



Sunday, 2 October 2022

Morale Boosting Benny

Summer vacation? Not for Jack Benny in 1943.

He spent it entertaining soldiers with his troupe overseas through the USO.

Even when he returned, he wasn't through helping the fighting men. Daughter Joan Benny outlined it in her book, but one of the stories below talks about how he tried to give assurances to the mothers of soldiers in the war zone.

The first two stories are dated September 30th; the second came from the *New York Times*.



Jack Benny Returns From Overseas Tour

NEW YORK, Sept. 30. (UP)—When Jack Benny landed in Italy to entertain troops, he stepped from his plane and announced, "I'm Jack Benny."

A surprised major looked at him and asked: "What in the hell do you think you're doing here?"

Back from a 32,000 mile tour overseas the comedian said at a press conference today that the one night stand in Italy wasn't on the schedule until he and harmonica player Larry Adler and singer Wini Shaw arrived to find an audience in Sicily had moved ahead.

Benny found that Arabs, who frequently were in the audience at Algiers, were appreciative listeners. "They'll laugh at anything," he said.

He found good food in the camps and gained 15 pounds while playing 150 shows in Central and North Africa, the Persian gulf area and Sicily.

Benny Troupe End Overseas Air Tour

Comedian and Itinerant Unit Visited Camps in Africa, Egypt, Persia, Italy

Jack Benny and his troupe of itinerant players are back in town after a ten-week air tour, under the auspices of United Service Organizations-Camp Shows, of American Army camps behind the front lines in Africa, Egypt, Iran and Italy.

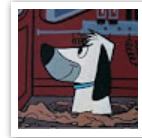
They were the first entertainers to follow the Allied army from Sicily into the "toe" of Italy, and landed in the comfortable belief that Allied commanders were expecting them, when they weren't; but they went through safely with good luck.

Mr. Benny returned to La Guardia Field Tuesday night, with Miss Wini Shaw, stage and screen singer, and Jack Snyder, pianist of the Yacht Club Boys, who joined the troupe in North Africa after completing an eight-month tour. They left Larry Adler, harmonica virtuoso, in London, and the fifth member, Miss Anna Lee, film actress, in Algiers, where she remained with another USO-Camp Shows troupe under Adolph Menjou, one of fifty shows now entertaining American fighting men abroad.

Trip "Like a Vacation"

Miss Shaw and Mr. Benny told yesterday about their experiences at the Camp Show offices, 8 West Fortieth Street. They say it had been like a vacation, and that they had seen places like Aden, Bengasi, Cairo and Iranian sections that "we would never see except in a war." They praised the morale of the troops, but Miss Shaw, who "talked to the boys" at every stop, said with considerable emphasis that American relatives at home ought to stop writing gloomy letters to their me at the front—her other remarks on this score were blue-

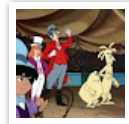
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Earth (1985) - A wonderfully creepy episode. In this episode the gang heads to Dooville to visit Scooby's parents. When they get there no one is there to meet them...

1 hour ago

Cartoon Research

In His Own Words: Chuck Jones on Music in Animation - Many of Jones' best cartoons rely on music for their impact, so it is no surprise he had some opinions on the topic of music in animation even back in 1946.

6 hours ago

News From ME

Today's Video Link - It's been a while since we had a number here from the Masters of Harmony but here they are — with their rendition of a song from the musical *Wicked*....

6 hours ago

Yowp

The Life and Times of Yowp - Before he played a cowardly Great Dane that solved mysteries (I've forgotten the character's name, Scrubby or something), and before he portrayed Astro on ...

1 day ago

Fernando Llera Cartoons

Institutional Revolutionary Party will not admit regression of democracy

pencilled by an officer-censor at the interview.

Both spoke in glowing terms of what Army doctors and nurses were doing at the front and at hospital stations, as unsung heroes, saying that not once did they hear the tired, overworked nurses, voice the desire to come home. They expressed the wish that newer motion pictures could be sent to Army detachments abroad. Remarked Mr. Benny: "In Iran, according to the current films, Shirley Temple hadn't been born yet, and Francis X. Bushman had just won the popularity contest." Miss Shaw, who is going back soon, said the soldiers were annoyed by the ban on record transcriptions, which keeps them short of disks. The troupe played an average of two shows a day, sleeping in camps, leaving early the next morning for the next stand, and trying to cover as much ground as possible, so that no unit would miss getting entertainment. Mr. Benny said regretfully that they had to miss some Army units, and he is advising directors of the USO-Camp Show organization on routings to overcome faults in the system. Both Mr. Benny and Miss Shaw were tanned by the Middle East sun. Mr. Benny was in a hospital in Sicily for a few days, but quickly recovered from a bad cold, and he said the army food "all the way" had been so good that he would have to take off fifteen pounds for his next picture.

