



Sunday, 13 January 2019

## Better Than Joe Cook

In show biz, money talks. And here's what money was saying in 1932.

In the March 8th edition of *Variety* that year, it was revealed Jack Benny was making \$2,000 a week to play at the Palace in New York City. By contrast, Joe Cook (photo to the right) was pulling in \$5,500.

Today, you'd probably say "Joe who?" But back then, Joe was a bigger, more in-demand comedian than Benny.

Radio changed that. Benny jumped into the newish medium of network radio two months later. No doubt he looked at that same column and saw radio stars Amos and Andy were pulling in \$7,500 a week for personal appearances. Despite some early sponsor turmoil, Benny became a hit. His popularity meant he could charge more to appear on a stage. He soon passed bigger vaudeville stars like Cook.

That's one of the points Sidney Skolsky makes in a feature story on Jack that appeared in the *New York Post* in 1941. From what I can tell, it was rare for a newspaper gossip writer to devote a whole column to one person (magazines were a different story), but Skolsky set aside his entire space in one edition to Benny, giving the comedian's life story in the process. In fact, he used some of these same words in a 1931 syndicated column and again in 1937.



### Sidney Skolsky Writes...

#### Tintypes

HOLLYWOOD Jan. 16.

Jack Benny, according to the official radio survey, is not only the No. 1 comedian, but he is the leading performer on radio. He is doing pretty good in pictures also.

His latest, "Love Thy Neighbor," in which he co-stars with another radio comedian, Fred Allen, is doing big business throughout the country. So good, in fact, that he is under contract to two studios, Paramount and 20th Century-Fox, to make pictures.

There was a time in the early days of the talkies when he made a couple of pictures and was given his release, considered through in pictures. He didn't start off with a bang on radio either. A couple of sponsors let him go before his style of program caught on.

In fact, if you listed the best comedians on Broadway in 1931, and were asked to name who would he tops in 1941, you wouldn't put Benny above any of these: Al Jolson, Ed Wynn, Eddie Cantor, Lou Holtz, Joe Cook, George Jessel, Frank Fay, W. C. Fields and Groucho Marx.

They all ranked higher than Jack Benny in vaudeville and in musical comedy. Benny was never the headliner on a hill with any of those names. But Benny's method of comedy is paying dividends now.

He says: "Even in those days in vaudeville, when I was a master of ceremonies, I always liked to have a reason for introducing the next act, or for telling a joke. I didn't think it should be as easy as 'on my way to the theatre tonight, etc. . . .' And I always tried to be the poor guy who was in trouble, that the other fellows picked on."

These points are today the basis for his radio show. He is the poor guy who's in trouble. And his show has continuity and believable characters.

He says: "I work harder with my writers trying to find a legitimate reason to go from one section of the program to the other than I do on the gags."

On the radio he has fun with the statement that he hails from Waukegan. He was born in Chicago on St. Valentine's Day, 1894. His parents went to Chicago so he could tell people he was born in a big city.

He is 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighs 155 pounds. His hair is gray and thinning. When broadcasting he wears

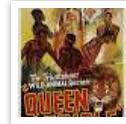
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### Blogs to See

#### Rip Jagger's Dojo



Queen Of The Jungle! - "Queen of the Jungle" is a 1935 serial from Mascot

which takes footage from an even earlier silent film and tries to bond some new scenes. It's not reall...

11 hours ago

#### Cartoon Research

Disney Rareties - This week, two Disney oddities in Mark Kausler's film closet - one, a lost educational film from the 1940s, the other some rare behind the scenes footage ...

13 hours ago

#### News From ME

Sunday Evening - Convention's over. Now, we can concern ourselves with more important matters... like what kind of silly news stories is Trump going to create to divert attent...

14 hours ago

#### Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons



Longest living animals in Chapultepec's Zoo in need of special

care. - ©2019

fernandollera.com

1 day ago

#### Movies with Michael



Cowboy Church #19 - Hello my friends and welcome to another addition of

Cowboy Church. We start

glasses. He has blue eyes.

His first job in the theatre was as a doorman. Next he became a property man. Then he became a violin player (oh, you don't believe it, Fred Allen!) in the theatre's orchestra conducted by Cora Salisbury.

When the theatre closed, he and Cora went into vaudeville. They did a violin and piano act. Then he didn't play the fiddle for laughs.

He toured in this act for about four years, never getting to New York. While doing this act, he didn't speak a word of dialogue on the stage. If there was a curtain speech to be made, Miss Salisbury made it.

He had to join the navy to speak on a stage. During the World War he was in the navy and was put into the Navy Relief Society. This organization put on a show called "The Great Lakes Revue." Here Benny spoke for the first time on a stage. He was ordered to do so.

So he came out of the World War with a violin, some chatter, and the courage to do a single act in vaudeville.

He is married to Sadie Marks. She was not connected with show business. She worked in the hosiery department of a department store. Yes, she is the Mary Livingston on his radio show.

He generally starts work on his Sunday program on Tuesday. He sits with his two writers, Bill Morrow and Ed Beloin, and they discuss what the show should be about. The first writing comes out of these conversations.

The program is generally written by Friday afternoon. There is a "run through" of the script on Saturday at the studio, and on Sunday, before the broadcast, there is a complete rehearsal. He stages the show. He wants to become a movie director.

The word he uses most is "marvelous." Everything he likes and describes to a person is "marvelous." When he was in vaudeville he used this adjective to describe almost every act. A letter he received from a fan caused him to be careful how he used the word. The letter read: "Enjoyed your performance very much. Like everything about you but the word 'marvelous.' Am sending you a list of words you can use in the place of marvelous. Except for that, Mr. Benny, you are marvelous."

Despite his popularity as "Buck Benny" on the radio and in pictures, he has never been on a horse except at Santa Anita.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:00](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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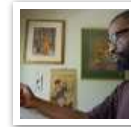
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☐ Notify me

our music selection off with The Sons of the Pioneers' 1947 recording of the go...  
1 day ago



**The World of Knight**



**SATURDAY AFTERNOON** - Nice view. I actually drew it into a panel

today.  
1 day ago



**Termite Terrace headlines**



Animation Websites in the Archive #1 - The newest series!

These are some of the best websites on animation that are either unsung or just have been wiped out from the internet. Some of these si...

1 day ago



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

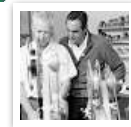


The Classic Comedy Rorschach Test - \* In 13 years and 1072 posts, onl...

2 days ago



**Yowp**



Fewer Drawings, More Gimmicks - Adult humour today isn't

what it was 60 years ago. Today, "adult" humour brings to mind a lot of sexual references and crudity. In other words, the stuff...

2 days 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...

2 days 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.

2 weeks ago

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**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**

[Zozor ruine la réputation de sa famille \(Zozor Ruins the Reputation of His Family\)](#) - After his move to the United States in 1912 Émile Cohl starting experimenting with putting the idiom of comic strips to the animated screen, being the firs...  
2 hours ago

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