

Sunday, 2 March 2025

## First Stop, Kansas

The Jack Benny radio show's humour became so honed after World War Two that when Jack took his show on the road he knew exactly what elements he needed for success.

Eddie Anderson was one. Another was Phil Harris. The bandleader once said "Jack and I did our own routines in lots of theaters, and we were a good team and always kept the audience laughing."

One of the Benny entourage's stops was in Wichita, Kansas in 1950. Going along with the three were guitarist Frank Remley, who was regular travelling company of Jack's, drummer Sammy Weiss, and the Wiere Brothers. Jack loved them so much, he tried to get them on TV. Eventually, they succeeded in breaking onto the schedule in mid-season 1962, and succeeded in being cancelled before the season was done.



The *Wichita Eagle* of May 17, 1950 featured several stories about the record-breaking shows the night before.

### 8,200 at Show in Forum

#### **Jack Benny's Troupe Plays As Radio Audiences Like It** **By TED HAMMER**

*(Eagle Staff Writer)*

If Wichita's city dads are asked soon to repair the roof and rafters of the Forum, blame the Jack Benny-Phil Harris show which played there to two standing—room—only audiences Tuesday night, setting a new stage attendance record. More applause and laughs were provided by the show than ordinarily might come from a good season of top attractions.

The principles just played themselves, as radio audiences have learned to like them. Jack Benny appeared hurt when numerous performers declined to let him accompany them on the violin, he finally got to play "Love In Bloom," and Phil Harris showed him how to play a love scene. Eddie (Rochester) Anderson was brought on after a telephone bell interrupted a Benny speech, just as it happens on the radio every Sunday night when the CBS show is broadcast by KFJH, KFJH-FM here.

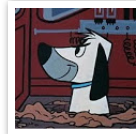
Benny found the easy way that if he doesn't get a new radio contract and doesn't click in television, he can return to his old time single act, a monologue. And Wichitans loved him just as they did back in 1922 when he played at the Orpheum, before he became famous on screen and radio.

There just wasn't time enough for Harris to satisfy the audience with his southern style songs, but he had to sing four of them before he and Benny started a new routine to stop the applause. Vivian Blaine of the films did three songs which proved why she has been given her own television show next fall. And Rochester demonstrated that his singing and dancing are just as good as his gags spoken in the crackly, high pitched voice which radio fans enjoy so much.

The three Wiere Brothers, who also have been in pictures and are internationally famous, could have stayed on the stage another half hour with their violins, dancing and comedy. They proved more than equal to advance billing as top jugglers, with some hat and stick feats new to Wichita theatergoers. Phil Harris bawled was responsible for much of the show's success.

The Stuart Morgan Dancers, three fellows and cute girl, did some breath taking adagio which made the audience believe Benny when he said he went to a lot of trouble to get them.

## About Me



[View my complete profile](#)

## NOTE

Comments on an article will be limited to the first few days after it is posted. This blog is virtually retired, with daily posts ending March 12.

## My Blog List

### Old TV History

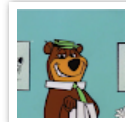


December 1929 - In 1929, there were technical developments

in the advancement of televisions, new stations were being granted licenses in the United States (at least in th...

21 hours ago

### Yowp



Yogi Bear is On the Air. Hey, Hey, Hee! -

"MeTV is running old Hanna-Barbera cartoons. What do you think, Yowp?" I have been asked by blog readers. I'm not really sure why anyone is all that intere...

1 week ago

## Blogs to See



Closing the show was a musical routine featuring Benny and Miss Elaine with members of the Phil Harris band. Dressed in weird costume they provided "mountain music," with Benny as director and violinist, while Miss Blaine played it deadpan, Sam the drummer and Frank Remley guitar player, were in this group, the "Beverly Hillbillies."

Good as the others in the cast are, it was a Benny-Harris show, marked by gags and songs of the type for which they're famous—even including the band leader's "That's What I Like About the South" and "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?"

The Wichita shows were attended by more than 8,700, with some 100 persons allowed to buy standing room, to set a record. Extra seats were placed down in front and in corners at the last night to accommodate a few more persons, according to Mrs. Mary Floto who handled the ticket sale.

### It's Informal But Lively at Rehearsals

In rehearsals of the Jack Benny-Phil Harris show, it's "Phil, or Curly," when members of the band or cast address the leader. And everyone calls Benny "Jack" or "Jackson." The latter is the nickname used by Harris since they became associated 14 years ago.

When the drummer was called to the telephone during rehearsal at the Forum Tuesday, Harris took his place, even going through a number he was to sing in the show.

