

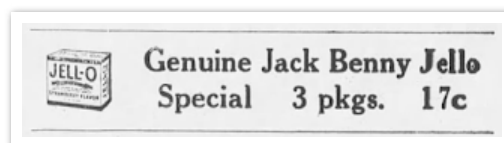


Sunday 31 December 2023

## Those Big Red Letters

Ask a radio fan the product that Jack Benny sponsored, the answer you'll likely get is Jell-O.

Sorry, F.E. Boone and Speedy Riggs.



In fact, a case could be made that it was the most popular sponsor connection of all time. Witness this video snippet, and how Don Wilson gets prolonged applause when he launches into one of his most famous commercial lines. More than 30 years after last plugging the "six delicious flavors" on radio, he doesn't need a script to name them. In order. I'm a little disappointed he didn't tell us to "Look for the big red letters on the box." (General Foods engaged in as much overly-repetitious sloganeering as George Washington Hill did for Lucky Strikes).

Radio announcers of the 1930's - 50's recreate their famou...



What Jack Benny did for Jell-O (and, perhaps, vice-versa) was part of a feature story on the wobbly gelatin in the December 1950 edition of *Modern Packaging* (there seems to have been a magazine for everything at one time). Here's most of the portion which mentions Benny, who was not being sponsored by the company at the time.

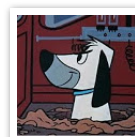
General Foods participated in one of the first [radio] advertising campaigns when it joined with the Borden Co. and others in 1928 in sponsoring the Radio Household Institute. By 1933 Jell-O had its own program—the Wizard of Oz series, for which it paid NBC a modest \$51,214. Then came Jack Benny.

The association of Jell-O with Jack Benny was one of the most famous in radio-advertising history and, along with progressive packaging and merchandising policies, is considered by trade observers to have been perhaps the greatest factor in recent years in building Jell-O sales to their present staggering total.

Jell-O sponsored the Benny program for 10 years, from 1934 to 1944. In literally millions of American homes, over hundreds of Sunday evenings, listeners settled back with a smile of anticipation at the familiar greeting "Jell-O again! This is Jack Benny," and they stayed to chuckle over Don Wilson's exuberant banter about the "six delicious flavors," and the quartet's merry jingle ending with a crescendo "J-E-L-L-O!"

The charm of the Jack Benny touch is hard to define, but it has kept him at or near the top in listener

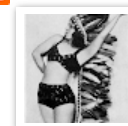
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### Old TV History

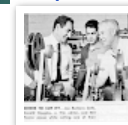


[May-June 1932 - CBS'](#) television logo is an eye. But it was CBS-

TV's mouth that was closed in May 1932. For a pile of reasons—most of them involving money—the company cut ...

19 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 ...

1 month ago

## Blogs to See

### News From ME

[ASK me: Silent Movie Stars](#)

- One of those folks who asked me to withhold their name sent me this... What encounters, if any — even fleeting or from a distance — have you had with folks w...

10 hours ago



ratings for close to 20 years and made him the star salesman of the air waves. As between Jack Benny and Jell-O, it is a question who did most for whom. Jack was certainly instrumental in keeping Jell-O the best-selling gelatin dessert during the period of its toughest competition and, on the other hand, the General Foods people were instrumental in developing the good-humored, easy-to-take, tuneful touch on commercials, which has since become recognized as the Jack Benny style. Benny and Jell-O were linked in the public mind as a pleasant experience, a happy time. When Benny finally shifted to another sponsor in the fall of 1944, people were heard to say that it didn't seem quite right; they missed that familiar "Jell-O, again" greeting.

It was an amicable parting when Benny and Jell-O went their separate ways. There was no official explanation and the advertising trade has been able to adduce only two logical reasons for the break: (1) that Benny and his large cast were becoming excessively expensive at a time when most advertisers were turning to the popular and inexpensive quiz shows and (2) that after 10 years of Benny it seemed to General Foods that a change to other media might be equally or even more effective. According to the New York Times, General Foods in 1940 was devoting more than three-quarters of its Jell-O advertising appropriation to Benny, paying him about \$630,000—in addition to the network cost—for 35 half-hour appearances. When Benny signed for his eighth year with Jell-O, in the spring of 1941, *Newsweek* estimated that he had an audience of 40, 000,000 listeners. But in the seasons starting in 1941, '42 and '43—which also coincided with the start of World War II—Benny's listener rating dropped from 1st to 5th or 6th and this may have had something to do with General Foods' decision to change.

