

Sunday, 9 March 2025

Blintzes and Bets

Jack Benny celebrated his birthday in Toronto in 1943, and then returned to the city seven years later in a stop on his one-night-stand tour. This time, he didn't broadcast a live show; his radio season was already transcribed for release at a more convenient time.

The first trip was set up to sell Victory Bonds, and his some of his radio cast was with him. There was some charity work as a sidebar to the second appearance, which was a variety show and included two of the people listeners heard on the air (via Buffalo; Toronto stations and others in Canada did not run the Lucky Strike show).

Here's a story from the *Toronto Star* of May 31, 1950 about an unusual news conference. Something doesn't ring true to me, as if this was something put together by Benny's writers. Eddie Anderson and Phil Harris seem to be in character, and Vivian Blaine's comments sound like something she would say on a radio show.

Sold Out Everywhere Benny's Not Hungry But Only Pretending By A. O. TATE

Star Staff Correspondent

Buffalo, May 31—Jack Benny will be wondering today if those cheese blintzes were really as good as they were cracked up to be.

Jack was here yesterday with Rochester, Phil Harris and Vivian Blaine. The famous radio comedian was torn between sadness and gladness, and when it came time for lunch Jack said he wasn't hungry. He just wasn't hungry.

"I'm not hungry . . . I'm not hungry . . . I'm not hungry," he said in three directions.

When Miss Blaine, who is a very appealing blonde movie star and radio singer, appealed to Jack to think of his stomach, Mr. Benny responded with only a sardonic smile.

"But boss . . ." Rochester began.

"ROCHESTER!" Jack yelled.

"But Jackson," Phil Harris dared.

"PHIL," Mr. Benny gargled, "I'M NOT HUNGRY!"

Jack Benny is on a tour of one-night stands which brings him to Toronto for a Maple Leaf Gardens show tonight. He is minus Mary Livingstone and Dennis Day, but along with Rochester, Phil Harris and Vivian Blaine are the Wiere Brothers, Harris' orchestra and a cast of 40. At lunch time yesterday Jack was very sad about Buffalo, and exceedingly happy about Toronto.

"Six thousand . . . twenty-five thousand," he muttered into his lap while people swirled about him in his suite's living room. "Six thousand . . . twenty-five thousand."

Jack Benny is doing one-night stands for the first time in his long show-business career.

"Just for Fun"

"I didn't have to start out on this," he said to someone who was standing nearby. "I'm just doing it for fun. And I've got a good show . . . a fine show . . . a terrific show. If Jack Benny, Rochester and Phil Harris



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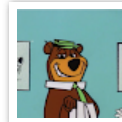
Old TV History



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can't pack 'em in—well, nobody can."

Even in the old days of vaudeville, before he went into radio about 20 years ago, Jack Benny never did one-night stands. When he showed up in a theatre with his violin and his gags, he was there for a week. One night stands are rugged.

When the reporter and photographer entered the suit they saw Jack Benny in conference with three other men. The conference, over the next hour or so, clustered about one chair after another as Jack moved restlessly about.

Occasionally it would disappear briefly into one of the bedrooms. When it would re-appear, Jack might be in a figured silk dressing gown, or back in his plain tan sports jacket.

Once, when the conference was in a bedroom, a bellboy came in and put a basket of fruit on a living room table. When Jack saw it first he made a quick move in its direction—only to remember, suddenly, he wasn't hungry.

"I'm Not Hungry"

Three Buffalo radio people came into the room with a tape recorder and yards of wire. When the conference and the radio people tangled in mid-floor a couple of times, the conference disintegrated and Jack sat down and looked at his publicity man, Irvine Fine [sic]. Irving had just come in.

"How about some lunch, Jack," said the unsuspecting Irving.

Mr. Benny eyed Mr. Fine for a moment and then said, quietly: "No thank you, Irving. I'm not hungry."

Then the tape recorder was ready to go. Someone went out to find Rochester. A few minutes later Vivian Blaine came in. Phil Harris had gone to a ballgame.

"Oh Jack," Vivian breathed at Mr. Benny. "Phil and I had the most wonderful food. Really, Jack, we've never eaten more wonderful food. We had cheese blintzes as light and tender as . . ."

"Cheese blintzes?" Jack whispered.

"Jack, cheese blintzes like we've never eaten before. And Jack, what do you think? A girl came over to me in the restaurant. She said her boy friend says you are his favorite comedian. He listens to you every Sunday night. Nothing interferes with that. But she said he said he didn't have enough money this week to take her to see your show. There are two people, Jack, two people who would give anything to see your show."

"Could Pretend"

"You can't go by what one or two people say, Vivian. This afternoon, the day before the show, there is a \$25,000 advance sale. What have we got here on the day of the show? A \$6,000 advance sale. What's the reason? What's the answer? The cheese blintzes were good, eh?"

