Sunday, 29 December 2019

General Tire and Jack

As inconceivable as it is, Jack Benny was fired by his first two sponsors despite his popularity with radio listeners. Canada Dry got annoyed at Benny having fun with the soft drink on the air (and being forced to fire a writer it imposed on him). Chevrolet's boss, C.E. Coyle, decided he wanted something classier than a comedian and over the objections of franchise dealers, replaced the Benny show with Victor Young (who didn't last very long).

Benny wasn't out of work for long. He was quickly snapped up by General Tire and Rubber Company. His last show for Chevrolet was April 1, 1934. His first for General Tire was five days later. Mary Livingstone and vocalist Frank Parker stayed when the new sponsor took over. Significantly, a new announcer was hired and Don Wilson won the audition over the others in the NBC stable. He remained until the Benny TV series ended in 1965.

How the Benny show came to be sponsored by General Tire is outlined in the book A Whale of a Territory: The Story of Bill O'Neil by Dennis

John O'Neill (with two Ls), published by McGraw-Hill in 1966. What the book doesn't reveal was how it came to be unsponsored. Trade publications in 1934 stated that a deal was struck that Benny would be "loaned" to General Foods for the winter and General Tire would resume sponsorship in the spring. But it never happened; Jack and Co. stayed with General Foods for another ten years. What happened? We may never know.

Benny was finished with General Tire on September 24, 1934 and, after a short break, took to the air with General Foods on October 14th

Here are the pertinent points about O'Neil and the Benny show from the book.

One of the reasons his associates—and competitors—were frequently taken off guard by Bill O'Neil's ideas was his habit of starting with an idea and using it as a launching pad for a vaguely related but quite different one. A good illustration of this was what happened as a result of his first exposure to radio. In the early 1930s, national radio shows had become the glamour advertising medium. The big stars were coming into American homes and making friends in a way never before possible. These people could influence potential customers, and W.O. had great faith in the power of the spoken word to sell ideas and products. W.O. felt that in many cases the stars received more advertising than some of the products they were paid to advertise, but this was because their sales talks were not properly prepared. One young fellow seemed to have an especially nice, easy way of weaving the advertising messages into the format of his show. So Bill O'Neil phoned his advertising agency and asked how much it would cost to sponsor Jack Benny. Characteristically, he did not ask for any listener ratings or for any other program suggestions. He had made up his mind that he wanted Benny. The price floored him. General advertised heavily in the expensive media of national magazine and newspaper advertising, but W.O. figured that they had large equipment and inventory expenses, tons of paper to buy, and costly distribution and postal charges.

Theirs was a manufacturing business and these costs he could understand. Radio, he figured, had none of these expenses, or practically none. For days W.O. reasoned his case with everyone remotely connected with the problem. He stormed, pacing up and down his office, hands jammed into his pockets. He burned the long-distance wire to New York. In short, he reacted as he always did when his own ideas collided with an entrenched status quo.



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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...

20 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

E Fernando Llera Blog Cartoons



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

fernandolleracartoons.com 14 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 Finally the temptation of being able to speak with millions of consumers in their homes became overpowering. So W.O. instructed his advertising agency to sign a contract for the Jack Benny program, including Jack's wife, Mary Livingston, tenor Frank Parker, announcer Don Wilson, and the orchestra. The association was a success and W.O. enjoyed it immensely. During the initial weeks he found excuses to be in New York and attend the broadcasts. One reason he gave for wanting to be there was to familiarize Benny with tires — General Tires—so he could ad lib some sales points: it was Benny's knack of selling other products informally and effectively that had attracted W.O. to him in the first place. But the hazards of the technique showed up on one of the early programs. Frank Parker had just finished a popular song and Benny returned to the air to exclaim enthusiastically, "Wonderful, Frank! Wonderful! That was as smooth as General Tires!" With this remark Bill O'Neil's enthusiasm for the ad-lib commercial waned.

