



Tuesday 26 December 2023

Remembering Jack Benny

Jack Benny's death on December 26, 1974 affected a nation.

Newspapers in big cities and small towns reported it on their front pages. Days later, countless editorial sections across the U.S. (and Canada and other countries) included something on Benny's character and his comedic touch. There were feature stories, some radio-era reminiscences from columnists, thoughts by others like Alan King, Goody Ace and Larry Adler, all of whom knew Jack personally for a long time. There were photos, some dug up by papers from their morgue, and all kinds of others supplied by wire services.

Here are some editorials, picked purely at random, from Sunday papers three days later. First, from the *Lansing State Journal*:

Master of Laughs

In a not so funny world where "big star" comedians rise briefly and then disappear, Jack Benny was a rare exception who stayed on top nearly a half-century and brought laughter to generations.

Jack Benny's rise to fame through vaudeville and then radio centered on a pose as the world's tightest tightwad and embraced his outrageous violin solos, and he successfully [sic] carried his act over into television when many others failed. He continued to star until his death.

Something about Jack Benny—his mastery of timing, the violin, the Maxwell, the vault in the basement—made millions laugh in the dark depression days of the thirties. The grandchildren of that era found humor in the same routines a generation later.

Perhaps Comedian Steve Allen summed it up best when he said Jack Benny was "to humor what Arthur Rubenstein was to music." His "laugh-at-me" posture made him "straight man for the whole world." The world will miss him in these times when laughs again are not easy to come by.

The *Post-Crescent* of Appleton, Wisconsin:

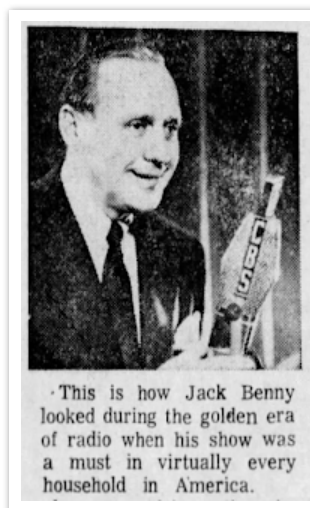
Sunday belongs to Benny

We are saddened and much impoverished by the passing Friday of the beloved Jack Benny, whose very special gift it was to make us laugh and forget our troubles for more than 40 years.

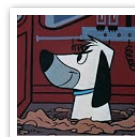
His unexpected death of cancer darkens this holiday season. There are other comedians, but there was only one Jack Benny.

Younger people may recall him only from an occasional television special or for his frequent appearances on TV talk shows. But to most older Americans Jack Benny was an important part of the flavor and joy of life back in what we call today the "golden age" of radio. Sunday nights belonged to Jack Benny, and Jack Benny belonged to all of America.

Miss a Benny show? As well think of missing Sunday dinner.



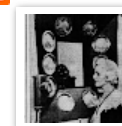
About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

My Blog List

Old TV History



March-April 1932 - New York lost one of its major television

stations in April 1932. Quite suddenly, W2XCR went off the air. It was one of two stations that were broadcastin...

3 days 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 ...

5 weeks ago

Blogs to See

News From ME

Tuesday Afternoon - I very much enjoyed the CBS special tributing Dick Van Dyke...and like you, I didn't know who some of those performers were, either.

The best part of it was ...

6 hours ago



Benny in radio with Mary Livingstone and Rochester (Eddie Anderson) . . . 1947

jokes. He was a gentle and amiable comedian, hurting no one and offending no one. We saw our own human foibles through his eyes and his art, and we are the better for having lived and laughed with him. And now Jack Benny is gone. The obituaries say he was 80 years old, but Jack insisted he was only 39. Let him never grow a day older in our memory.

The *Anniston [Alabama] Star*.

Jack Benny, 39

The deceptive simplicity of Jack Benny's humor almost concealed the genius behind it—his pose of the vain, stingy, somewhat pompous man who was a natural target for a con artist, who was endlessly the butt of his friends' practical jokes and wisecracks.

Benny masterfully surrounded himself with a first-rate stable of talented players, gave them all the funny lines and, as often as not, topped them with his exquisite sense of timing, his pained stares, his patented rejoinder: "Well!!!"

