



Sunday, 13 June 2021

Good Night, Joanie

Jack Benny had a little message at the end of his broadcasts when he was out of Los Angeles in the late '30s-early '40s.

"Good night, Joanie," he would say.

It was a private recognition of his little daughter Joan, listening back home before being put to bed.

Little Joanie passed away last Thursday, a week before her 87th birthday. She and her father both succumbed to pancreatic cancer.

Joan grew up in the spotlight, with movie magazines running feature stories about the Benny family when she was a child. Her first wedding drew huge press attention, mainly because her father spent and spent and spent some more on it, in contrast to his radio character. She stood in for her mother in the end days of the radio episodes, and even appeared on the radio and TV shows. No doubt fans are rushing to video sharing sites, re-watching her and her dad on *Password* in the early '60s.

She is probably best known as what they used to call an "authoress" by taking her father's memoirs, adding her own memories, and compiling "Sunday Nights at Seven." She remarked that she didn't think it would be popular because she had nothing bad to say about her father. But she loved him very much, and so did fans, who snapped up copies as soon as they came out.

Jack Benny died December 26, 1974. Joan, naturally, was one from whom reporters at the time wanted to hear. She was featured in a story from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of January 14, 1975 that was syndicated across the U.S.

My thanks to Bill Cairns for use of the photo of father and daughter.



Jack Benny's Daughter, Joan, Recalls Life With Dad

By ELAINE TAIT

Knight Newspapers Writer

PHILADELPHIA, Pa.—"Daddy had the greatest enthusiasm about everything. We used to laugh at him. He would say something like 'this is the greatest glass of water I have ever had in my life' and mean it."

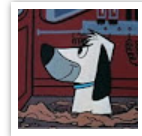
Joan Benny Blumofe smiles a lot when she talks about her father, the late Jack Benny. But there are times when tears well up suddenly in those lovely, expressive eyes.

Joan was in town this past week to tape a Benny tribute for a Jan. 24 Mike Douglas show. She was adopted by Benny and his wife when the comedian was 40 and she was an infant. Despite the age difference, she and her father were very close, she says.

Both were baseball fans and they haunted the stadium where the Hollywood Stars played. They shared an enthusiasm for classical music, something that in the last 20 years of Benny's life, became more important than his comedy work according to Joan.

Despite his reputation as a comedian, Benny wasn't a funny father, Joan says. "He would tell us jokes he had heard at the club then explain why a certain story was funny even though you already knew why."


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As an example of this "unfunny" characteristic Joan recounted the time she told her father a story she thought was funny. She got to the punch line and drew a blank look from Benny. "I said 'that's the story Daddy,' and he said 'oh'," Joan recalls.

"So I said, 'let me try again.' Again, nothing. Two hours later we were talking about something else, he said 'That was a great story.' And he then explained to me why it was funny.

"I wish I could be more like him," Joan says. "He had no guile. No ulterior motives. Mother was the stronger person. She would tell him to look out for someone she suspected was trying to use him and Daddy would listen. But he was never convinced.

"Daddy couldn't care less about clothing. Mother saw to it he was dressed properly. He might wear purple socks if Mother didn't supervise. He didn't understand status dressing like Gucci shoes."

Like father like daughter.

Joan, who is 40 but looks younger, says she dresses in jeans and wears virtually no makeup. For the Douglas show, she wore a denim pantsuit that de-emphasized her petite, feminine prettiness.

Joan, who was slightly nervous about doing the Douglas show, (she left show business to raise a family of four), says her father was always nervous.

"Really talented people always are," she says. "He worried about everything as far as his profession was concerned but I thought he hid it well."

Benny doted on his first grandson, Michael, Joan's son. He took the boy everywhere, to Expo in Montreal and to one of the early space launchings.

"He was always recognized. I think he was unhappy if he wasn't. He and Bob Hope once compared vacations which each other had taken to get away for some peace and quiet. When he wasn't recognized in two days he came home," Joan says. "He hated it. Bob said he had the same experience.