On the first program, Jack Benny told a story about his new sponsor and referred to him as Mr. O'Neil. On the second show he told another story and again referred to Mr. O'Neil. After that program, W.O. got his advertising man to one side and and said: "I don't feel comfortable having Jack call me Mr. O'Neil. Don't make a big issue of it, but see if he'd mind calling me Bill O'Neil. It sounds more natural."

The significance of W.O.'s early association with the Jack Benny show was that it gave him his first contact with radio. No one at the time attached much importance to the interest he showed in every detail of the business. After each of the early Friday-evening broadcasts he gathered together a group from the studio, usually the producers, engineers, time salesmen, agency men— the people who were knowledgeable about radio as a business. More often than not, they would go out to a restaurant for a late supper and talk radio for hours. The studio people had never met a sponsor quite like him. He did not want to tell them how to handle his show, or talk about his business at all. He wanted to talk about theirs. A most peculiar sponsor!

They liked him, not only as a big, attractive human being with wit, great personal magnetism and a naturalness that was refreshing, but also because he was obviously interested in their business and shoptalk. Usually at the restaurant sessions, he would sell one or another a set of General Tires. He seldom missed an opportunity to do that. There was always a new face or two at these get-togethers, any one of whom might be the next eager caller at the New York General Tire store the Monday morning after hearing W.O. quietly paint a word picture of the difference between Generals and other tires. "Bill O'Neil said you'd give me a good tradein and a good price on a set of Generals," became a familiar opening gambit of these radio friends calling at the store.

This was the seed of General Tire's eventual role as a major factor in radio and television through RKO General, today the largest independent operation in the field. W.O. learned enough about radio to know that the business was attractive to him. He felt at home in it. He felt radio to be the wave of the future. It would be a challenge—his ideas against larger entrenched forces. There is no question that he him. He felt at home in it. He felt radio to be the wave of the future. It would be a challenge—his ideas against larger entrenched forces. There is no question that he decided then that someday he would like to test them. And test them he did, very successfully.

Posted by Yowp at 07:25



Labels: Jack Benny

1 comment:



M. Mitchell Marmel 29 December 2019 at 13:37

I find it interesting that pretty much all of Jack's major sponsors (Canada Dry, Chevrolet, General Tires, Jell-O, Grape Nuts, even Lucky Strikes) are still around in one form or another...

Reply



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

E The World of Knight



TONIGHT, 11:54 PM. -COPYRIGH T 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

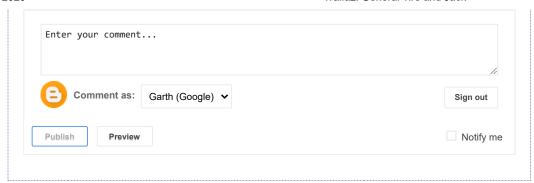
Mark Kausler's CatBlog

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



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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.blo gspot.com/2020/02/originalart-for-sale.html https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/ graphite47/m.html? _nkw=&_armrs=1&_ipg=&_f rom=

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

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Goona!

General Tire and Jack

Don't Follow the Bouncing Ball

Walky Talky Tree

Turkey Eyes

Tralfaz: General Tire and Jack

7/18/2020

The Santa With Two Bags, One Under Each

The Story of Christmas

The Great Toy Robbery

The Unmerry Story of a Hollywood Christmas

Christmas Every Day

Mole and the Christmas Tree

Christmas Cracker

Radio vs Television, a **Christmas Season** Look

Spunky the Snowman

The Bear's Christmas

The Show Never Heard on the Radio

Terry Tells Tales

Bill and Joe's Angry Kitten

They Rattle My Brains

Behind the Scenes at To Tell The Truth

Fishy Skunk

Van Beuren Does Fleischer

Tralfaz Sunday Theatre: The Light in Your Life

Jack Benny, His School and His Gang

Snafu

Trombone Lightning

Rubber Hose Dwarves

Before Allen's Alley

Cat Split

Duck's All, Folks

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