"Oh, Jack, they were . . ."

"Jack's not hungry," Irvine Fine reminded Miss Blaine.

When Jack and Rochester and Vivian were interviewed for the tape recorder, Vivian said she had just had the most wonderful food just a short time earlier. She gave the name of the restaurant, the street and number.

"We call this show 'Tape it or Leave it'," said one of the radio people. "Pretty corny, don't you think, Jack?"

"No," Jack said, laughing heartily. "I like that. I also like Vivian's commercials. Cheese blintzes, yet." After a while Jack Benny slowed down long enough to be photographed. "Why don't you?" he asked the photographer, "take my picture with a great banana. That one right there. I could pretend to be eating it."

Two bananas later Jack posed with a banana.

"Toronto's a great city," he said. "A great city. By tomorrow night the Gardens will be sold out. Buffalo and Pittsburgh. Yipe. In Wichita we sold out. In Pasadena, where they've seen me a million times, we sold out. We're going to London in a month or so. The Palladium is practically sold out now."

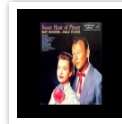
Outside Jack's suite a number of 'teen agers waited around hoping for his autograph.

How did the act go? The *Star's* Jack Karr, in the June 1 edition, gave a summary. He tagged it with an example of Jack's real-life un-stinginess, the declaration made by Canada's best-known newsman-turned-announcer who, in a few years, would become America's best-known Cartwright.

The Jack Benny jackpot at the Gardens last night was a happy piece of entertainment . . . even for those who don't worship at the Sunday evening radio shrine. For this trek into the hinterlands, Jackson has surrounded himself with a program full of talent, some of which, if subjected to the applause meter, would climb quite a few decibels higher than Benny's own rating. And that, you've got to admit, is a pretty brave thing for any top-ranking comic to do.

By saying that Benny doesn't hog the show doesn't mean, however, that anybody walks away with it from under his nose. He sees to it that his presence is liberally sprinkled throughout the evening simply by taking over the master of ceremonies job. But he has also seen to it that there isn't a dud act on his supporting bill and that each of these various acts gets a chance to show off its stuff under the best of conditions. And that's smart showmanship. So the net impression left is of a fine evening's

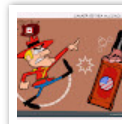
Movies with Michael



Cowboy Church #209 - Hello my friends and welcome

back for another service of Cowboy Church. Today's musical selection begins with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans singing Sweet H...
7 hours ago

Fernando Llera Cartoons



Canadian stores pull U.S. liquor from shelves as Trump's

tariffs take effect. - ©2025 fernandollercartoons.com
8 hours ago

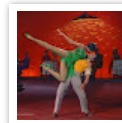
AFRTS Archive



AFRS Guam 1965 - "Would you like some tape from the

Guam station?" AFRTS Guam was there in 1944. Radioman Cousin Mike held down the fort on the "Night Beat". I be...
1 day ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



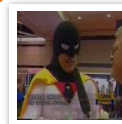
Baby, You Knock Me Out - Terpsichore & Cartoons -

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Cartoon Research

Going for the Gold: The 25th Anniversary of "The Road to El Dorado" - In the twenty-five years since its release, the film has found a devoted following.
2 days ago

The Exposure Sheet



Video of the Week: Space Ghost on C-SPAN - He's fought

all manner of outer space villainy, but today, Space Ghost faces a new enemy: C-SPAN! Today's video comes from 1995, and features Space Ghost ...
3 days ago

entertainment all provided through the courtesy of Mr. B. "You can't say I don't provide you with the best," he reminds his audience a couple of times during the show."

And "the best" includes his radio mates, Phil Harris and Rochester, as well as a gorgeous hunt of Hollywood womanhood named Vivian Blaine, the screwy Wiere Brothers, the juggling Peiro Brothers, and an adagio act known as the Stuart Morgan dancers. These, with Harris' orchestra in the background, add up to a very solid vaudeville program.

While no special attempt has been made to make the Benny in-person show conform to the pattern of the Benny radio show, a great deal of the latter has very naturally crept in.

The Benny character—the one developed in nearly 20 years on the networks—is established early and is allowed to grow through the evening; the tightness, the bad violin playing, the infirmities of advancing age that are creeping up on him, his vanity and school-boyish petulance, his notion of being a lady's man, and his hurt when the glamour dolls won't take him seriously. He is continually heckled by Phil Harris and he, in turn, heckles Harris. "Did you see how he leads that band?" Benny asks. "Harris is the only man in the world who leads a band as though he has to go some place."

