



Sunday, 19 February 2023

The Young, Mean Benny

The Louisiana State Fair. Expo '67. The Ronald Reagan Inaugural Concert.

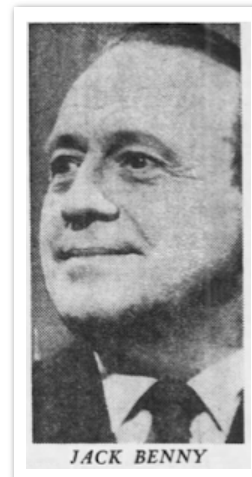
What do they have in common?

Jack Benny.

He performed at all of them in 1967, along with his usual TV specials, talk show appearances, and a guest shot on *The Smothers Brothers*.

There was also a unique event in Jack's life that year. He handed over a cheque for more than £50,000 to a woman in England, where he was supposedly on a holiday.

The London *Evening Standard* of May 17 doesn't explain the circumstances of how it was arranged, but recorded the good news for posterity.



Meet the £52,000 family

ROBERT STEPHENS

There'll be no more getting up at 6.30 to cook bacon, eggs and sausages for eight hungry lodgers for Mrs. Susan Maddison.

For today, East London landlady Mrs. Maddison, who has seven children, collected a £52,641 Littlewoods Treble Chance pools cheque from American comedian Jack Benny.

But despite her win, Mrs. Maddison, 46, of Goldsmith Road, Leyton, will not turn her 11s.-a-night lodgers out straight away.

She will make certain they have got other landladies to go to first.

Proudly watching while she received the cheque at the Grosvenor House Hotel as her 29-year-old second husband, lorry driver Mr. John Maddison, to whom she has been married for six years.

He is the father of Debbie, five, and Brett, three. The other five children are from Mrs. Maddison's first marriage, which ended in divorce.

Mrs. Maddison, who came to England in 1946 from Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland, has done the pools for 20 years.

Now, after modest wins of £26, £22 and half-a-crown last year, her biggest win has come up on a 7s. 6d. stake on two 8-from-10 perms.

The birth dates

And the only method she permits herself is to do one line from the children's birth dates together with the birthday of a Pekinese dog, Bobo, she once owned. But the winning line was just guess work.

After the cheque was handed over by Jack Benny, self-styled "meanest man in the world," she said: "I'll give up being a landlady now. I want to buy a house in Waltham Abbey or Chingford. It's nice there and not too far from London."

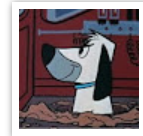
Mrs. Maddison added: "I used to study form but now I don't do it any more. My husband does his own coupon and has won £39."

She said she had worked hard all her life and thought there was no end to it. She had taken it for granted that hard work and little money was her destiny.

One of his children, Olive, 21, is studying law at London University.

After a big celebration tonight at their Leyton home the family plan a holiday.

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...

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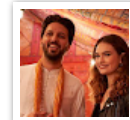
[Famous Studios:](#)

[Noveltoons 1948-50](#) - And in general, the studio inched closer to launching its own stable of original characters to compete with the Looney Tunes and Tom and Jerry.

5 hours ago



Movies with Michael



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Movie Grade: D- A bland and overly familiar romantic comedy. The idea of a romantic comedy that takes a look at Arranged (or assisted mar...

6 hours ago



Fernando Liera Cartoons

[Mother's Day will bring big business for services, restaurants and commerce.](#)

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19 hours ago



We mentioned Jack was supposedly on a holiday. That didn't stop him from performing at the London Palladium, with Dusty Springfield, British comedian Bob Monkhouse and ballad singer Vince Hill.

Why? Because Jack liked to work.

A writer for the *London Express* interviewed Jack during his stop. Benny appeared in a film called *The Meanest Man in the World* (1943) where he tries to become a bad-guy lawyer. However, the story below uses the English form of the word "mean." In other words, "cheap."

This appeared in a number of American papers, starting around June 24, 1967.

