



Sunday, 19 November 2023

Molehills and Jersey

Fred Allen's feud with Jack Benny began with an Allen ad-lib in late 1936 and carried on even after Allen's radio show came to an end in 1949.

Radio fans know (I hope) it was all fake. But his real feud was with network and sponsor ridiculousness, climaxing, perhaps, with Allen's show being cut off the air for almost a half-minute in 1947 when he started to make fun of an imaginary NBC executive. The public, rightfully, sided with humorous Allen over the humourless network.



There was one place where NBC couldn't fade him out—well, other than newspaper interviews where he continued to drip venom on radio and television—and that was during his audience warm-ups. One can only imagine the reaction in the sponsor's booth while he did this.

That fine publication, *Radio Life*, published a series on audience warm-ups; unfortunately not all of them are available. The first one was about Allen's show, published on July 25, 1948.

Acid-Tongued Fred Allen Takes Advantage of His Warm-up Time to Enlarge on the Subject That Once Got Him Faded From the Network!

NEW YORKERS will tell you that one of the best shows to see in town is one that isn't advertised and not listed in those "where-to-go" guidebooks. Natives and visitors to the city both try to accomplish the difficult feat of getting in to see it. Money can't get you in, since the show costs nothing to produce or to see. Only three hundred people can be admitted to the theater where it plays.

This entertainment rarity is Fred Allen's fifteen-minute audience-warm-up period before each of his Sunday broadcasts. The small studio at NBC in New York holds the three hundred lucky devotees who've managed to wangle tickets to the broadcast.

Veepees vs. Allen

Fred, famous for his acid views on certain phases of radio, gained extra fame a season back by suffering a rather severe reprimand for poking sarcastic fun at the network vice-presidents. He was cut off the air. He takes advantage of the warm-up period, naturally, to express himself more fully on the vice-president subject.

"Radio's vice-presidents are men who do not know what their jobs are," Allen explains to the audience, "and by the time they find out, they are no longer with the organization."

"In the early days of radio, the vice-presidents used to work hard.

When they arrived in their offices ... in the morning, they used to find a molehill on their desks. Their job was to build that molehill into a mountain by 5:00 p.m.

"... all vice-presidents were haunted by the fear of going to 'heck.' 'Heck' is a word invented by the National Broadcasting Company, which denies the existence of hell and the Columbia Broadcasting System, though not necessarily in that order." According to Fred, these are the sins that speeded a vice-president to "heck"; "tearing a *clean* memo, sprinkling water at the water cooler or springing the buzzer in a fit of executive pique. On the other hand ... if they did their jobs well, they were assured of going to the Rainbow Room, where the cover charge was to be eternally removed."

Now, however, times have changed for vice-presidents. "They function by means of conference—a conference is a group of people who singularly can do nothing and collectively agree that nothing can be done." Fred does admit that when they are rushing around the corridors they make a colorful picture

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Old TV History



July-August 1940 -
Almost a month after spearheading historic

television coverage of the 1940 Republican convention, W2XBS was off the air. The FCC ordered it to change frequ...

23 hours ago

Yowp



A Few Hanna-Barbera Staff Pictures -

There's something pleasing about seeing pictures of the people who worked on the classic Hanna-Barbera cartoons. Of course, publicity photos of Bill Hanna ...

2 days ago

Blogs to See

Fernando Llera Cartoons



Mexican party FAM in Mexico City
experiences some

rupture among its members.
- ©2023

fernandollera.com

4 hours ago

— “so colorful that the travelogue people come every spring to take pictures of the vice-presidents going up-carpet to spawn.”

Other Gag Targets

Second favorite Allen target is radio itself. He begins his warm-up by explaining that he has a cold. For this ailment he claims to have followed the prescription of a guest expert (“an interne in a pet hospital”) on radio’s outstanding medical program, “Young Doctor Malone.” “I swallowed a remedy which claimed to fight colds four ways,” he continues. “The tablet worked one way four times and, as yet, the other three ways have not been heard from.” Concerning warm-ups, Allen warns the audience about “one of the more animated comedians in Hollywood who overdid his warm-up and cremated three hundred and fifty people in his audience.” [Note: an Earl Wilson column revealed Allen was talking about Red Skelton].

Another great favorite among Allen’s comedy topics is people from New Jersey. This is evidently a local joke in New York, in much the same spirit as Hollywood’s Anaheim routine. Allen tells a poignant story of how a group of New Jersey dance-lovers made an expedition to the Radio City Music Hall to see the Rockettes. Becoming confused, as people from New Jersey are apt to do when they emerge from their natural habitat, they wandered into the RCA Building and were borne into the Allen show. To console this group for the temporary loss of the Rockettes, Fred lifts a trouser leg delicately to display the Allen calf.

At one time the comedian used to create a new warm-up for each show, but he found that they were too well appreciated. Other comedians were showing a touching regard for his material. Now he sticks to pretty much the same routine and it’s still greeted with the same hilarity — particularly by network vice-presidents and people from New Jersey!

