



Sunday 10 November 2024

The Yes Man

When Jack Benny would exclaim, "Oh, floorwalker!" the audience knew exactly what was going to happen next. It always got a laugh.

The floorwalker would turn around and reply:
"Yehhhhhhhhhhs?"

Frank Nelson may be best known for that one word, but he had an incredibly prolific career that would be impossible to list here, so it's pointless to try.



In addition to radio and TV, he voiced cartoons, narrated industrial films, appeared in commercials, and had a second career as the national president of AFTRA from 1954 to 1957. He was a founder of the union and instrumental in creating its pension plan.

He told of how his acting career started at KOA in Denver playing a 30-year-old man—when he was 15. At 18, in 1929, he arrived in Hollywood and continued his radio career. He started in drama with the KNX Players but he eventually surfaced on the big comedy and comedy/variety shows from Los Angeles because, as he told interviewer Chuck Schaden, "comedy paid better."

Nelson recalled the first appearance on the Benny show was in an insert on June 1, 1934. It was on an hour-long show from Chicago touting the Century of Progress exhibition, and he played Clark Gable. Through the 1930s into the '40s, Nelson would appear with Benny as an announcer/narrator, play-by-play sports imitator, a radio salesman for Yhtapmys Soothing Syrup, a medium's henchman (and others with an evil laugh), doctors, and an array of clerks, floorwalkers (some not as masculine as others) and people Benny had to deal with who didn't want to deal with him.

His most unusual role wasn't on the Benny show. He played the voice of Monty Woolley's beard on the Woolley-Al Jolson programme for Colgate on June 1, 1943.

Nelson stuck with network radio pretty much until the end. He was an railroad information counter clerk on Benny's second-last radio show on May 15, 1955 and finished his career in May 1960 on a broadcast of *The Amos 'n' Andy Music Hall*.

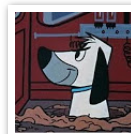
We mentioned cartoons. In the late 1940s, Nelson was the narrator of the *Jerky Journeys* and followed up with voices for John Sutherland Productions, including the the Devil in *The Devil and John Q.* (1952) and as the dog narrator in Walter Lantz's *Dig That Dog* (1954). He doesn't mention these, but he talks about cartoons in Henry Mitchell's "Dixie Dialing" column of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* of April 20, 1961.

LOOK AT the little picture and tell me his name—QUICK. Oh, sure, I know you've seen him 100 times, and I know it's right on the tip of your tongue but you're like me, there are a lot of faces and even performances familiar to you but you can't quite come up with the name in a hurry. It's Frank Nelson, and he's been with Jack Benny on his shows for 27 years now.

New Amos 'n' Andy

"But we've seen you on a lot of other shows, too," I began (on the phone yesterday) and he admitted to doing roles in *The Real McCoys*, *I Love Lucy*, *Our Miss Brooks*, *The Life of Riley*, *Ann Sothern Show* and *Danny Thomas Show*—as well as on that recent grim Audrey Meadows show (the adjective is mine, not

About Me



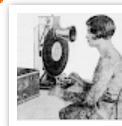
[View my complete profile](#)

NOTE

Comments on an article will be limited to the first few days after it is posted. While there will be a spurt of posts to mid-December, this blog is pretty much retired.

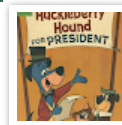
My Blog List

Old TV History



November 1928 - U.S. government regulators tried to solve a problem with television at the end of 1928. Radio stations were sending out TV shows, a few of them on a regu...
19 hours ago

Yowp



President Huck - How long have animated cartoon characters been "running" for the U.S. presidency? Well, Popeye and Bluto did. So did Betty Boop (as the crowd chanted her ...
1 day ago

Blogs to See

News From ME

Today's Video Link - Have you ever seen Andy Huggins do stand-up? Well, I guess with him, it's sit-down but he's a funny guy either way... [...] Read More... from Today's Video L...
12 hours ago

his), in Ronald Reagan Theater. Also in the still-unreleased Weir [Wiere] Brothers series [*Oh, Those Bells* on CBS in 1962]. But what I asked him about was this new Amos 'n' Andy show we keep hearing about. "Well it's by Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll (the creators of the old radio show and later on the TV series) and it's to be cartoons. The characters will be Southern but not Negroes. They've done the first five of the shows, though they won't be telecast until fall, and I do voice roles in three of them.

"I've done some of the voice work in the Flintstones series, by the way, and in the Mister Magoo series. I haven't actually seen what the cartoon characters will look like, but I do know the show was sold to a sponsor just on the strength of the story outlines and the ability of Gosden and Correll. "In all these things I play some crazy character, but it's not associated with Frank Nelson."

I interrupted to say that might be just as well, but he said it was a mixed blessing.

Taking No Risk

"Like most actors I work freelance. I'd love to do something heavy for a change, but these casting directors are not going to take any calculated risk. If anybody wrote in and said they saw the show and me on it and were disappointed the thing was not a comedy, the producer would tell the casting director he was out of his mind to use an offbeat character when there are so many good heavies around.