TWO GREAT MYTHS

Jack Benny: He Has to Prove He's Not Really Mean

BY PETER DACKER

LONDON — Jack Benny has built a legend out of two statements—and both of them, as I discovered the other day, are false.

For long years now he has been proclaiming that he is 39 and that also he is the Meanest Man in the World.

Let us take this age business first.

It is obvious that he is more than 39. But what will be far from obvious will be his real age. For Jack Benny is 73.

He is, without doubt, the youngest-looking 73-year-old I have ever met. Even if you can remember the years he has been around as one of the world's top comics, you would judge him to be no more than 60 at a push and well preserved at that.

His hair is slightly greying and thinning, but the bronze face is unhaggard, his voice is strong, and there is no hint of the rocking chair in his figure.

I commented on this and he beamed. "Yes," he said, "even the doctors are amazed. And it certainly makes you feel good to hear people tell you you look so young."

HOW HAS he managed it? He leaned back in his chair and said: "Well, I'll tell you. It's constantly working. Enjoying my work and loving life. I'm sure that if I had spent my life selling machinery or something I would look my age.

"As it is, I can't wait to get up in the morning to see what's going to happen. You must never lose your enthusiasm; never lose the excitement.

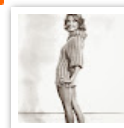
"My trip to London is supposed to be a vacation. People say: What kind of vacation is this?' But I just love to take a vacation where there's work.

"I remember Bob Hope going off for three weeks on a yacht, and when he returned I asked him if he'd enjoyed himself. No, he said, 'There was no place to work.' That goes for me too. Another thing. I've always mixed with young people. That helps a lot.

"I would like to live to be a hundred—but only if I can continue to feel good."

But, apart from working and enjoying life, has Benny any other recipe for his youthfulness? "No. I walk

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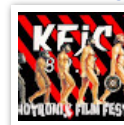


Chris Noel
1967 -
Chris Noel
is back with
a 1967 visit.
It's a Date

With Chris. *Date With
Chris - 1967* More Chris
Noel

21 hours ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog

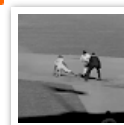


Coronation
and The
Return Of
The KFJC
Psychotronic
Film

Festival - *Can't say I'm
exactly nutty about the
royals and would not want
to be in King Charles' spats,
but am positive...

2 days ago

Old TV History



September
1947 Part 2
- Maybe
Happy
wasn't
happy, but

baseball fans in the east
were. A last-minute deal
was signed at the end of
September 1947 to put the
World Series on televi...

2 days ago

Buddy's Cartoons

"Mice, Ducks, and Rabbits"

- Chapter Two is officially
done! Chapter Three is
about the explicit copy-
Disney era, such as
Warners' Buddy, Iwerks'
Flip, and the post-Code
Betty Boop. ...

2 days ago

Termite Terrace headlines

Soaky Toy Commercials -

Superman and Tennessee
Tuxedo! Musky the Muskrat
and Dick Tracy! These rule!
These Soaky commercials
are incredible. According to
Darrel Van Citters there...

6 days ago

Yowp

Tally Ho Ho Ho

Backgrounds - Fernando
Montealegre was among
the first staffers at Hanna-
Barbera, jumping over from
MGM where he started as
an assistant animator and
became a background...

1 week ago

Show All

Why Not Read...

Cartoonerific

Dr Grob's Animation Review

a lot and I play golf. And I never drink too much—though I've smoked a lot."



WHAT NOW, about the "Meanest Man in the World" tag? That, it appeared was also a myth. "It started as a joke—and it just snowballed," explained Benny.

In fact, it has become a handicap. For as he explains: "You constantly have to prove that you are not really [sic] stingy—that it is just a joke. You would be surprised how many people are convinced that there can't be smoke without fire.

"I can't afford to let someone else pick up the check or people say: 'Ah, it's true—he is mean.' When it comes to tipping, I have to overtip all the time." Arising out of this gimmick, Benny has been dubbed "the last of the great savers." After 56 years in show business he is clearly well heeled. But how wealthy is he?