While Harris handled much of the musical rehearsal, Benny took care of "business" and timing. When Vivian Blaine asked Benny if she could use a different opening song than previously rehearsed, he told her "fine," and she ran through it with the band.

"After all, Wichitans don't know that we had the other number ready," Benny said as he resumed his chair in a corner of the Forum stage. He was on his feet a moment later to hurry beck and forth, making suggestions.

Once, while Miss Blaine, Benny and Harris discussed a bit of business, the drummer called out, "Let's go, we've got a show to do tonight." Show time was four hours away, but everybody laughed.

In an interview on Don Anderson's "Harmony Ranch," over KFJ, KFJ-FM. Harris credited Benny with much of his success. After stating that he grew up in the show business, the son of parents who were in the theater, he said Benny helped him get the show started in which he and his wife, Alice Faye, are co-starred.

### Benny and Company Make Vet Patients Noisy with Mirth

A hollering houseful of patients at Veterans hospital Tuesday saw a funfest fostered by Jack Benny and his company.

In the end they found that Benny, the consummate master of ceremonies, can really play the violin. Hot violin, too.

He's no Joe Venuti, but he can finger the fiddle. With confidence and savoir-faire that best can be described simply as Benny-like, he finally fiddled after frustrating interruptions by Phil Harris, Rochester, and Vivian Elaine. The latter interruption was most welcome to Benny and audience.

An eight-man outfit from the Harris orchestra pulled the curtain ahead of schedule and entertained the ex-GI's with improvisations that added up to Dixieland. The drummer, a bigger man than Broderick Crawford, used a folding chair and a tissue box for traps.

Benny entered to assure the vets that he isn't stingy. I throw money away. Not very far, but.."

Harris interrupted for a routine with the boss and then did "Preacher and Bear" and "Darktown Poker Club." The boys found out that Harris is not good, but perfect, and that he has to be a lot faster than it sounds like on the phonograph.

Vivian Blaine insulted the be-junior out of the boss with a frank appraisal of his sex appeal—zero—then

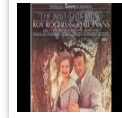


**LOVE CERTAINLY MUST BE IN BLOOM**—Jack Benny, at the microphone, swings into "Love in Bloom," Monday following his arrival at Municipal airport with his troupe for performances at the Forum Tuesday night. Tom Bashaw, program director for station KFJ, holds the mike for the Hollywood Heffetz, and Marjorie Shidier, at Bashaw's left, winner of the KFJ Jack Benny talent show, gets pointers from the maestro.



**TWO WORRY—BUT NOT ROCHESTER**—Jack Benny, center, and Phil Harris, right, worry while Rochester beams, as the ancient Maxwell which was waiting for the Benny troupe Monday night at Municipal airport, sputters into action.—(Eagle Staff Photos.)

### Movies with Michael



**Cowboy Church #208** - Hello my friends and welcome

back for another service of Cowboy Church. Today's musical selection begins with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans with "In the Sw..."

32 minutes ago

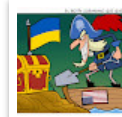
### News From ME

**FACT CHECK: Ingratitude** -

Steve Benen further debunks the claims of our vice-president that Volodymyr Zelensky was not expressing thanks for all the U.S. has done for his country. I...

2 hours ago

### Fernando Llera Cartoons

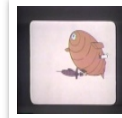


**Future of military aid to Ukraine, minerals deal uncertain**

after tumultuous White House meeting. - ©2025 fernandollera.com

2 hours ago

### The Exposure Sheet



**Video of the Week: Fantastic Four Previews** - All good

things must come to an end, and today marks the last post for Fantastic February. This was a lot of fun to put together, and I hope you had a gre...

2 days ago

### AFRTS Archive



**Tom Campbell 1973** - Welcome back Tom Campbell,

after Tom Campbell dominated San Francisco Radio he came to Los Angeles, jocked, found a bunch of voiceover work and was ...

2 days ago

### Cartoon Research

**Awards with Character Part 2: More Oscar-Winning Animated Short Subjects Celebrating Anniversaries** - Here are three more Oscar winning shorts that are celebrating an anniversary this year.

2 days ago



caressed the patients with two numbers, including a job on “You Made Me Love You” that created a lot of hot but harmless humidity.  
Then came Rochester, who apologized for making the boss look like a cheap skate. (“I have all the luxuries. Shoes, bread ...”)  
Rochester, of course, stopped the show with “Sunny Side of the Street” and a return to his original occupation, booting, that gave the lads a laugh with every lunge.

Three thousand people greeted Jack and his group as they arrived on a TWA Constellation the day before. They were travelling by air because of a railway strike. A 50-passenger passenger plane was chartered along with a second plane to haul scenery, costumes and props.

