

Sunday, 18 August 2019

Jack Benny, Jail Bird

Even when Jack Benny's radio show was based in New York, it didn't stay there. Benny's deal with General Foods was that he could make personal appearances; basically, he emceed a vaudeville show. One of the stops in 1936 was in Pittsburgh. The tour coincided with his on-air commitment, so he simply did his show from the Steel City.

Jack "wrote" a story for the *Pittsburgh Press* that was published March 1, 1936. I presume he didn't really have time to write it, that Harry Conn ghost-wrote it. This was not long before Conn got into a huff and walked out on Benny for good.

Regardless of who wrote this, there are some nice little stories.

For those not familiar with Benny's radio evolution, this is before Phil Harris joined the show later in the year when it permanently relocated to Hollywood. Green moved over to the Packard show with Fred Astaire. Vocalist Kenny Baker would remain with Jack until 1939.

Unfortunately, copies of the Pittsburgh broadcasts don't exist. Blanche Stewart appeared, as did Vi Klein and a woman named Kathrine Lee, along with Jack's personal secretary, Harry Baldwin. I can't find my notes about Klein; I believe she was someone's secretary and not an actress.

The sidebar story reveals Jack did his own audience warm-up. I don't think it was uncommon for stars on comedy/variety shows to do this in the radio days. Fred Allen did it; he could get away with more satire off the air than he could on. Red Skelton did it with words that would never be permitted on the air.

Jack Benny Confesses He Has Prison Record In 'Pittsburgh's Jail'

Ace Radio Comedian Remembers When He Was Really Able to Play His Fiddle on Vaudeville Stage

Jack Benny went to jail, but not for long, in Pittsburgh. He recalls the incident and other amusing memories of the days when he played the vaudeville stage here, in his guest column.

By JACK BENNY

Hell-O Again.

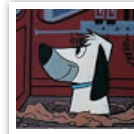
This is Jack Benny pushing the middle valve down. Only the valve this time is a typewriter key and what's going round and round isn't the music but my head. I'm a microphonist and this typing machine gets me. Our mutual friend, Si Steinhauser, shoved it in front of me and there was nothing to do but give it a great big hand. So away we go, and let's hope it comes out here. If you follow me you'll go to jail. If the Pittsburgh cop who once put me behind the bars can prove his identity I'll give him a ticket to my broadcast tonight. And I'm not fooling. I'll make him wish he had a sense of humor. He certainly had none the night he and I met.

Well, I want to start off by telling all my friends, and those who hear the Jack Benny program that I am delighted to be in Pittsburgh again. If I were Mary, I would express myself in verse, but since the muse has overlooked me, I will have to do the best I can in unpoetic, and probably ungrammatical, prose.

Pittsburgh has always been a great town for me. I suppose it's because so many of the people living here are music-lovers. It is a well known fact that we concert artists always look forward to giving recitals in Pittsburgh. As a violinist, I want you to know that I was deeply touched that your distinguished Pittsburgh Symphony



About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

Blogs to See

Movies with Michael

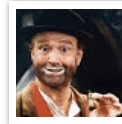


Some Cartoons For Saturday Morning #80 - Hello my friends

and welcome back for another selection of classic cartoons. Today's selection begins with one of the great Mickey, Donald and Goofy car...

32 minutes ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Born on July 18, 1913 - Red Skelton - *Today's post commences

with the Guzzler's Gin routine (from Ziegfeld Follies) by R...

1 hour ago

Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons



'Cozy Bear' Group Tied to Hacks on Covid Vaccine Research. - ©2020

fernandolleracartoons.com
15 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...
19 hours ago

Cartoon Research

In His Own Words: H.T. Kalmus on Disney in Technicolor - Suspended Animation #276 Many

selected Thursday, the day of my arrival from New York, as the date on which to begin its new series of radio concerts. I regret that other commitments [sic] prevented my making a guest appearance with the orchestra but perhaps Maestro Modarelli will give me an opportunity to do so at some other time. At any rate, I want to take this occasion (seriously) to congratulate him and his men on a very excellent performance. Of course, I am still essentially a musician. In latter years such Pittsburghers who have seen or heard me on the air will recognize that my recitals are somewhat unorthodox and not in line with the accepted standards of concertizing. I am now going in more for what is better described as "words and music." Unfortunately there is a lot of jealousy on our program. Every time I start to play the "Love in Bloom" concerto, for example, Johnny Green has the orchestra strike up a loud dance tune. You see, he is afraid of me. Of course, that does not make him hesitate to try to be a comedian.