To this, he says: "I have a fairly good amount of money stacked away but not as much as people think. Some people really believe I have 30 or 40 million dollars. I never cared that much about piling the stuff. I had a pretty good

time spending it, though."

There is a third aspect of Jack Benny which has always intrigued me—his violin playing. For years he has done an act in which he mixes jokes with fooling on the fiddle. But in recent years he has frequently popped up playing with symphony orchestras.

He owns two valuable violins, including a Stradivarius. How serious is he about his playing? "I suppose I'm the kind of player who, if you're not a musician, you think is fine," he said candidly. "I've even fooled some critics. But when I appear before an orchestra my playing is a great satire—though I usually finish with a serious piece of playing just to kinda surprise the audience."

Most music critics, however, take Benny at his self-confessed level. They write such notices as: "Jack Benny played Mendelssohn last night—Mendelssohn lost." Or "Like Heifitz [sic], Jack Benny held the violin under his chin." But playing in concerts undoubtedly gives Benny a kick. "When I'm standing before the orchestra, dressed in tails, I actually think at that moment I'm the world's greatest violinist—and I act that way. I become all aloof and egotistical. But it doesn't take long before the feeling goes." HE GRINNED. "Isaac Stern once said to me: 'You actually look like a violinist—it's a goddam shame you have to play!'"

Is Benny sad that he is not a great player? "I am a frustrated violinist," he admitted. "But let me answer you this way: I never seriously played the violin from the age of 14 until 11 years ago when I was 62. Then I decided to start again.

"An orchestra leader told me: 'You're nuts. You'll never get your fingers moving.' But I was determined to try—and I did.

"Now I think that if I could pick up the violin and play it seriously after a gap of nearly 50 years, it shows I would have had a chance of being a great concert violinist.

"But my wife has told me: 'If you had set out to be that, it would have been your biggest mistake. You would not have been good enough to be in the top rank and you would have been too good to make yourself play badly for a comedy act.'"

I recalled something he had said earlier: "I don't ever want to retire. I would only think about giving it up if I can't make people laugh as I used to."

Today's unrelated Benny trivia:

You may recall a few jokes on Jack's radio show about an elk's tooth on a watch chain. Watch chains are almost obsolete, but the Elks are still around. And, according to the Jan. 23, 1968 edition of the *Elwood Call Leader* of Indiana, Jack was a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

He belonged to Waukegan Lodge No. 702. Also members were Phil Harris of Palm Springs Lodge No. 1905 and Andy Devine, who served as Exalted Ruler of San Fernando Lodge No. 1539.

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



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

3 comments:



Paul Groh 19 February 2023 at 15:57

I met Isaac Stern after a concert when I was fifteen, and as he was autographing my program I told him how much I enjoyed his TV appearances with Jack Benny, which rather surprised him. He then told me a story about one time when he and Jack were having lunch at a restaurant in Beverly Hills. A young violinist

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approached their table and, completely ignoring Stern, asked Jack to do him the honour of playing a little something on his violin. Jack agreed, took the instrument, played a couple of sour notes, scowled, and said: "I think there's something wrong with this violin. What do you think, Isaac?" Stern took the violin and played an elaborate virtuoso caprice right there in the middle of the restaurant, getting a big ovation from all the other diners when he finished. "Seems all right to me, Jack," he said, handing it back. Jack played a few more sour notes and said: "Oh Isaac, now you've broken it!"

Jack Benny's opening line in "The Mouse That Jack Built" -- "Who's this guy Isaac Stern?" -- always makes me think of that story.

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M. Mitchell Marmel 19 February 2023 at 18:22

They're the Best People of Earth! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tLxkC5RNYA> ;-D

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Yowp 20 February 2023 at 04:58

I see this song in the July 1909 Victor catalogue along with another one in the Comic Songs category by Dan W. Quinn called "The Masons." A musical competition, I guess. It was apparently written in 1907.

Then there are other songs with titles that are just outrageous.

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