We mentioned the Benny-Allen feud. If you’re wondering whether Allen varied his warm-up when Benny showed up on his show, here’s a portion of a column from the *Des Moines Register* of July 8, 1979.

Silence wasn't golden in radio's golden age

By ED KINTZER

A big event each year on radio was when Jack Benny brought his cast from the West Coast to New York so he and Fred Allen could exchange guest shots — usually for their last shows of the season. This was the scene at NBC’s Radio City studios on Sunday, June 27, 1948.

Fifteen minutes before the 7 o’clock air time, announcer Don Wilson walked onto the large, uncurtained stage of Studio 8-H, welcomed the audience and introduced Phil Harris, who led the band in a number with wild and exaggerated musical directions.

Then Wilson introduced the rest of the cast as they took their places on stage: Sportsmen Quartet, Dennis Day, Eddie “Rochester” Anderson, Artie Auerbach (who played “Mr. ‘pickel in the middle, mustard on top’ Kitzel”) and Mary Livingstone. Benny sauntered out from behind the 8-H control room throwing kisses, and while he was joking briefly with the audience, a nasal-twanged voice came from the rear of the studio: “I wouldn’t throw a fish a line like that.” Fred Allen came down the middle aisle and joined Benny on stage to trade Insults until air time.

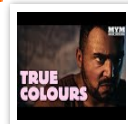
Later that night down in Studio 6-A, Fred Allen’s warm-up consisted of Fred Allen. Unannounced, he stepped before the curtain and welcomed the audience, and then proceeded to throw barbs at his sponsor, the Ford Motor Co. Less than a minute before the 8:30 air time, the curtain opened. Announcer Kenny Delmar, script in hand, and orchestra leader Al Goodman, baton raised, watching the control room for the go-ahead signal.

No introduction was made of the cast seated in front the orchestra: Parker Fennelly, who played “Titus Moody”; Minerva Pious, “Mrs. Nussbaum”; Peter Donald, “Ajax Cassidy”; Portland Hoffa; Jack Benny, and the five singing DeMarco Sisters. Announcer Delmar also played the popular Senator Claghorn.

You’d think Allen would have brought Benny up on stage, as the audience would no doubt have loved it, but Allen doesn’t appear to have wanted to waste any off-air time he could spend attacking things he couldn’t slice and dice on the air.



Movies with Michael



Short Film
Corner:
True
Colours
(2023) -

13 hours ago

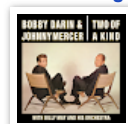
News From ME

Today's Video Link -

Because of the new documentary of him, folks are talking a lot online about Albert Brooks and the films he made. I liked all the ones that didn't have the ...

1 day ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Remembering Johnny Mercer -

1 day ago

The Exposure Sheet



Daws Butler
Tributes -
On the 18th
of May,
1988, Daws
Butler

passed away following a heart attack. His passing left a huge impact on Hanna-Barbera. I think Walker Edmiston, anot...

2 days ago

Cartoon Research

Peanuts for Dinner: The 50th Anniversary of “A Charlie Brown

Thanksgiving” - First airing on CBS in November 1973, the special features almost entirely new material not featured in Schulz’s comic strip.

2 days ago

AFRTS Archive



Sugar
Report
1945 - This
one was
sure a
story. Sugar

Report was apparently never sent out on vinyl. Each disk apparently unique and broadcast on shortwave at the time. B...

4 days ago

As a side note, the article mentions that Bert Parks announced the *Vaughn Monroe Show* on CBS, but the warm-up act was someone who never appeared on the programme—Frank Fontaine. Before long, Jack brought him on the Benny show to do variations of his John L.C. Sivoney night-club act (and impressions), and the exposure gave a huge boost to his career.

It's also interesting to read that Jack was given cavernous Studio 8-H at Rockefeller Centre. It was designed for Arturo Toscanini's NBC Symphony radio broadcasts but people today know it as the home of *Saturday Night Live*. You, perhaps, are familiar with Allen's small Studio 6-A. A gentleman used to broadcast a late-night show from there. His name is David Letterman.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:04](#)



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[They're For Kids...Who Cares?](#) -
*Carl Barks and
Tarzan

legend Burne Hogarth at the 1982 San Diego Comic-Con. Surprised so many legends could fit in one room!* **"A little nonsense now ...

6 days ago

[Termite Terrace headlines](#)



Today's Post: [The 1964 World's Fair Documentary](#) and other

64 World's Fair stuff - This documentary is quite good. Most of you have probably already seen it, but I'm sharing it here anyways. While I'm add it, why not share some ...

2 weeks ago

[Mark Kausler's CatBlog](#)

[Felix Vs. A Spy From Brigandia](#) - In these Felix strips from 4-24 to 5-7-32, Felix returns from the Moon, only to encounter a spy from the kingdom of Brigandia, who wants to steal all the p...

2 weeks ago

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