The first time I ever appeared in Pittsburgh, however, it was in a strictly musical act without interruptions by people trying to be funny. My partner and I—we were billed as Benny and Woods—played violin and piano duets. Woods was the pianist and I performed with my accustomed dexterity on the violin.

For the benefit of those who happen to remember having heard any of those early joint-recitals I hasten to assure you that my hand has never lost its skill. I don't know. I guess I just have that magic touch. We played two-a-day at the Davis Theater and were given an honorarium of \$200 per week. We concert artists never accept salaries. We call them honorariums. The name is a little longer, but you can't get any more coffee and cake for them than you can with a salary. Not even so much sometimes, as a matter of fact.

Altogether I gave recitals at the Davis half a dozen times. After the Benny and Woods combination disbanded I returned as a solo violinist. During these solo performances I did no speaking whatsoever. You see, I was giving my all to my art. I had not met Mary Livingstone at this time. Therefore, the ability to talk back in order to maintain my self-respect was not essential. I don't have to tell you music-appreciating Pittsburghers that those were the days.

One of the few inartistic incidents in my career took place during one of my appearances in Pittsburgh. For the first and last time in my life I visited a jail. Of course, just a brief visit, sort of like dropping in for a little while. Nevertheless. I was there in a strictly official capacity.

* * *

Following my concert one evening I decided to stop in at a restaurant near the theater for a bite to eat before going to bed. Business was not particularly lively at this time, the crowd at the theater having gone home, for some reason or other, before my recital was completed. (Of course, this was highly unusual procedure, but not entirely beyond belief. I can understand that some people can appreciate only a certain amount of music at any one time).

At any rate in this particular restaurant they were serving at only part of the tables at this late hour. Being something of a stranger in town I could hardly be expected to know the customs of the restaurant. Innocently I sat down at one of the tables that was not supposed to be in use. The waiter quite obviously was not a music-lover, or else he would have known who I was. I can't imagine who he thought I was for his tone of voice in suggesting that I remove myself to another table was a little indelicate.

Words, as literary folks say, passed between us. I suppose it was my artistic temperament coming out. Anyhow, I had failed to observe that an officer of the law was also in the restaurant at the time, also bent on getting a snack. He happened to overhear the discussion I was having with the waiter. He expressed the opinion that perhaps it would be better if I left. I had come in to satisfy a justified appetite worked up after a vigorous evening of pushing and pulling the bow back and forth across the strings. I countered the officer's declaration of his views with the statement that that was my intention. Just as in a debate, he stated that he saw the affair in an entirely different light.

In school at Waukegan I had always been taught that it is the right of every American to have and to hold to the liberties guaranteed to him under the Constitution. Upon announcing my position, the officer said that I would either leave or accompany him to the jail. To which I replied, perfectly calm and collected, that then to jail it must be. As I said before, the visit was of extremely short duration. I was able to get in touch with someone at my hotel, the manager I believe, who was good enough to tell the representative of the law that I was Jack Benny, violinist, and generally considered to be a respectable citizen.

* * *

After the war I returned to Pittsburgh. The war did something to me. Whereas before I had been concentrating solely on music, words now began to play a more important role. In short, I had become a monologist, or as others termed it, a master-of-ceremonies. But music was still my great interest. I occasionally carried my violin on stage though I never played it. I played here in Earl Carroll's "Vanities" and also in "The Great Temptation."

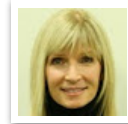
There is another fond musical memory I have of Pittsburgh. It was here that my good friend, Don Bestor, [photo right] held forth for such a long time. Don, as some of you know, was with our program all last season, and he did a great job. Gee, I still can't think of anything to get that guy for Christmas. I understand he has been up north in Canada this year. I'll bet those spats kept him good and warm.



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

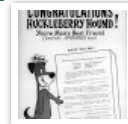
The World of Knight



TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. - COPYRIGHT 2020 BY MILTON KNIGHT

3 days ago

Yowp

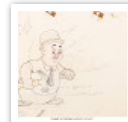


Hanna-Barbera Birthday Did-You-Knows - 63 years ago today, some

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 cannibalism when it comes

* * *

My trip to Pittsburgh last year certainly will always be among my happiest recollections. You can well imagine how highly honored I felt when I arrived early on a cold, wintry morning and discovered that that very fine gentleman, Harry Milholland, had come down to the station to meet me. Then he drove me to the William Penn in his car. Later on that morning, I went to call on him at his office at The Press. We had our pictures taken together, and one of them I remember particularly. I sat at his desk as if I were the editor and he acted as copy-boy bringing the latest stuff from the city-room. I understand he is in Florida now, and I was genuinely sorry to learn it, because ever since my manager arranged the engagement in Pittsburgh I had been looking forward to renewing my acquaintance with Mr. Milholland.