"He was a great visitor, popping in on friends. He loved to walk. That's not unusual anywhere but in Hollywood. I drive to the corner to mail a letter.

"He was a pushover as a father," Joan says, and her eyes begin to mist. Records show she isn't exaggerating. When she was married at 21, the man whose comedy reputation had been based on being a skinflint, gave her a wedding that was estimated to cost from \$25,000 to 150,000.

Asked to share special memories, she remembers how every week when she was three or four, Benny would take her for an excursion through the Calif. countryside. "He'd always say that the car wouldn't start until I gave him a kiss." There's a pause and a visible effort to regain composure.

"I don't know yet what I can talk about without crying," she apologizes as she rushes off to the Douglas taping. The explanation is unnecessary. A whole country will know how she feels.



Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:33](#)



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Steve 14 June 2021 at 09:45

I have the "Sunday Night" book, and reading it one gets the distinct impression she and Mary did not get along. Joan tells in the book about reuniting with her caretaker Signe Bensen years later, and Signe said among other things that Joan was lucky, her parents actually wanted her. Not just for publicity.

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Errol 14 June 2021 at 10:09

Sorry to hear that. The end of a legacy. Godspeed Joan. R.I.P.

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Hans Christian Brando 15 June 2021 at 17:33

What a relief: no "Bennie Dearest."

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► [May \(34\)](#)

► [April \(30\)](#)

► [March \(31\)](#)

► [February \(29\)](#)

► [January \(33\)](#)

► [2020 \(389\)](#)

► [2019 \(376\)](#)

► [2018 \(379\)](#)

- [2017](#) (380)
- [2016](#) (396)
- [2015](#) (389)
- [2014](#) (390)
- [2013](#) (388)
- [2012](#) (397)
- [2011](#) (106)

Labels

Aline Mosby (18)
Art Davis (39)
Bad Luck Blackie (11)
Bob and Ray (15)
Bob Clampett (104)
Bob McKimson (75)
Bob Thomas (61)
Chuck Jones (169)
Columbia (56)
Counterfeit Cat (10)
Cynthia Lowry (35)
Dick Thomas (18)
Don Patterson (19)
Drag-a-Long Droopy (14)
Earl Wilson (17)
Erskine Johnson (43)
Felix the Cat (32)
Film Daily (50)
Fleischer (191)
Frank Tashlin (35)
Fred Allen (51)
Fred Brunish (11)
Friz Freleng (174)
Gene Deitch (21)
George Pal (11)
Grant Simmons (9)
Hanna and Barbera unit (121)
Hanna-Barbera (4)
Harman-Ising (83)
Henry Morgan (14)
Irv Spence (12)
Jack Benny (561)
Jay Ward (34)
Jimmy Durante (21)
John Crosby (99)
John Sutherland (37)
Johnny Johnsen (37)
Kenny Baker (6)
King-Size Canary (9)
Laugh-In (16)
Legend of Rockabye Point (6)

- [Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)
- [Magical Maestro](#) (9)
- [Maurice Noble](#) (12)
- [Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)
- [MGM](#) (678)
- [Norm McCabe](#) (6)
- [Pat Matthews](#) (12)
- [Paul Julian](#) (15)
- [Sara Berner](#) (5)
- [Screwy Squirrel](#) (38)
- [Spider-Man](#) (1)
- [Terrytoons](#) (104)
- [Tex Avery](#) (584)
- [The Cat That Hated People](#) (10)
- [Toby the Pup](#) (3)
- [Tom and Jerry Human](#) (45)
- [Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (19)
- [Ub Iwerks](#) (110)
- [UPA](#) (69)
- [Van Beuren](#) (123)
- [Vernon Scott](#) (51)
- [Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)
- [Walt Disney](#) (182)
- [Walter Lantz](#) (293)
- [Warner Bros.](#) (757)
- [Who Killed Who](#) (10)