This last story is from the *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1943. Every time I see Larry Adler's name mentioned in connection with the war effort, I get angry about how he was blacklisted and forced to leave the U.S. for good.

Setting that aside, you can't help but appreciate the extra things Jack did when he didn't have to.

Benny Busy Phoning "Moms" of Servicemen

Jack Benny, home from the battle fronts, is as busied as ever for the men overseas. He's phoning "Moms"—many "Moms." For his pockets and his duffle bags overflow with the telephone numbers of American mothers he was asked to "call up."

"Just tell Mom I'm fine, they'd ask me. Most of them were very young. It kinda got you," the comedian said. But he was full of enthusiasm for the men "over there" and the reception they gave him.

Benny, 12 pounds heavier and fitter than his fiddle after 10 weeks of constant travel, played to service men in such places as the Middle East, Africa, Sicily, Iceland, and in the first American show there—Italy. The N.B.C. comedian describes his trip to 32,000 miles as the greatest vacation of his life.

With his first broadcast of the season coming up today, he was met in New York by his leading lady, Mary Livingstone (his wife in private life), and his daughter, Joan. The remainder of the Benny regular cast joined him a few days ago to get ready for the big event which will be played to a studio audience of service men at N.B.C.'s Vanderbilt Theatre. After Oct. 17 the cast, including Rochester, Phil Harris, Dennis Day and Don Wilson, will return to Hollywood.

On his shows in far-off places Benny said he was most frequently asked to do old routines the boys remembered from his programs. "They all know how cheap I'm supposed to be and they all ask about the Maxwell," he chuckled.

The Benny troupe, which included Anna Lee, actress; Larry Adler, harmonica player, who also helped Jack write some of his camp shows; Jack Snyder, pianist, and Wini Shaw, singer, played two or three shows a day on the tour. They also visited hospitals in every camp they touched. Benny paid particular tribute to the doctors and nurses and said that despite fatigue they seemed always cheerful, just as the men were.

The only near-mishap of the trip the comedian could recall came in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf when their plane could not make its scheduled landing because of recurring sandstorms. "Otherwise," said Benny, "we had no trouble."

Jack made other stops during the war. He was in the South Pacific. In 1945 he, Ingrid Bergman and others performed in Germany (those are the photos with this post). Of course, he took his radio show to various military camps and assisted with Victory Loan drives in Canada. And he persevered during a tour in the Korean War zone in the '50s with Frank Remley and Errol Flynn but admitted when he got home it was too tiring for him to do it any more.

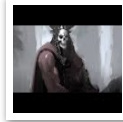


during Constitution Reforms voting. - ©2022
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1 day ago

Buddy's Cartoons

Er... - Let's pretend that that "moving stuff" never happened. Essays-as well as your comments-are still there.
2 days ago

Prydain on Film



Disney's Live Action/Hybrid Realistic CGI Remakes,

and the Chronicles of Prydain live action storyboard pitch reel - For those waiting (including myself) for Disney to adapt the Prydain chronicles as a live action CGI series, since 2016, Disney repurchased the film r...
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Old TV History



July 1946 - Radio was still king in mid-1946, but things were shifting very slowly. The FCC was approving licenses for new television stations. A small company named ...
5 days ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



October 22 means NYUK NYUK NYUK WOOWOO

WOO - *Today we pay tribute to comedy icon and key Stoooge Jerome Lester Horw...
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Termite Terrace headlines

Today's Sharing--Blondie and Popeye's Shadow Theatre - It's been a while since I posted here... I've been busy with school and writing for Jerry Beck. I plan to share things here more often Anyways, I saw this...
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Regardless, Jack performed (in more ways than one) his duty during war-time. It couldn't help but boost morale.

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



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

2 comments:

Anonymous [5 October 2022 at 08:15](#)

Big Benny fan here. I had no idea that Larry Adler was victimized by McCarthyism until you mentioned it. That's a travesty. (But thank you for the information, as well as all the wonderful work you've been doing with these transcripts over the years. I know it can be hard throwing stuff out into the ether, wondering if people appreciate it or not. Believe me, I do, and I'm sure there's many, many others out there who also enjoy your posts, even if they don't take the time to say so.) After reading your post, I went to Larry Adler's page on Wikipedia. Amusing that he was good friends with Peter Stringfellow. :D

[Reply](#)



Yowp [5 October 2022 at 09:30](#)

The Los Angeles Times, years ago, mentioned an Adler documentary. I haven't seen it. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-02-06-ca-28814-story.html>

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