Another highlight of my visit last year was the interview over KDKA with Si Steinhäuser. He tried to cross me up with some ad-libbing.

But fortunately the members of our cast quite often deviate from the straight and narrow path of the script, so I was ready for him.

Mary, Kenny Baker (who is getting a big kick out of his first visit to Pittsburgh), Johnny Green, Don Wilson and all of us are looking forward to broadcasting tonight from KDKA's fine studios. We rehearsed there yesterday afternoon and everyone agreed that your Pittsburgh radio facilities are as fine as any we've ever come across.

In conclusion we want to tell you how complimented we are at the number of Pittsburgh listeners who have expressed enough interest in our program to apply for tickets. We're sorry that there can't be room for everyone and I think my sponsor did the only fair thing—issued the tickets in the order in which requests were received.

With this final push of the keys let me acknowledge my gratitude to Si Steinhäuser for making it possible for me to greet all of our Pittsburgh friends through his swell column.

Easy Jack

Mr. Benny Has Nothing To Do Today But Work

Here's Jack Benny's day's work in preparation for tonight's broadcast:

Having read the script, twice on Saturday, with Producer Tom Harrington, Lawton Campbell, sponsor's agent, and Harry Conn, gag writer, and previously rehearsed for two hours, he will:

Report at KDKA at 10 a. m. for two more readings.

Noon to 2 p. m.— Time program, using microphones.

2 to 4:30—Witness Johnny Green's Orchestra rehearsal.

4:30 to 6—Witness Kenny Baker's rehearsal with the orchestra and Don Wilson's timing of commercials.

6 to 6:30—Take part in a dress rehearsal with his cast.

6:30 to 6:45—Relax.

6:45 to 7—Kid with his audience.

7:00—On the air.

7:30—Sign autographs and try to get out of studios.

11:15—Return to studios for repeat broadcast.

Midnight—Sign autographs and try to get to his hotel.

Posted by Yowp at 07:23



Labels: Jack Benny

No comments:

Post a comment



to comics featuring Porky Pig. These are just some of the covers in which

Porky is ei...
4 weeks ago

Peter Gray's Comics and Art



An early Tom Thug page for sale and other comic art by Lew Stringer go

to link and ebay.. -
<http://lewstringercomics.blogspot.com/2020/02/original-art-for-sale.html>
https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/graphite47/m.html?_nkw=&_armrs=1&_ipg=&_from=
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)
 - December (32)
 - November (30)
 - October (31)
 - September (31)
 - ▼ August (32)
 - Walt Disney Says "We're Not a Company"
 - Rhoda
 - What's That On the Wall?

Enter your comment...

 Comment as: Garth (Google) ▼

Sign out

Publish

Preview

☐ Notify me

Newer Post

Home

Older Post

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

[How To Put Together a Cow](#)

[To Leave or Knotts to Leave](#)

[I'm Multiplyin'](#)

[Tex Smears the Cat](#)

[Youth and Violins](#)

[One of the Flip Cel Flippers](#)

[The Multi Door Gag](#)

[The Cupboard Was Bare \(In the Next Frame\)](#)

[Howard Morris, Crocodile and Comic Genius](#)

[How Rubber Hose Runs](#)

[Butt Walk](#)

[Jack Benny, Jail Bird](#)

[The Troubled Composer](#)

[Evil Woody](#)

[Casanova Cat Take](#)

[Mommy, Where Do Jokes Come From?](#)

[Crazy, Dam Fool Duck](#)

[Oceans of Beer](#)

[The Working Ham](#)

[Alvin and Calvin \(And The Rest\)](#)

[Boom Boom Bust](#)

[Jail Break!](#)

[Hans Conried, a Paart of the Show](#)

[Hey, What Does That Say?](#)

[Friz is Better Than Fritz](#)

[A Bit About Some Minor Players](#)

[The Accidental Cartoon Producer](#)

[Shakespeare Silhouettes](#)

[The Leaking Mouse](#)

► [July \(31\)](#)

► [June \(30\)](#)

► [May \(32\)](#)

► [April \(31\)](#)

► [March \(31\)](#)

► [February \(30\)](#)

► [January \(35\)](#)

► [2018 \(379\)](#)

► [2017 \(380\)](#)

► [2016 \(396\)](#)

► [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) |
| Kenny Baker | (6) |
| 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) |

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