



Sunday, 18 June 2023

## Not Tonight Jack

"Check your local listings" sometimes didn't work in the Golden Age of Radio.

Jack Benny toiled for NBC for most of his radio career. Sitting in an office at 30 Rockefeller Plaza was a gentleman named J. Vance Babb. In 1938, he was the manager of the Press Division of the NBC Publicity Department. His staff communicated with the press to make sure the local listings were correct.

All the networks issued press releases about their programmes, hoping they'd be picked up by local papers to give free publicity. One newspaper that was extremely cooperative was the *Greenville News* in South Carolina. It owned WFBC radio, which happened to be the local NBC affiliate. And judging by the paper's radio page of the time, it apparently filled space with oodles of NBC news releases (and posed photos) promoting shows to air that day.



One of the more interesting ones appeared in the October 16, 1938 edition promoting the evening's Jack Benny Program. That's because the show advertised was not the show that made it onto the air.

I presume the NBC PR department had a deadline to write their releases. Jack and his writers began meetings on Tuesday to come up with a rough draught of a show, and then polished it. On several occasions, this blog has mentioned shows that were tossed out and re-written the night before the broadcast. When that happened, NBC's carefully crafted news release would be out of date.

This is what the paper published on the 16th:

### JACK BENNY CAST CALLS ON DEVINE IN SHOW TONIGHT Don Wilson, Andy To Be In Weighing-In Contest As Added Feature KENNY PICKS HIT

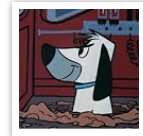
Jack Benny and his gang will smoke out Mayor Andy Devine from his office in Van Nuys, Cal., during the broadcast with Mary Livingstone, Kenny Baker, Phil Harris and Don Wilson over the NBC-WFBC network today at 7 p. m. Gravel-voiced Andy will be making his microphone debut of the season, postponed from last week when a movie retake kept him out of the show.

The diligent mayor will desert his offices behind the old cowshed on his Van Nuys rancho with malice aforethought this time. Andy is trying to dispose of his home-grown crop of "Havana filler" tobacco at Jack's expense. If Jack buys the crop of manufactured stogies, it probably will be at some one else's expense.

As an added feature of the broadcast, Jack will stage a weighing-in contest between his heavyweight aides, Don Wilson and Andy Devine, both former star footballers. Don, who steadfastly maintains that he lost three chins and a hangnail during the summer, is giving odds that he tips the beams at a lower figure than his gravel-voiced competitor for the local beef-trust title. With the aid of diet, strenuous exercise and nerve-wracking lack of sleep, Don has shrivelled to a mere 220 pounds. Andy, on the other hand, has been trying to fill out to the proportions of his political job.

Timid tenor Kenny Baker will battle through the smoke screen to sing the popular favorite "I Used To Be Color Blind" and Phil Harris' orchestra will play "For No Reason In Rhyme." The band also will unfold a

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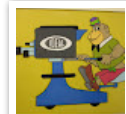


May 1939 - New York City had TV again. W2XBS signed on

to mark the start of the World's Fair on April 30, 1939. Now what? NBC decided it would have one-hour variet...

19 hours ago

### Yowp



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3 weeks ago

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### News From ME

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9 hours ago

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[Nell Shipman: Signing Up](#)  
[Juno](#) - The following is a 1919 article about silent era actress and filmmaker Nell Shipman. If you have any trouble reading the following pages click on them a...

22 hours ago

new arrangement of "Don't Cross Your Fingers."

About the only thing accurate is Andy Devine did appear, and Harris played the two numbers mentioned, although Don Wilson introduced one as "For No Rhyme or Reason." Kenny's song was "I've Got a Date With a Dream."

The plot outlined in the NBC release never happened. At all. It wasn't postponed to a later broadcast. There are other occasions where the Benny summaries aren't quite the same as what went on the air, though the broadcasts on the Sundays before and after this show reflect what was promoted. Why such a drastic change was made is open to speculation.

What actually went on the air was a programme bidding farewell to the NBC studio at Melrose and Gower. The following day, the network was to open its "Hollywood Radio City" on a 4 1/2 acre site at the northeast corner of Sunset and Vine. The *Los Angeles Times* reported a three-storey lobby linked the office building with four auditorium studios linked together with glass brick walls. A mural 25 feet high and 40 feet wide portraying radio covered the entire curved half of the northeast wall. Naturally, this lovely building was torn down starting in May 1964.



It's possible because the building was a huge deal to NBC, Benny and his writers decided instead of a show involving Don Wilson's weight, they'd build a programme promoting the new network West Coast headquarters.

It's actually a pretty funny show, though it's a little odd at the end where one of the NBC demolition workers, who have been called Laverne and Mervin, suddenly turns out to be network vice-president John Swallow.

Listen to the show here. Elliott Lewis is Laverne, Ed Beloin is Mervin.

▶ 0:00 / 29:30 — 🔊 ⋮

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:01](#)



Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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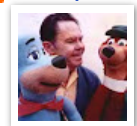
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[A Chat With Daws Butler](#) - We're taking a break from the Jetsons

for today's post. Well, sort of. Instead, it's time to highlight one of Hanna-Barbera's most celebrated voice actors...  
2 days ago

[Mark Kausler's CatBlog](#)

[Mabel Listens Again](#) - In the words of Bill Hay, "Here they ah!" The "Now Listen Mabel" dailies from 11-8 to 11-22-1919. In the 11-8 there are human figures in the first two pane...  
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 [Pete Hale Blog](#)

[New Blog!](#) - I now have a new blog, called The Golden Age of Animation, which I hope to be a Cartoon Research-like place for a bunch of writers, mainly me, the head w...  
1 week ago

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**Termite Terrace**

**headlines**

Mr. Jinks and Boo Boo?  
Sure Why Not! - Now these two characters were paired together in this record and this coloring book but their connection pretty much stops at the cover. Why they were pair...  
*3 weeks ago*

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