"You ask how I feel about television in general. Well, I'm a past president the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and I happen to be pretty much a defender of TV. When you consider the amount of product that appears on television, I think it has a pretty high standard. How many good shows are on Broadway, or how many good movies are there?

"As for movies on TV, I think it's unfortunate we have to look at something made 30 years ago to get our entertainment—it's been foisted on the public and these old movies they wouldn't pay a dime to see in a theater. Until TV came along looking for a cheap way to fill in time those movies were sitting in vaults and the movie companies never dreamed of ever doing anything with them."

Has Trademark

"But back to my character—he's usually just nameless, though Benny sometimes refers to him as "Mr. Nelson" in a show. I think most people recognize me for the way this character sayss EEEYESSS (yes).

"I once walked in a producer's office and he said I certainly didn't look the way I sounded and I said thank God for that."

You'll notice Mr. Nelson in the Benny show this Sunday, repeat of the one starring Benny, Oscar Levant and Nelson—the one in which Jack Benny goes to see a psychiatrist.

For a change I thought we might pin down one of these wonderfully familiar characters on TV who don't get star billing, yet they're in our living rooms oftener than orange peels (it you have children).

As for the psychiatrist show, originally aired on Nov. 30, 1958, but rerun on April 23, 1961, the highlight of the second half was a sketch filled with Frank Nelson. William L. Doudna, the television editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal* was one of a number of columnists who wrote about the show on re-broadcast day.

A man who has been heckling Jack Benny for 27 years would like to do something else for a change, he told The Wisconsin State Journal in an exclusive interview.



The man is Frank Nelson, a 36-year veteran of radio and television who was on radio's first coast-to-coast broadcast.

Nelson joined Benny in 1934, he said in a telephone conversation from Beverly Hills, and has been with him ever since.

While his chief job has been heckling Jack on the air, Nelson has done it in a variety of roles. He'll give a sampling of these in an "iron-man" performance on the Benny show over CBS-WISC-TV at 8:30 tonight.

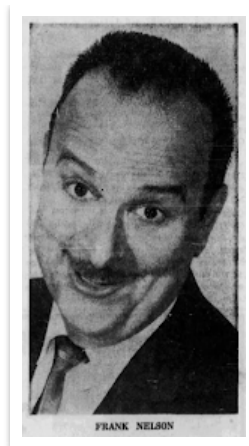
In this, Nelson will rival even King Baggett, star and

director of silent films who, some 45 years ago, played every role in a courtroom drama and directed the multiple-exposure movie as well.

Among modern stars, one of the most versatile is Alec Guinness, English actor who played eight parts in "Kind Hearts and Coronets."

12 Roles, 24 Minutes

Tonight, in one-third the time of the Guinness film, Nelson will be seen in 12 roles within 24 minutes. He'll be an insolent waiter, a men's clothing salesman, a hot dog vendor, a filling station attendant, a psychiatrist's patient—and more.



Fernando Llera Cartoons



Mexico's automobile prices soar sky high with 100% price

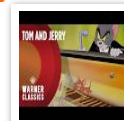
increase in last 10 years. -

©2024

fernandollera.com

1 day ago

Movies with Michael



Some Cartoons for Saturday Morning #202 - Hello

my friends and happy Saturday morning. Once again it is time for some classic cartoons. "The Cat Concerto" (1947) was the fourth Tom and Jerry fi...

1 day ago

The Exposure Sheet



Video of the Week: Penny Singleton Speaks - The

birthday of Penny Singleton, the original voice of Jane Jetson, will be here in a few days, so I'm sharing this lengthy video interview with her that ...

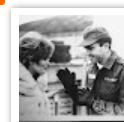
2 days ago

Cartoon Research

A Royal Fowl: The 30th Anniversary of "The Swan Princess" - After a so-so box office performance, the film had renewed life on home video - inspiring no less than eleven direct-to-video sequels.

2 days ago

AFRTS Archive



Jim Pewter 1968 - PV2 Jim Pewters and Jill St John in

Korea 1964. Jill was with the Bob Hope show. Copyright Playground Productions. Courtesy Jim Pewter. Jim Pewte...

2 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Felix Arrives in the Sunny South - Howdy Readers! First off we have a color drawing by Cathy Hill, my favorite cartoonist. She's celebrating Halloween night this year and many years past in ...

5 days ago

Even though Nelson plays many parts, he still feels he's typed as Benny's heckler.

"I'd like to be a performer rather than a type," he said.

"I enjoyed radio more than I do television," he added. "There, even when the parts were somewhat alike, there was variety in the work, and, because the audience didn't see me, I wasn't so closely typed." Nelson said he would like to play serious roles—almost anything, even a villainous part.

"I would like to do movies, because they give the actor more scope than television does, but I expect I'll stay in TV," he said.

Started as Announcer

He finds himself in much the same position as his close friend, Willard Waterman, a native of Madison. Waterman became so closely associated with "The Great Gildersleeve," in which he can still be seen in re-runs, that he found it difficult to get serious parts.

