



Sunday, 9 October 2022

Mel and Jack

No, not everyone who works together in radio hangs out with their boss, though it sounds like they're close buddies on the air. Take Jack Benny for example. Don Wilson and Dennis Day don't seem to have been part of his social set. He hung out with Barbara Stanwyck and Paulette Goddard as well as vaudeville cohorts like George Burns.

There was at least one exception.

Mel Blanc.

Mel's autobiography and Jack's book written partly by his daughter mention the relationship the two had. And while I imagine Mel wasn't at the Bennys' big, fancy Hollywood parties, they did see each other at the Blancs' cottage at Big Bear Lake, and Mel could come over and entertain Joan Benny with his array of cartoon voices.

And Jack certainly was close enough to Mel to call on him in hospital after the horrific car accident in 1961 that came close to killing Blanc. Eventually, Mel was well enough to return to Jack's TV show in a very touching portion of a Christmas season episode.

Here's a feature story from the *Hartford Courant* of December 24, 1961. Nowhere does it say Jack visited Mel "every day" in hospital as some stories say. Nor does it tell the story of a comtose Mel being woken after repeated attempts when a doctor talked to him as Bugs Bunny (Mel alternately confirmed and denied that one). But it does give you an idea of the friendship between the two and what a thoughtful man Benny was.



You Just Can't Keep Mel Blanc Down

Man of 300 Voices Fights Back from Near Tragedy

By H. VIGGO ANDERSEN

Television Editor

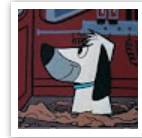
A man with 300 different voices telephoned me from Hollywood the other day. That could be a bit confusing, you know. Even disturbing. Happily, he was using only one voice that day. The one he was born with and a very pleasant one it is.

You would never dream, as we sat there chatting over the transcontinental phone, that Mel Blanc, out there in California, was confined to a wheel chair, still convalescing from extremely painful, near-fatal injuries suffered in a grim automobile accident about 11 months ago. He was cheerful, uncomplaining, eager to talk about his work which he still carries on busily, undaunted by his handicap.

"I'm a very lucky guy," he said, and meant it. "Lucky to be here at all. Know what the doctor told me when I asked him how many bones I had broken? He said if any friends of mine ever told me about breaking a bone, any bone except the left arm, I could tell them I had broken the same ones! That covers quite a bit of territory, including my head, which was pretty well smashed up, too."

Mel was driving to work that fearful evening and was in the curb lane on Sunset Boulevard near UCLA. Suddenly a youngster, driving a car at a fast clip, crossed the double lines from the other side of the boulevard, veered across the inside lane and then plowed head on into Mel's car. It took rescuers more than a half hour to saw him out of the wreckage and then they hurried him to the hospital of the nearby

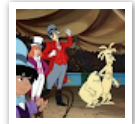
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Yowp

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

university more dead than alive.

Fortunate Coincidence

"Just by coincidence I had entertained the faculty at UCLA a few days earlier, and when I was brought in one of the doctors recognized me. Man, did he go into action. He's a bone specialist. Well, he and a head specialist and 14 other doctors worked on me all that night. I was on the critical list for three days. Since then I've been wearing all sorts of casts and bandages, but, by gosh, I'm still here and doing fine," said the indomitable man of many voices.



STRICTLY BUSINESS: Comedian Mel Blanc (right), recovered from a near-fatal automobile accident, pays Jack Benny a dollar for his autograph when he returns as a guest on "The Jack Benny Program" tonight at 9:30 on Ch. 5, 12.

"Just the other day," he went on cheerfully, "they took the cast off my right leg and it is in a brace now. With the help of crutches I am beginning to get around a bit. In two or three months I should be pretty much myself again."

One thing that has kept Mel Blanc's spirits up during the dark, painful months since the accident has been his work. Almost as soon as he got out of the hospital and returned to his home in Pacific Palisades he resumed making hilarious magic with that wonderful, flexible voice of his. He does the voices of 97 per cent of the characters in all the Warner Bros. cartoons, you know, including such prime favorites as Bugs Bunny (his top favorite and one he has been doing for 25 years), Speedy Gonzales, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Yosemite Sam and many others.

How did he manage to carry on, lying in bed all swathed up like a mummy. Let him tell it.