The long-running Jack Benny Show—radio first through the Thirties and Forties, later on television—left millions with memories that still make them smile: Singer Dennis Day's perpetual bubbly adolescent; all those characters brought to life by Mel Blanc's vocal mastery; Phil Harris' whiskied misadventures; Mary Livingston's gentle put-downs; Rochester's gravelly croaked insubordinations. All of them bounced arrows of needles of deflation off the Benny character in loving but knowing fondness, and in Benny Americans saw themselves and all their foibles, vanities, pretensions. We saw, through Jack Benny, that people, all people, can be funny, and Americans loved him dearly for that gift. With a small handful of others, who must include Fred Allen and George Burns and Gracie Allen and Fibber McGee and Molly, Jack Benny gave the world a marvelous and too brief golden age of comedy, and as one of the newsmen reporting his death last week remarked, he will always remain Jack Benny, 39.

Peter D. Bunzel of the *Los Angeles Times*:

Last Call for Anaheim, Azusa and Cucamonga. . .

It is appropriate to write a memorial to Jack Benny without ever having met him or having seen him perform on stage except a couple of times. Benny entered the American consciousness as a voice, a pause, a "Well!!" For those of us who grew up in the great days of radio, his self-deprecating comedy, punctuated by quiet exasperation, will remain in our ears long after his interment today in Hillside Cemetery.

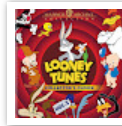
Benny's stock in trade was poking fun at himself. Indeed, among all the standup comedians of his era, he played a genuine character that became more indelibly etched in our awareness than his own. He was the middle-aged skinflint the incompetent fiddler who could barely play "Love in Bloom" but who, by his own insistence; magically never grew older than 39.

The laughs—not jokes, really—grew out of this parsimonious character, and his humor was always subservient to it. His radio family—Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Don Wilson, Kenny Baker (later Dennis Day)—all fell into the rhythm of this mythical Silas Marner, feeding him the lines or, more often, being fed them by him.

This essential generosity was a tipoff that the real Jack Benny was exactly, the reverse of the character he played. It was this knowledge we all intuitively shared that made the portrayal so endearing. The foibles he ridiculed were more ours than his, but being, a gentleman, he would never come out and say so.

We remember his wife, sharp-tongued Mary Livingstone, and the major domo of the Benny menage, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson. And jolly Don Wilson, Benny's announcer, and his dim-bulb vocalist, Dennis Day. And the musical directors, Don Bestor, and, later, Phil Harris. The ancient Maxwell car, the creaky old money vault in the basement, the supercilious floorwalker in the department store where Jack did his miserly Christmas shopping, and the famous "feud" with the late Fred Allen. With that air of perpetual indignation, Jack Benny was forever the butt of his own

Pete Hale



Looney Tunes: Collector's Choice: Volume 2 Review -

Happy day-after-Christmas! Mine was great, except I got nausea (and other things) off of some candy and eggnog Christmas morning, but it lasted about two...
9 hours ago

Fernando Llera



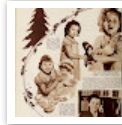
Christmas quality of air in Mexico City goes from bad to worse. -

©2023
fernandollercartoons.com
11 hours ago

Cartoon Research

"Steamboat Willie" and the Importance of the Public Domain - Congratulations! We now all own an historic Mickey Mouse cartoon.
19 hours ago

Movies with Michael



Merry Christmas from Classic Hollywood Child Actors

- I love this little two page spread in this 1936 issue of Silver Screen magazine. If you have any trouble reading the words on these pages click on them...
1 day ago

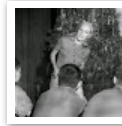
The Exposure Sheet



Hanna-Barbera and Hallmark Ornaments: A Truncated

History - No Christmas tree is complete without a healthy dose of ornaments covering it, and when you think of ornaments, what is the first company that comes to mi...
1 day ago

AFRTS Archive



Chris Noel - Christmas 1967 -

Because of the way the transcription disks were sent out, there was no way to tell when they were actually broadcast... Except for Christmas week. Th...
2 days ago

His radio "family" became an extension of all the actual families out there listening. We saw the same pinch-penny qualities in our own fathers, and when Mary cried, in her Plainfield, N. J. voice, "Oh, Jack," that was the sound of own mothers losing patience.

So every Sunday night at 7 o'clock we gathered around the radio as Don Wilson intoned "Jello again, it's the Jack Benny Show," The sounds of that program are the sounds of our childhood: the growling bear guarding Benny's vault, his sputtering Maxwell, the train announcer calling out "Anaheim, Azusa, Cucamonga" towns that, in later years, many of us were surprised to find were real.

Those were the years when Sunday night required a family vigil by the radio. Jack Benny at 7, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy at 8, Fred Allen at 8:30, with everyone getting their comeuppance at 9 as Walter Winchell informed Mr. and Mrs. North America and all the ships at sea that the real world was filled not with "Love in Bloom" but with gossip, gangsters and meanness.