Nelson was born in Colorado Springs, but spent much of his boyhood in Denver before moving to Los Angeles, Calif. He started his career as a radio announcer on an early morning show.

"I had to get up so early that sometimes I actually went to sleep at the microphone," Nelson said. "One morning, the engineer went to sleep, too, and we had a great time explaining the silence to listeners."

On the West Coast, he was announcer for the National Broadcasting first coast-to-coast broadcast which featured Groucho Marx.

He joined Benny in 1934 when Jack had a 5-minute insert on an NBC program, and has been with him ever since on both radio and television. In the meantime, he appeared in a few movies, but he has made his real career in the job with which he is as closely associated as Basil Rathbone with "Sherlock Holmes" and Percy Grainger with "Country Gardens."



Nelson died of cancer on Sept. 12, 1986. Is he still remembered today? Considering his occasional appearance in the Gasoline Alley comic strip, you can probably figure out how Nelson would answer that one.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [06:54](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

No comments:

Post a Comment



Enter comment

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

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

[Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog](#)



[Taking A Post-Election, Pre-Holiday Hiatus -](#)

5 days ago

[Pegbar Profiles](#)



[The Animator, January 1938 - The second issue of](#)

The Animator is missing as of this writing, so here is the third edition from the start of January 1938.

*Snow White *had its Ca...

2 weeks ago

[Termite Terrace headlines](#)



[A Mistake Only Charlton Could Make - The Jetsons,](#)

here mistakenly referred to by their Spanish name, Los Supersonicos, in Charlton's Huckleberry Hound#3.

4 months ago

[Show All](#)

Why Not Read...

[Cartoonerific Podcast](#)

[Dr Grob's Animation Review](#)

[Tex Avery at Warner Bros](#)

[Format Films Roadrunners](#)

[Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie](#)

Blog Archive

▼ [2024](#) (148)

▼ [November](#) (11)

[The Yes Man](#)

[The Low, Low Price of Two Million Dollars](#)

[The End at The End](#)

[Less Cowbell](#)

[The Failure of Phil Silvers](#)

[Betty Ends Prohibition](#)

[Hopping Cinderella](#)

[Tralfaz Sunday Theatre: Tune in Tomorrow](#)

[Your Money Or Your Life](#)

[How Cartoons Are Made – 1930](#)

[The Many Shapes of Tom](#)

► [October](#) (32)

- ▶ [September](#) (30)
- ▶ [August](#) (33)
- ▶ [July](#) (19)
- ▶ [June](#) (14)
- ▶ [May](#) (1)
- ▶ [April](#) (2)
- ▶ [February](#) (2)
- ▶ [January](#) (4)
- ▶ [2023](#) (381)
- ▶ [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](#) (51)
- [Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)
- [Bob and Ray](#) (18)
- [Bob Clampett](#) (122)
- [Bob McKimson](#) (87)
- [Bob Thomas](#) (66)
- [Chuck Jones](#) (193)
- [Columbia](#) (76)
- [Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)
- [Cynthia Lowry](#) (39)
- [Dick Thomas](#) (18)
- [Disney](#) (1)
- [Don Patterson](#) (24)
- [Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)
- [Earl Wilson](#) (20)
- [Erskine Johnson](#) (46)
- [Felix the Cat](#) (40)
- [Film Daily](#) (50)
- [Fleischer](#) (223)
- [Frank Tashlin](#) (43)
- [Fred Allen](#) (61)
- [Fred Brunish](#) (13)
- [Friz Freleng](#) (199)
- [Gene Deitch](#) (25)
- [George Pal](#) (12)

[Grant Simmons](#) (11)

[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (140)

[Hanna-Barbera](#) (13)

[Hans Conried](#) (5)

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

[Harman-Ising](#) (107)

[Henry Morgan](#) (14)

[Irv Spence](#) (14)

[Jack Benny](#) (652)

[Jay Ward](#) (37)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (112)

[John Sutherland](#) (46)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (42)

[Johnny Olson](#) (6)

[June Foray](#) (8)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

[King-Size Canary](#) (11)

[Laugh-In](#) (20)

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

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (8)

[Magical Maestro](#) (10)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

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

[MGM](#) (772)

[Norm McCabe](#) (11)

[Pat Matthews](#) (13)

[Paul Julian](#) (17)

[Sara Berner](#) (6)

[Screwy Squirrel](#) (43)

[Spider-Man](#) (3)

[Terrytoons](#) (120)

[Tex Avery](#) (679)

[The Cat That Hated People](#) (10)

[Toby the Pup](#) (5)

[Tom and Jerry Human](#) (48)

[Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (21)

[Ub Iwerks](#) (132)

[UPA](#) (81)

[Van Beuren](#) (149)

[Vernon Scott](#) (53)

[Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)

[Walt Disney](#) (218)

[Walter Lantz](#) (336)

[Warner Bros.](#) (927)

[Who Killed Who](#) (13)

