



Friday, 14 February 2020

## Birthday Benny

126 years ago, the world gained a 39-year-old.

Jack Benny was born.

It's safe to hypothesize that he was one of the most popular comedy figures of the 20th Century. Setting aside his vaudeville career in the 1920s, he was in the public eye almost weekly for 33 years on radio and television, and continued with occasional specials and guest appearances until his death nine years after his regular series ended. On top of that, he was so much of a drawing power he generated immense amounts of money for symphony orchestras, concert halls and musicians funds.



The fictionalised version of Benny beamed into living rooms had enough quirks and tics that the audience could easily identify with him. And laugh at him, too.

In honour of his birthday, here's a column in the editorial pages of the *Napa Valley Register* of February 14, 1968, though I have not ascertained when it was originally written.

*(EDITORS NOTE: Jack Benny, soon to appear at the Circle Star Theatre and a frequent star at Lake Tahoe, has been a leading entertainer for many years. The following report on Benny was originally written by Ross P. Game several years ago for some Chicago area newspapers and is reprinted today Benny's birthday—as a matter of public interest.)*

Bob Hope and Bing Crosby have been top-ranking entertainers for a good many years. And yet, how many Americans are aware that Crosby was born in Tacoma, Wash., or that Hope is a native of England? Such is not the case of Jack Benny. Waukegan, Ill., has countless industries, leading schools, recreation and vacation spots and miles of Lake Michigan shore line, but for most Americans these matters are of only secondary importance, for Waukegan is Jack Benny's hometown.

It's even likely that if Congress should ever move the nations capital to Waukegan the community would continue to carry the Jack Benny association in the hearts and minds of most people.

Jack Benny has been a Waukegan boy who made good, and in doing so never forgot the people, the places or things that played so important a part in his earlier life.

Waukegan today is filled with the Jack Benny legend. Anyone visiting the city for the first time will ask many questions about the comedian. Where did he live? Where did he go to school? Does he still have many friends in Waukegan? And, an almost certain question to be asked by a stranger: Did you know Jack Benny?

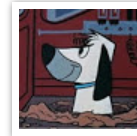
The entertainer hasn't forgotten Waukegan and there are a good many residents of the area who were raised with the comedian, went to school with him, were his neighbors, served with him in the Navy or appeared with him on the stage. Many of those concerned still keep in contact with Benny and the others enjoy recalling those days with the youthful, promising violinist.

The now famed comedian was born Benny Kubelsky on Valentine Day, Feb. 14, 1894 (although he has remained 39 for a good many years). His mother was taken from Waukegan to a Chicago hospital for the very special occasion. His father owned a clothing store on Waukegan's South Genesee Street and was able to support the family in a moderate style.

While still in grade school young Benny got a part time job as an usher at Waukegans Barri-son Theater and a short time later was the only knicker-bockered member of the pit orchestra, playing the violin—or what his friends termed "his fiddle."

Grover C. Lutter, a former police officer, recalls when he had the Genesee beat. "I can remember seeing Benny

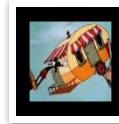
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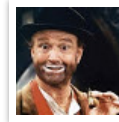


Some Cartoons For Saturday Morning #80 - Hello my friends

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

14 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

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

walking along carrying that big violin case," he notes. "The fiddle was almost as big as the boy." Lutter became acquainted with the young musician and later continued the friendship after the youth went on to be so famous.

When Benny was 15 or 16 he and Cora Salisbury, pianist at the Barrison, teamed up as vaudeville duo. Earlier, as Miss Florence Grady of Waukegan, recalls, the teenager had won weekly amateur contests and was popular with fellow students at Waukegan High School. The team of Kubelsky and Salisbury became featured on theater bills within 200-300 miles of Waukegan, but when Miss Salisbury's father became ill she returned home. Benny then teamed with a Chicago pianist named Lyman Woods. They gained bookings as far west as Seattle and even were scheduled to appear in London's Palladium.

Although he was "on the road" much of the time, reports David Richmon, a cousin, Benny would come home to visit his father in Waukegan and later nearby Lake Forest whenever he was in the area and during holidays.

Just prior to World War I Benny entered the Navy and was stationed at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, only a few miles from his Waukegan home. One night, as the story is told, Benny was to appear in a fundraising event at Great Lakes. As he walked on the stage with his violin the lights went out. However, the concert continued—with side comments from the musician. The remarks brought laughs and applause from the audience. That is credited with being the start of Benny, the comedian. His later activities during the war were as a sailor in grease paint.

Cliff Gordon, another cousin in Waukegan, comments with a smile, "He (Benny) was probably the outstanding military man in World War I." Gordon notes that Benny had been a hopeful musician, but his Great Lakes performance changed his entire career with the switch from music to comedy.