The world etched by Jack Benny was infinitely preferable. It made us laugh, but it also spread a certain sweetness and decency.

It is a wonder that Benny made this kind of impact just by being heard, for as we came to know from his television and stage appearances, seeing him added a whole new dimension. He had an almost cat-like elegance that was feminine as well as masculine the embodiment of everyone's vulnerability and, with luck, grace under pressure.

Now, as he makes his final trip, we join in calling out the stops along that memorable route: "Anaheim! Azusa! Cucamonga."

There are so many more we could post, but we'll conclude with an editorial from the city where loved him. This is from the *St. Joseph News-Press*:

Jack Benny Got Enthusiastic Welcome on 1945 Visit Here

ORIGINALLY, WE had planned to do a column such as this next February, which would have been the 30th anniversary of Jack Benny's radio broadcast from St. Joseph. But the death Friday of the 80-year-old comedian has moved up the date for this article.

Jack Benny was perennially 39 years old and a tightwad; that was the image he had given himself, one that he parlayed into fame and fortune. As a comedian, he was in a class by himself. His strong point was his timing. He could stretch a mild titter into a belly laugh by dragging it out.

For some reason never explained, Jack started using the line, "They love me in St. Joseph" on his radio programs some time around 1940. It got laughs for some still unknown reason, and Jack capitalized on it.

St. Joseph people didn't mind, and eventually they invited Jack here for a broadcast. This was in World War II days and travel was greatly curtailed, but finally Jack's management accepted and the date was set for Feb. 18, 1945. That was a Sunday, the day of all of Benny's broadcasts and Jack and company arrived in town on Thursday the 15th. It was a festive day in St. Joseph and school kids didn't have to attend class. Business men were called in to a briefing session at the Chamber of Commerce to be told how to act in the presence of such an eminent character as Jack Benny.

The general impression was that Jack was more of a businessman than a comic. But he got a good reception.

A luncheon was held at Hotel Robidoux in Jack's honor and only those at the head table got steaks. As we said before, there was a war on. Nobody told Benny that only he and the other top guests were getting steak and in his remarks he indicated he thought everyone was feasting on prime St. Joseph T-bones.

The committee had heard Jack's favorite salad was cold asparagus, and that is what he got. It turned out that except on the stage, he never touched the stuff. But Jack apparently enjoyed his lunch, though he indicated he was in a hurry to get on to a study of his show.



Jack Benny and Frank Sinatra in 1951 when Benny's second television show was aired. Sinatra was one of his guests as Benny made the move to the "new medium."

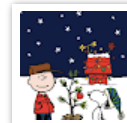
Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Felix Fakes the Rocket Plans and Happy Holidays!

- Hi Folks, Here are the Felix strips from 19320508 to 19320521 with the next chapter of the Spy story. Felix ingeniously fakes the rocket plans and sli...

2 days ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog

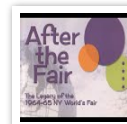


Merry Christmas 2023 from Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A

Blog -

2 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 ...

1 month ago

[Show All](#)

Why Not Read...

[Cartoonerific](#)

[Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)

[Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)

[Format Films Roadrunners](#)

Blog Archive

▼ 2023 (373)

▼ December (27)

[Remembering Jack Benny](#)

[Felix Sees Stars](#)

[Bagging the Cat](#)

[Hicks](#)

[Screwy is Not Dead](#)

[Almost Bunny Slippers](#)

[The Pine Ridge Party Line](#)

[Not Mark VII](#)

[Wait! Does This Mean Gravy?](#)

[Tralfaz Sunday Theatre: The Information Machine](#)

[Not Enough Benny, Says Critic](#)



Jack Benny accepts the Entertainer of the Year Award in 1971 from Ed Sullivan who helped skyrocket Benny's career after Benny was interviewed on Sullivan's radio show in 1931.

Phil Harris was the orchestra leader. He brought a few key musicians and relied on Local No. 50 to provide the others. Don Wilson was the announcer.

The actual broadcast was from the stage of the Auditorium. Admission was by ticket only and tickets were given to those who donated to the blood bank. Jack made an appearance at the Red Cross and was photographed purportedly in the act of giving. Actually, he suffered from a cold and was forbidden to donate blood on that day, but the pictures were made anyway.

There were two shows at the Auditorium, the second being the actual broadcast. The place was packed to the rafters and many had to sit on the balcony steps. The crowd was enthusiastic, though some of the script seemed a bit derisive of St. Joseph, making it appear as a hick cow town.