Harris, in fact, doesn't lead the band at all. When he is singing his standbys, "That's What I Like About the South" or "Preacher and the Bear," he occasionally attacks it in the manner of a cheerleader with a hot-foot, but he seldom conducts it.

For her part in the performance, the blonde, low-cut Miss Blaine sings a couple of bouncy songs and a couple of torchy ones, and then becomes stooge to Benny's and Harris' demonstrations in technique of love-making to much audience hilarity.

The Stuart Morgan dancers—a girl and three men—have the most violent adagio act these eyes have caught in some time. One late-coming lady member of the audience, walking past the front of the stage, almost lost her balance when she ducked at the sight of the girl in the act coming hurtling out in her direction.

The Peiro Brothers have a very fast juggling act . . . and the Weire [sic] Brothers, three clowns who occasionally use violins with their nonsense, are show-stoppers in the real sense of the word.

And then there's Rochester—Eddie Anderson—who occupies a special spot of his own on the program and who sings in a voice like a fingernail on a blackboard with a great deal of raucous good humor.

Rochester is obviously looked upon with a good deal of affection by the Benny regulars, and they eat it up when he sasses Boss Benny.

At the conclusion of last night's performance, there was a special announcement from Lorne Green. During his Toronto stay, Jack Benny made a trip out to Variety Village, the school for crippled boys at Scarboro, operated by the Variety club of Toronto.

Jack Benny has offered to completely furnish one of the rooms in the school as a gesture of friendship for the reception he was given here.

While Jack was visiting disabled young people, Rochester and Phil Harris decided to check out the ponies. Eddie Anderson owned a stable of race horses and one famously came in last at Churchill Downs in 1943. The *Star's* Sports Editor, Milt Dunnell, has the story. I do not understand why he gave Anderson an Amos 'n' Andy dialect. A Canadian should know better.

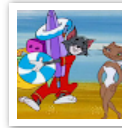
Rochester's Horse Didn't Co-operate

THERE was one new record at Woodbine yesterday that won't appear in the books. Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, an afternoon refugee from Jack Benny, broke all existing marks for autographing programs. Tom "Long Boy" Ellison, the happy-go-lucky colored clogger, gaped in awe as Rochester "stole" his public. Long Boy had been ticking off winners and non-winners for years on the programs of these same people. They practically trampled Tom under foot in their haste to get Rochester's signature. Phil Harris, Benny's bragging (on the air) band-leader, made the mistake of sitting back of Rochester and Mrs. Rochester in their box. That made Phil the pivot man in passing paper. The play was from public to Phil to Rochester; then from Rochester to Phil to public. Harris soon tired of it and got himself a front row seat breaking up the combination.

Rochester made one trip to the paddock, but was button-holed by so many fans that he was shut out when he finally went to make a wager. After that, he remained in his seat and sent down bets with his



Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon



Muscle Beach Tom (1956) - Nine years after Salt Water

Tabby (1947), Tom and Jerry return to the beach in this short film. The storyline between the two cartoons is even quite ...
5 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...
1 month 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

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chauffeur.

Rochester is a “just even” player and owner. He likes the bangtails too well to admit they cost him money. A steed named Whiffletree got him “even” in the seventh. He’s just about “even” in his operation of a modest collection of beetles. His pride and joy was Burnt Cork, which he bought at the Saratoga sales and which he ran eventually in the Kentucky Derby. At least, he entered the colt in the Kentucky Derby. Whether it ran is a matter of argument. Some students of the thoroughbred claim Burnt Cork still would be somewhere on the back stretch at Churchill Downs if he hadn’t got hungry. The Kentucky hardboots were miffed. Such a grazing gluepot, they sniffed, had no place in the Derby.

Kunnel Rochester disagrees. Burnt Cork might not have won he admits, but sure enough, he’d have been in the dough, if the race had been run according to instructions.

Did he mean the jockey disregarded instructions? No, the jockey rode to instructions, but Burnt Cork refused to co-operate. He didn’t like to come from off the pace. So after a mild canter, he spit out the bit and said “to hell with this nonsense.”

“When the race is over, he’s not as tired as ah am right now,” Rochester lamented, shifting his cigar and wagging his noggin.

Eleven days later, Burnt Cork was dead. Killed in a spill while driving down the stretch?

“Naw,” Rochester gloomed. “Died of nee-monia.”



Back to the States went Jack for a June 4th performance at Carnegie Hall for the Damon Runyon Memorial Fund for Cancer Research (tickets were \$1.80 to \$6.00, tax included). Something else was added to the regular Benny show that evening—another round of the feud with Fred Allen. But that’s a story for another time.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:02](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

Larynxa [9 March 2025 at 13:01](#)

Variety Village is still thriving in Scarborough, in the eastern part of Toronto.

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