Originally the performer adopted the professional name of Ben K. Benny. After World War I he was known as Ben Benny, but that sounded too much like Ben Bernie, then popular orchestra leader. He changed his name this time to Jack Benny.

Following the war Benny was booked as a comedian and master of ceremonies. He gained fame on Broadway and also appeared in Earl Carroll and Schubert musicals.

In 1927 Jack and Sadye Marks (later Mary Livingston) became husband and wife in Waukegan. He had been in Los Angeles the previous year with the musical, Great Temptations, and it was there he was introduced to the young woman who clerked in a Los Angeles department store.

Several years later they adopted a daughter, Joan.

In the coming years Jack was making movies. Among those in which he appeared was The Hollywood Party of 1929. In the early 1930s he became interested in radio. He forfeited a guaranteed \$1,500 a week salary in an Earl Carroll contract so as to give the new entertainment medium a whirl.

Ed Sullivan, then host of a radio series, had Benny his guest during the early months of 1932. He made a hit and was offered his own contract. Since then Jack Benny has been on radio every season, first on NBC and later CBS, finally returning to NBC. His chief sponsors have been Canada Dry, General Motors, General Tires, General Foods and American Tobacco Co. The comedian developed his own radio show menu in the early days and before long others were imitating his style.

Benny is credited with being the first person to good-naturedly kid the commercials of his sponsor. He is also the first comedian to play straight man for other people on a show.

Jack Benny has been portrayed on his radio, television and stage presentations as the cheapest man in the world.

It's said that the comedian has worn out many coins and paper bills in his underground vault while counting his financial reserve. The cheap tag has been applied to Benny for entertainment purposes only. Those who know him consider the comedian to be one of the most generous individuals in the entertainment world.

Jerome Morrison, Waukegan businessman and friend of the comedian, terms Benny to be quite thoughtful and interested in the development of Waukegan, adding, Jack Benny is a nice guy for the town, not only publicly but quietly too.

The comedian has taken part in all major Waukegan fund-raising campaigns for charity and has gone all out to assist worthy: programs in his hometown.

On one occasion he performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. As a result of that benefit, Cedars of Lebanon Hospital netted a reported \$100,000. There have been numerous other performances too, with the Waukeganite giving his all.

One of Jack Benny's friends comments, "Few people will ever know the real Benny for what he is, because he's attempting to be funny when performing—and succeeds. In real life he's a warm, human type person and seems to love the world and that world loves him."

In Hollywood those persons working in restaurants, cabs and other places where Jack Benny may have occasion to appear term the comedian exceedingly generous with tips.

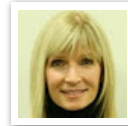
During World War II and the Korean War and later he traveled thousands of miles to entertain American servicemen and often appeared close to the fighting-lines. Jack and Mary provided one of Hollywood's most



references may be found regarding two-strip Technicolor. I have been guilty of discussing Walter Lantz's King of Jazz (1930)...

1 day ago

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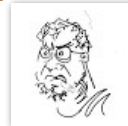


Mary Turner  
1985 - Mary Turner today Mary Turner really

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

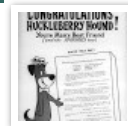
#### The World of Knight



TONIGHT,  
11:54 PM. -  
COPYRIGHT  
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

lavish weddings when their daughter was married in March of 1954. Total bill for the affair was estimated as being in the neighborhood of \$25,000.

Benny has never forgotten Waukegan and the millions of Americans who listen to radio or view television will never forget the association. "They loved me in Waukegan" is frequently noted by the comedian during the course of a show.

That Waukegan will never forget Jack Benny there can be no doubt. In April of 1937 there was a Jack Benny Day conducted, with the city's most famed citizen returning to accept the cheers of his home folks.

Two years later another big Benny day was experienced in Waukegan. Then the spotlight fell upon the community for the world premiere of "Man About Town." The stars were Dorothy Lamour, Edward Arnold and Jack Benny. They were all on hand for a huge parade and a round of special activities.

Throughout the festivities one of the busiest men in Waukegan was Julius Sinykin, long time friend of Benny, who played a featured part in the affair.

Jack Benny remains on top in the entertainment world, where figures have come and gone with the changing tides of popularity.

Benny has been associated with all of Hollywood's top film studios and has been featured in numerous films.

Jack and Mary live in a fine residential section of Beverly Hills, Calif. He still practices the violin.

Waukeganites feel that Benny has changed little through the years. Most consider him "one of us," and believe that he's still the same friendly, well rounded individual.

In 1911 The Waukegan Daily Sun commented on an Elks Club minstrel show act, saying, "Benny Kubelsky, the ragtime violinist and the first act in the folio, showed himself a master of the violin and his pleasing slyly humorous personality made a deep impression." Jack Benny continues to make that impression wherever he goes—and in whatever he does.



Posted by Yowp at 06:07




Labels: Jack Benny

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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.. -  
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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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