The schedule was grueling—21 cities in 21 days. Stops included Montreal and Toronto. It climaxed at Carnegie Hall. Afterward, Benny, Harris and Rochester boarded the Queen Mary for return engagements to the Palladium in London and the Empire in Glasgow.

Greeting him on his return was a new radio season. And a new medium. He began his 15-year television career that October 28th.

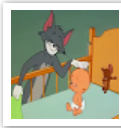
Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:08](#)  
Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

No comments:  
  
Post a Comment


 Enter comment

[Home](#) [Older Post](#)

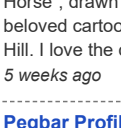
Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)




[Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon](#)  
[Busy Buddies \(1956\)](#) - In 1975, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera would revisit their characters of Tom and Jerry with a TV show entitled, \*The Tom and Jerry Show\*. That ser...  
*3 days ago*



[Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog](#)  
[February 26 Birthdays](#) - *4 days ago*



[Mark Kausler's CatBlog](#)  
[Felix and Danny](#) - Howdy Readers, As our introduction to this post, we present "Felix On His Stick Horse", drawn by my most beloved cartoonist, Cathy Hill. I love the ch...  
*5 weeks 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...  
*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
- ▼ [2025](#) (63)
    - ▼ [March](#) (3)
      - [First Stop, Kansas](#)
      - [Juul Haalmeyer](#)
      - [Fleischer's Snow-White](#)
    - [February](#) (28)
    - [January](#) (32)
  - [2024](#) (209)
  - [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](#) (52)  
-----  
[Bad Luck Blackie](#) (12)  
-----  
[Bob and Ray](#) (18)  
-----  
[Bob Clampett](#) (125)  
-----  
[Bob McKimson](#) (88)  
-----  
[Bob Thomas](#) (67)  
-----  
[Christmas cartoon](#) (88)  
-----  
[Chuck Jones](#) (198)  
-----  
[Columbia](#) (83)  
-----  
[Counterfeit Cat](#) (10)  
-----  
[Cynthia Lowry](#) (39)  
-----  
[Dick Thomas](#) (18)  
-----  
[Don Patterson](#) (25)  
-----  
[Drag-a-Long Droopy](#) (14)  
-----  
[Earl Wilson](#) (22)  
-----  
[Erskine Johnson](#) (46)  
-----  
[Felix the Cat](#) (42)  
-----  
[Film Daily](#) (50)  
-----  
[Fleischer](#) (229)  
-----  
[Frank Tashlin](#) (45)  
-----  
[Fred Allen](#) (61)  
-----  
[Fred Brunish](#) (14)  
-----  
[Friz Freleng](#) (206)  
-----  
[Gene Deitch](#) (25)  
-----  
[George Pal](#) (12)  
-----  
[Grant Simmons](#) (11)  
-----  
[Hanna and Barbera unit](#) (143)  
-----  
[Hanna-Barbera](#) (15)  
-----  
[Hans Conried](#) (5)  
-----  
[Hardaway-Dalton unit](#) (7)  
-----  
[Harman-Ising](#) (109)  
-----  
[Henry Morgan](#) (14)  
-----  
[Irv Spence](#) (14)  
-----  
[Jack Benny](#) (668)  
-----  
[Jay Ward](#) (38)



[Jim Tyer](#) (14)

[Jimmy Durante](#) (22)

[John Crosby](#) (116)

[John Sutherland](#) (49)

[Johnny Johnsen](#) (44)

[Johnny Olson](#) (6)

[June Foray](#) (9)

[Kenny Baker](#) (6)

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

[Laugh-In](#) (20)

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

[Little Rural Riding Hood](#) (9)

[Magical Maestro](#) (10)

[Maurice Noble](#) (12)

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

[MGM](#) (792)

[Norm McCabe](#) (12)

[Pat Matthews](#) (13)

[Paul Julian](#) (17)

[Sara Berner](#) (6)

[Screwy Squirrel](#) (44)

[Snafu](#) (36)

[Spider-Man](#) (3)

[Terrytoons](#) (126)

[Tex Avery](#) (699)

[The Cat That Hated People](#) (11)

[Toby the Pup](#) (6)

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

[Tralfaz Sunday Theatre](#) (30)

[Ub Iwerks](#) (135)

[UPA](#) (83)

[Van Beuren](#) (154)

[Vernon Scott](#) (54)

[Virginia MacPherson](#) (14)

[Walt Disney](#) (222)

[Walter Lantz](#) (345)

[Warner Bros.](#) (952)

[Who Killed Who](#) (13)