



Sunday, 14 November 2021

I Had Four Wives

Ol' Buck Benny needed to do more than blaze a six-shooter if'n he were to rout those mangy varmints on the other networks.

In the 1958-59 season, Jack Benny was up against *Maverick* on ABC. He had what may have been a decided disadvantage. James Garner and his six-shooter were on every week. Benny was still alternating weeks; every other week, CBS aired *Bachelor Father*. And *Maverick* had something different than pretty much every other horse opera—Garner was amusing; the show had a lighter touch than *Cheyenne*, *Tales of Wells Fargo* or just about any other Western on the air that season (and there were plenty of them).

So that meant Benny had to counter-programme. Usually that meant filling the screen with some huge motion picture guest star. But of November 2nd, he tried something else—wives of big-name stars.

Here's a syndicated story that appeared in papers just before the broadcast aired.

Four Wives For Benny!

By HAL HUMPHREY

HOLLYWOOD—"Now, look. I want all four of you to relax on this show. If you break up or forget a line, it's all right. I don't want you to rehearse too much either. That would spoil everything."

Four very attractive women looked rather baffled as they heard these instructions from the star of the show in which they were to play important roles. After all, this was their TV acting debut, and each one had a husband who would be watching with extremely critical eyes.

The women?

Mrs. Bob Hope, Mrs. Dean Martin, Mrs. Ray Milland and Mrs. David Niven.

The star (of stage, screen, radio and TV)?

Jack Benny, who else?

There just isn't anyone else who would have the nerve and audacity to hire four amateurs for key roles on his TV show unless it was Ted Mack.

Playing themselves in this Sunday's Jack Benny Show, the Mes-dames Hope, Martin, Milland and Niven descend upon Jack as a committee for the improvement of Beverly Hills. To this committee of lovely ladies nothing would improve their fair city more than the removal of Jack's 1910 Maxwell. Knowing Jack's pecuniary habits, they resort to chincancery right off.

When Mal Milland and Hjordis Niven told their husbands they were doing Jack's show, the reaction was, "You crazy? That's a live show!"

Dean Martin had let wife Jean believe it was on film. After she heard it was "live" she was about to chicken out.

Dolores Hope seems to have no fear of the medium "live" or dead and in the rehearsal I caught, she was punching across the lines like a veteran.

Her only worry is that the Toluca Lake chamber of commerce won't cotton to her being classed as a Beverly Hills resident and Dolores is quite serious about this, too. She wasn't placated when someone suggested they wouldn't hear about it.

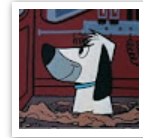
"I've already heard so much comment about our being on this show, and we haven't even been on yet. I believe more people must watch Jack than they do Bob's show," she stated.

And now it's a question of who is going to feel most injured—Toluca Lake or Bob.



Jack Benny signs four stars' wives to appear on his show Sunday night. From left: Mrs. David Niven, Mrs. Bob Hope, Mrs. Dean Martin and Mrs. Ray Milland.

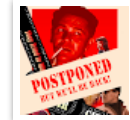
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Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Noir City 19
Postponed (thanks A LOT, Omicron) -
*The hope

for 2022 was that screenings, festivals and events would finally return at least semi-permanently, but, alas, COVID-19 has the las...

27 minutes ago



Cartoon Research

In His Own Words: Willis Pyle - Pyle worked at Disney and UPA and later enjoyed a long career as a freelance animator on such projects as Richard Williams' *Raggedy Ann* and *Andy*.

7 hours ago



News From ME

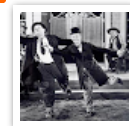
Orlando Busino, R.I.P. - Veteran gag cartoonist Orlando Busino has left us at the age of 95. I don't write these about a lot of magazine cartoonists but Mr. Busino did exceptional

...

10 hours ago



Movies with Michael



Way Out West (1937) - If *Sons of the Desert* (1933) is

Laurel and Hardy's most popular feature than "Way Out West" is a close second. Its popularity is well founded as t...

23 hours ago



Fernando Liera Blog Cartoons

"I think it's going to be a funny show because of the girls," Jack said to me. "If it isn't, what are they gonna do? Throw me out of show business?"

Dolores Hope went on despite a fever the night before. Niven took his wife to Austria and Sweden immediately after the show. Mal Milland, according to Jack's daughter Joan, was one of the most beautiful women she ever saw, more so than any movie star.

The New York *Daily News* called it his best show of the season and praised Mel Blanc in a supporting role. Louella Parsons noted in her column: [L]eave it to Bob Hope to throw in the "ad-lib" that broken them all up. Showing up with David Niven to take a bow at the end of the program, Bob whispered to Dolores, "Did you get your money yet?" To which Jack yipped, "No—but you'll make me do three free shows for you for this!"

As for the ratings showdown, Jack beat Garner with a 22.9 rating, compared to 22.1 for *Maverick* and 7.8 for *Northwest Passage* on NBC. *Maverick*, however, ended the season at number six, with Jack not even in the top 20.

George Rosen of *Variety* may not have been surprised. His opinion, in a column November 5, 1958, was that "the very best in television...more than likely won't even show up when the Top 10 laurels are distributed and when the season's cumulative batting averages are tallied." His argument was the number of viewers was not in direct proportion to the quality of the show.

It's an argument still being made 63 years later.


Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:00](#)
Labels: [Jack Benny](#)



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The price of milk is now higher than gasoline! - ©2022 fernandoller acartoons.c

om
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[A Itchin' to Fly: Howard Post's The Itch](#) - It's amusing to me,

compared to last week's cartoon of pick, this week I'm going to be giving some thoughts of something the complete opposite! Think about...
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[Wolfman Jack on AFN 1976](#) - It's howlingly delicious.

More Wolfman Jack
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[November and December 1943](#) - NBC shut down its

television cameras in 1942 when the FCC cut the minimal hours of broadcasting to four a week. The sole NBC station, WNBT in New York, sto...
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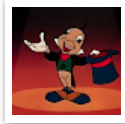
 [Yowp](#)



[Flintstones Daily Strips, October 1961](#) - Over the years, the Yowp

blog has posted the Sunday (Saturday in Canada) colour comics starring Yogi Bear and The Flintstones syndicated by McNaught. There...
1 week ago

 [Prydain on Film](#)



[Merry Christmas](#) -

2 weeks ago

[Show All](#)

 [Dr. Grob's Animation Review](#)

Sarusuberi (Miss Hokusai) -
Based on a manga from the
mid-1980s by Hinako
Sugiura 'Miss Hokusai' is
one of those rare animation
films unquestionably
directed to an adult
audience. The...
4 days ago

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