A typical joke: During the show, somebody pulled off one of Jack's boots. "Look, toes!" shouted the puller. Replied Jack: "What did you expect, a bunch of bananas?" Yet people laughed at such humor in those days.

Jack, Rochester, Mary Livingstone and the others stayed over to Monday, when another and smaller luncheon was held at the Robidoux. Then they left and so far as we know Jack never returned to the town that he said loved him. But he would have been welcome and we can't help but believe our town was a little better by his having been here.

Said the *Argus-Leader* of Sioux Falls: "Jack Benny dead? No, not really. Jack Benny will live forever: in the hearts and minds of millions of Americans who laughed with him and at him." The *Columbian* of Vancouver, Washington, summed up its opinion column with "In short, just about everyone will miss him." Today, almost 50 years after his death, many people still do.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [06:31](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

Anonymous 26 December 2023 at 09:42

I remember when I first read that Jack had died. I can't remember the paper, or the author of the article, but I remember reading through it, and although it was sad news, I made it through dry-eyed. Until I got to the end, and the last paragraph simply said, "Jack Benny passed away today. He was 39." And then I lost it. (I'm a little teary-eyed just typing that now!)

[Reply](#)



Enter comment

- [Man on the Land](#)
- [Flip Bit](#)
- [Four Mouths in One](#)
- [Are You Warm Yet?](#)
- [Hitching a Ride The Speedy Way](#)
- [Two Crows From Tacos Backgrounds](#)
- [Dollars For Day](#)
- [A Henny the Bear Cartoon](#)
- [Cat Faces](#)
- [Will the Real Doug Fairbanks...](#)
- [Norman Lear](#)
- [Chicken Goes to Pot](#)
- [A Tex Limo](#)
- [Jaunting With Jack, Romping With Remley](#)
- [The Making of Of Mice and Magic](#)

Cat Eye

- [November](#) (31)
- [October](#) (32)
- [September](#) (32)
- [August](#) (31)
- [July](#) (32)
- [June](#) (32)
- [May](#) (32)
- [April](#) (31)
- [March](#) (31)
- [February](#) (29)
- [January](#) (33)

- [2022](#) (382)
- [2021](#) (380)
- [2020](#) (389)
- [2019](#) (376)
- [2018](#) (379)
- [2017](#) (380)
- [2016](#) (396)
- [2015](#) (389)
- [2014](#) (390)
- [2013](#) (388)
- [2012](#) (397)
- [2011](#) (106)

Labels

- [Aline Mosby](#) (20)
- [Art Davis](#) (47)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)

[Bob and Ray](#) (17)

[Bob Clampett](#) (117)

[Bob McKimson](#) (84)

[Bob Thomas](#) (66)

[Chuck Jones](#) (187)

[Columbia](#) (69)

[Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)

[Cynthia Lowry](#) (36)

[Dick Thomas](#) (18)

[Don Patterson](#) (24)

[Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)

[Earl Wilson](#) (19)

[Erskine Johnson](#) (44)

[Felix the Cat](#) (39)

[Film Daily](#) (50)

[Fleischer](#) (214)

[Frank Tashlin](#) (43)

[Fred Allen](#) (58)

[Fred Brunish](#) (13)

[Friz Freleng](#) (194)

[Gene Deitch](#) (24)

[George Pal](#) (12)

[Grant Simmons](#) (11)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (133)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (11)

[Hans Conried](#) (5)

[Hardaway-Dalton unit](#) (7)

[Harman-Ising](#) (102)

[Henry Morgan](#) (14)

[Irv Spence](#) (12)

[Jack Benny](#) (629)

[Jay Ward](#) (36)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (109)

[John Sutherland](#) (42)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (42)

[Johnny Olson](#) (6)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (10)

[Laugh-In](#) (18)

[Legend of Rockabye Point](#) (7)

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (7)

[Magical Maestro](#) (10)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

[Mel-O-Toons](#) (5)

[MGM](#) (750)

[Norm McCabe](#) (10)

[Pat Matthews](#) (13)

[Paul Julian](#) (16)

[Sara Berner](#) (6)

Screwy Squirrel	(42)
Spider-Man	(3)
Terrytoons	(118)
Tex Avery	(659)
The Cat That Hated People	(10)
Toby the Pup	(4)
Tom and Jerry Human	(46)
Trafaz Sunday Theatre	(21)
Ub Iwerks	(128)
UPA	(79)
Van Beuren	(144)
Vernon Scott	(52)
Virginia MacPherson	(14)
Walt Disney	(213)
Walter Lantz	(329)
Warner Bros.	(890)
Who Killed Who	(13)