



Sunday, 8 September 2019

I Made Jack Benny

Jack Benny appeared on Ed Sullivan's CBS radio show on March 29, 1932 (8:45 p.m. Eastern) and the story goes the folks at Canada Dry heard him and signed him to a twice-weekly, half-hour show on NBC's WJZ network.

That isn't quite the way George Olsen remembered it.

He claimed he suggested Benny be signed to *his* programme, and was therefore responsible for beginning Benny's fame and fortune on radio and TV.

Unfortunately—at least for now—there's nothing I can find from contemporary sources which confirm Olsen's version of events, or even that Olsen was signed first for the show.

Variety of April 26, 1932 reveals Olsen and Benny had both been inked to start May 2nd on a show for Canada Dry. Benny had, not too many days before, begun a co-MCing job on stage with Lou Holtz; I can find no hint anywhere he was in talks to go on radio. However, *Variety* of April 12th talks about Olsen negotiating with NBC as his CBS deal was running out. Olsen soon made an appearance on WEAf (the flagship of the NBC Red network) on Louis Sobol's *Lucky Strike* show. Benny, of course, was sponsored by Lucky Strikes years later. There was another Benny connection—the announcer was Howard Claney, who later plugged Chevrolets on one iteration of Jack's show.

One thing is clear if you listen to that very first Canada Dry show—it's as much Olsen's show as it is Benny's. Olsen and his singers seem to take up about half the time with musical numbers, with Jack doing "funny" patter in between. Mercifully, a decision was made to bring Olsen and his wife Ethel Shutta into the chatter and soon that was expanded to include the announcer and actors hired to play characters. The show became more and more comic, relying less and less on music.

This feature piece came from the Hackensack *Record*, Feb. 8, 1958. As the story indicates, Canada Dry's agency, N.W. Ayer, moved the show to CBS later in the year. Olsen and Shutta stayed behind at NBC and hooked onto a show with Baron Munchausen (Jack Pearl) before year's end.

George Olsen Gave Jack Benny A Big Push

Paramus Restaurateur Was Noted Band Leader In Years Gone Past

By KENNETH G. WALLACE

To the present generation of teen-agers and young people, the name of George Olsen may not mean a great deal. But to us a bit, er, more advanced in years, reference to George Olsen and his music brings back fond memories. In the phraseology of the younger set — man, he was the greatest.

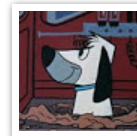
Olsen, now a Bergen County resident (he lives in an apartment in River Edge) and mine host at a favorite dining spot, Olsen's on Paramus Road in Paramus, has come into the news recently with an invitation to appear with Jack Benny on a television show next Thursday. On the show, Shower of Stars, Benny is slated to make a memorable step — he's going to celebrate his 40th birthday.

Olsen decided not to make the trip to the West Coast to appear with Benny, only after being strongly tempted to make the long jaunt.

But just seeing Olsen's name in the publicity released by the Columbia Broadcasting System, brought back a lot of memories. It surprised us a bit, too, to learn from the publicity that Olsen had been instrumental in Jack



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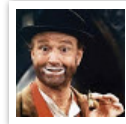


Some Cartoons For Saturday Morning #80 - Hello my friends

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

Benny's career, and as a matter of fact had been largely responsible for making Benny a big star.

It seemed like a good excuse to visit Olsen at his intimate place and to mix business and pleasure. So we got George Olsen to sit down with us while we ordered lunch, asked him about this Jack Benny T. V. show business and got him started talking about old times. Talking, that is, in between phone calls every five minutes from prospective dishwashers for whom George had advertised.

Well, then, what was this about giving Benny his start? It was back in 1931, Olsen recalled. He had just finished a 4-week engagement at the Palace Theater on bills which had included such other personalities as Milton Berle, Beatrice Lillie, the Mills Brothers, Fifi D'Orsay, and other big stars, when he was called to do another series of radio shows. It should be recalled here that for nearly 10 years before that, George Olsen and His Music was one of the biggest attractions in show business and that he had created a tremendous following on radio with one of the most popular air shows of all time.



