Stars and Los Angeles Angels) when the PCL had clubs in the Los Angeles area. One of his radio shows included a game with the visiting Seattle Rainiers in the plot. He may not have had a specific team he liked.

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TV Fan 1 February 2019 at 21:00

Mary was not particularly well liked by most of Jack's friends and associates. George Burns had a lot to say about the subject late in life.

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