There are several bits of information the article omits. Show biz trade publications in the late '30s and early '40s reveal General Foods tried to get Jack off Jell-O and onto another of its many products, but Jack refused. Finally, the wartime sugar shortage, coupled with the expense of mounting the show, resulted in General Foods plugging Grape Nuts Flakes for the start of the 1942-43 season. The switch made economic sense, but it hurt the show in my opinion.

Setting aside the sometimes ridiculous ad copy Don Wilson was forced to read, the double plural in the product has always bothered my ears, and telling people to "Eat a better breakfast, do a better job" is, frankly, insulting. Listeners likely thought they were already working hard, especially if they were involved in the war effort. And, to be honest, Jell-O is a lot more fun than some dried flakes. Jell-O provided one of the biggest laughs ever at the end of the Benny show on Dec. 13, 1936 when Andy Devine screwed up the name of the product on the West Coast (second) show. Even the KFI announcer is laughing.



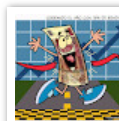
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Shows from bases aimed mainly at the military and not listeners, cast changes (eg. adding insurance salesman Herman Peabody and Minerva Pious with her "I'm not talking to you!" catchphrase), Jack's month-long absence due to serious pneumonia, Dennis Day's departure, all of that certainly didn't help maintain ratings, especially with newer talent like Bob Hope and Red Skelton coming along. In June 1944, General Foods got out of the Benny business until years later on television.

The relationship between the Benny show and Jell-O could be odd at times. Some grocery stores didn't advertise Jell-O in newspapers. They advertised "Jack Benny Jell-O." General Foods, as you may know, also advertised in newspapers with some excruciatingly bad-looking "comics" with Jack and Mary plugging the stuff. And my understanding is Jack never ate Jell-O.

The people who appeared on Jack's show, when making their own personal appearances, were connected with Jell-O in newspaper ads. I don't think it was contractual, because Don Bestor wasn't employed by General Foods when the ad below came out, and Dick Hotcha Gardner was only on Jack's show when it was

#### Fernando Llera Cartoons



Mexican  
Peso Posts  
Strongest  
Performanc  
e in Almost  
30 Years

Driven by Rates,  
Remittances. - ©2023  
fernandollera.com  
22 hours ago

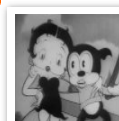
#### AFRTS Archive



Tom  
Campbell  
1975 - Time  
for another  
trip down  
memory

lane with Bay Area fave,  
Tom Campbell (for Cal  
Stereo). Here's a neat 1975  
show.. When Tom got out of  
the Air Force,...  
1 day ago

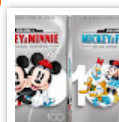
#### Movies with Michael



Some  
Classic  
Cartoons  
for  
Saturday  
Morning

#258 - Hello my friends and  
happy Saturday morning.  
Once again it is time for  
some classic cartoons.  
Today's cartoon selection  
begins with Betty Boop and  
Bimb...  
1 day ago

#### Pete Hale



Disney  
Shorts Go  
Blu-Ray -  
For  
Disney's  
Centennial,

they are now putting their  
older shorts on Blu-Ray,  
calling it either "Mickey &  
Minnie" or "Mickey &  
Friends", with awful-ugly c...  
2 days ago

#### Cartoon Research

Live Like a King: The 60th  
Anniversary of "The Sword  
in the Stone" - The film first  
surfaced as a project at  
Disney in 1939, when the  
Studio first purchased rights  
to the T.H. White's books.  
2 days ago

sponsored by Canada Dry.




 **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...  
6 days ago

 **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...

6 days ago


 **Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog**




Merry Christmas 2023 from Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A

[Blog](#) -

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 ...

1 month ago

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- [Cartooneric](#)
- [Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)
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- [Format Films Roadrunners](#)

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Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:08](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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