Norman working with George Olsen and his band at WJZ in 1925.

But getting back to the Benny story: Olsen was asked to add a feature to the radio show something along the line of the comedy business he had done with Norman Brokenshire in broadcasts from the Pennsylvania. That was when Olsen and Brokenshire exchanged gags and introduced a new angle to broadcasting technique.

So Olsen ran through a long list of comedians at a booking agency and came across the name of Jack Benny. Now Benny wasn't exactly an unknown; he had been well-known in vaudeville, did night club work, etc., and Olsen figured this was the man he wanted.

So the broadcasts started. Some of you may still recall those introductions of Olsen's when he'd say: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is Jack Denny." And Benny would interrupt: "No, Mr. Olsen, not Denny; it's Benny, Jack Benny." Or maybe Olsen would say Ben Bernie, and get the sheepish correction again.

And you may recall, too, that it was Olsen who was the penny-pincher then — a role Benny has himself assumed. Anyway, the radio shows went on for 26 weeks, and as well as adding luster to Olsen's already long list of credits, it created a new radio character named Jack Benny.

Olsen got another offer — an increase to move to another network but

he refused, saying he'd stay loyal to those who had started him. Benny, however, moved over and so the Jack Benny show was born.

And the career Olsen had started blossomed.

Benny or no Benny, Olsen went on as a big attraction just the same, playing all over the county at all the biggest theaters, hotels, night clubs, and on college occasions, until 1950, when the great George Olsen and His Music aggregation was disorganized and Olsen himself went into temporary retirement.

Olsen was born in Portland, Ore., and says he migrated into show business naturally since his father was a moving man and he helped bring sets and equipment into theaters. Just one look at the theater did it — and he was in it for the rest of his life. He got his big break when the band he had organized in Portland was heard by Fannie Brice and she recommended him to Ziegfeld. Ziegfeld brought him cast and two big hit shows immediately followed, "Kid Boots" in 1923 and the "Follies" in 1924 with Will Rogers and W. C. Fields.

Most people in this section of the country remember Olsen best for his music at the Pennsylvania Hotel and Pennsylvania Roof, where he played for nearly three years straight, after which he left to go into "Good News" in 1927 and "Whoopee" after that.

Ethel Shutta, whom George had married several years before, joined the band as the star vocalist in 1930 (she had been in several shows before, one of them "Louis the 14th" with Leon Errol) and many long-run engagements followed, including two years at the Ambassador in Los Angeles; two years at the College Inn and five years at the Edgewater Beach in Chicago. The marriage to Ethel Shutta ended in divorce and Olsen is now married to a former Englewood girl, Claralee Pilcer.

One of the biggest attractions in show business during his time, Olsen saw the handwriting on the wall as early as the Middle Thirties for the band business. As George puts it, every player wanted a band of his own and soon there were five bands for every date and it began to take the shape of a cannibalistic business. Olsen refused to have any part of it — and his price was met by those who wanted George Olsen and His Music. It got tougher as time went on, particularly as the players grumbled about the long jumps and after 4 more years at the Edgewater Beach, Olsen called it quits in 1950.

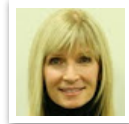
He loafed around a bit, joined Hackensack Golf Club and frankly admits he would have gone nuts being idle if it hadn't been for golf. You'd see him, as a matter of fact, in Charlie Mayo's pro shop in the middle of winter, dabbling with his golf clubs to keep busy.

Then he heard of the chance to buy the place on Paramus Road. So George bought it after thinking about it only a few days, and he's in the restaurant business now.

It's not exactly new to him, though. He was in business before — restaurants and night clubs along with his handwork and one of the places in which he had an interest was world-famous — the gigantic International Casino on Broadway, long since folded.

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



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



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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

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Posted by Yowp at 07:09



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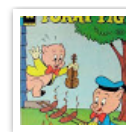
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to link and ebay.. -

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https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/graphite47/m.html?_nkw=&_armrs=1&_ipg=&_from=

rom=

5 months ago

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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

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