Son Built Him A Studio

"My son, Noel, is a pretty clever boy," he said proudly. "He's a lieutenant in the Army. Well, he built me a studio right here in my

own home that is as complete and well equipped as any you'll find in Hollywood. I lay here in bed and made sound tracks so that the boys down at Warner Bros. could keep going with the cartoons, including that new and highly successful one, 'The Flintstones.' "

You probably heard one track he made like this for Jack Benny, in which a small squirrel hid in a bunker hole and watched Benny whiff the breeze futilely several times without connecting with the golf ball. At last the squirrel burst out sarcastically: "It's cool now. Hit it."

And once the conversation had touched Jack Benny, Blanc was off on his favorite subject. "I've worked with just about all of them and he's the best. I'm not just talking about his superb talents as a comedian, but Jack Benny as a man. He is one of the kindest, most considerate men walking the earth today. Do you know that in all the time I've been laid up he has found time to visit me in the hospital and here at home at least once in every 10 days. He has been a source of tremendous inspiration and encouragement to me. What a great guy he is!"

Together Again Tonight

Blanc and Benny, who have been working together since 1940, back in radio days, will be seen together again tonight on Benny's Christmas show, but not in the familiar roles of annoying Christmas shopper (Jack) and utterly frustrated clerk (Mel). In tonight's show Benny visits the house-bound Blanc and they do a scene sitting beside each other. "Jack has seen the tape, and he tells me it's very funny. I hope you and everyone else will think so." (I'm sure we will.)

I asked Blanc how early in life he had learned that he had an outstanding gift for mimicry.

"Back in grammar school days. I guess," he said. "I used to do a lot of silly imitations for the other kids. I got started by talking to foreign born people in my native Portland, Oregon. For instance, a Japanese fruit pedlar. I'd point to the various fruits and vegetables he was selling and ask him what they were. Get him talking. Then I'd listen and when I left him I could do a pretty fair Jap dialect. I've been doing that sort of thing ever since I can remember picking up accents, dialects and odd sounds everywhere I've been."

"Is it true that you actually have 300 different, so-called voices?" I asked him.

"Oh, I guess it's really more than that," he said in all modesty.

Blanc had his first radio show on station KGW in Portland in 1927, just after he had been graduated from high school and he has been in show business ever since, and his is a voice (or voices) known and beloved to millions of listeners.

From Portland, Blanc drifted down to Hollywood where he began his career as a voice specialist for Warners, a job he still holds. Then came radio and his signing with Jack Benny in 1940. His first appearance with Benny was for the role of "Carmichael the Bear," and he was such a success Jack made him a permanent member of the cast.



TICKLING THE BOSS: By the looks of it, Mel Blanc must just have said something seriously funny, for it isn't easy to make Jack Benny break up like this. This pair has been making audiences roar with laughter since 1940.

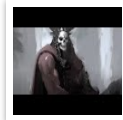
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Buddy's Cartoons

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/Hype
r 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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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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Dr Grob's Animation Review

Blog Archive

He became famous in his own right as the station master (remember him? Anaheim, Azusa and Cucamonga) the clerk in the annual Christmas show and as the sound of the famous old Maxwell.

Feared TV

When Benny went to television, Blanc had some serious doubts about his ability to make the switch. For so many years he had been cloaked in anonymity, just a voice. He didn't believe he could perform as effectively as a visual entertainer. He couldn't have been more wrong for he turned out to be the perfect image of all his radio voices and characters. The public loved and still loves him. In addition to his cartoon work, and his career on the Benny program, Blanc also owns his own commercial company, known as Mel Blanc Associates. The concern produces humorous commercials for many of the top accounts in the country and Blanc admits he "loves those residuals."

A mighty busy and contented man, this courageous Mel Blanc. Happy in his work, still very much in love with his wife of many years, Estelle, and so proud of son, Noel, he has every right to describe himself as "a lucky guy." And he's a mighty nice one, too.

Why don't you look in on him on the Benny show tonight? He'd love to have you. And you are guaranteed some laughs from a man who not so long ago had very little to feel funny about.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:18](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

Eric O. Costello [9 October 2022 at 09:08](#)

The show (after some talking heads) can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQsyNZal1Ds>

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