

Sunday, 20 April 2025

A Weighty Matter

The Jack Benny radio show didn't just develop over the course of a season, with a Maxwell, and age 39 and trains leaving for Anaheim, Azusa and Cucamonga showing up in the dialogue. That took years, something a show on TV would never be given the time to accomplish.

Jack debuted in May 1932. There was a revolving door of NBC and CBS staff announcers assigned to the show. Any attempt by Benny to build a comedy character around them was pretty much impossible.

When Chevrolet picked up his show the following year, Jack started with Howard Claney, who was replaced with Alois Havrilla. The carmaker dropped his show in 1934 and Benny was forced to find another announcer when General Tire decided to sponsor it.



That's when Don Wilson won an audition and began a lengthy association with the Benny show, taking the jump into television with Jack in 1950. He had started in radio in Denver as a singer, and ended up working at several radio stations in Los Angeles, and hosting a transcribed comedy/variety show called *The Mirth Parade*. He was best known for calling the Rose Bowl game. That got the attention of NBC executives in New York, who transferred him back east, ostensibly as a sports announcer.

Don continued doing what Claney and Havrilla had been doing—interrupting dialogue to shoehorn a word in about the sponsor. But Wilson had something else Benny could hang a comedy peg on—his size.

Some might call it fat-shaming today, but Wilson seemed to take it in stride and got his licks in at Benny in response.

When the show became televised, audiences could see Donsie was hefty but not obese. I'm no expert on the television version, but it seems things shifted and Wilson was called to do sillier things on camera (and, out of nowhere, was father to an adult son).

Here's Don talking to one of the newspaper syndicates in a story published on March 4, 1962.

Don Wilson: Large Bones

By DONALD FREEMAN

Copley News Service

HOLLYWOOD—28 years with the Jack Benny troupe, Don Wilson's size is certainly no state secret. Everyone knows that the cheerful announcer-actor with the mellifluous voice is —well, ample. His bulk, in fact, has proved one of the more durable props on the show.

"Actually, I am not fat at all," said Wilson, smiling broadly as he slid into a booth at an airport restaurant. "It is true that I have a large bone structure. But, if you want the truth of the matter, I only weigh. . . ." An airplane droned overhead at that moment, drowning out Wilson's voice.

"What was that?" I cried, leaning forward. "What was that again?"

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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 April 25.

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Old TV History

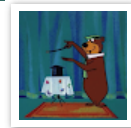


April 1939 -

Television made a significant and large leap forward in April 1939 with the start of regular service over NBC television. Any claims that April 30, 1939 m...

19 hours ago

Yowp



Not So Magical Bear - Yogi Bear tries a magic trick in one of

those cartoons-between-the-cartoons on the "Huckleberry Hound Show". *Alakazam, Alagazoom Come out, little bear, ...

4 weeks ago

Blogs to See

Weight A Comic Myth

"Let me put it another way," said Wilson, his expression bountiful. "My weight is one of those comic myths that take hold. But no one, down deep, believes the myths they laugh at."

"No one really believes that Jack Benny is so penurious, for instance no one really believes that he drives a Maxwell or has a butler named Rochester or that he keeps his money hidden in a vault."

"And your —er, size," I put it, that kind of a myth, too?"

"Absolutely," Wilson said, defiantly jutting out his chins. "But I couldn't be happier about it because it gives Jack a chance to make a lot of jokes and it's given me a pleasant living at my profession."



"How much," I asked, "did you say you weigh?"

Wilson raised an interruptive finger. "See those people over here," he said, "at that table by the window." A cluster of diners had spotted Wilson and several of them smiled by way of recognition, Wilson waved back, also smiling.

Wears A Triumphant Look

Now Wilson turned to me, a triumphant look on his good-natured face. "I'll tell you what they're saying over there right this minute," he said. "They're saying, 'My gosh, Don Wilson must have lost a lot of weight.' Wherever I go, that's what people say to me."

"I have to explain that I haven't lost any weight at all."

Besides the fact that the TV camera adds a few pounds, with all the jokes they've heard about me on the Benny show, people assume that I must weigh at least 350 pounds." Wilson laughed at the outrageousness of the thought, his chins dancing again. "And then it's a big surprise to these

people when they see me in person."

"I suppose, that I have been the subject of more fat man jokes than anyone in show business. When I think that Jack's writers have used every fat man joke in the world, they come up with another one. I remember one line where I tell Jack that I had gone on a diet and taken off 25 pounds. Jack gave me that dying calf look of his and he said, 'You haven't lost weight, Don. Turn around. You've just misplaced it.'"

Scales Are Challenged

A few minutes later, we left the restaurant and Mr. Wilson approached a scale. "Now," he said, inserting a coin, "this should prove my point. Fat, indeed."

"What does it say?" I asked, but, as he turned, Wilson accidentally blocked my vision. He quickly stepped off the platform.

"When a scale is out of order," Wilson demanded, innocently, "wouldn't you think they'd at least put a sign?"

Don Wilson won all kinds of announcing awards, even though Bea Benaderet once remarked how a pool was conducted every Sunday, with actors guessing which line Don would blow first. Jack took one of the mistakes on TV and turned it into a running gag on both television and radio—Wilson twisted the Lucky Strike slogan "Be Happy, Go Lucky." Wilson's wife Lois, who was a fine radio actress, was hired to add to the situation.

When Benny ended his regular series in 1965, Wilson wasn't hired to announce the specials. Veteran Bill Baldwin was brought in, while Wilson only made a few guest appearances. Somehow it didn't seem right.



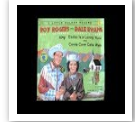
Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:28](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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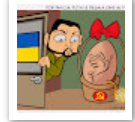


Cowboy Church
#215 - Hello my friends and welcome to

a special Easter service of Cowboy Church. Today's musical selection begins with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans singing East...

1 hour ago

Fernando Liera Cartoons



Putin orders a ceasefire in Ukraine for Easter. - ©2025

fernandoller

acartoons.com

2 hours ago

News From ME

Tales of My Childhood #27 -

As you may know from past essays here, my father's side of the family was Jewish and my mother's was Catholic. Neither parent was particularly proprietary ...

8 hours ago

The Exposure Sheet



Video of the Week: Grooving to Boomerang Groovies - When I

think of Boomerang, three things pop into my mind. One is the classic jingle, the second is the vintage collectibles, and the third is the music vid...

2 days ago

Cartoon Research

Basket Case: Looking Back at "Daffy Duck's Easter Show"

- A flashback to a time when there was a lot to choose from when it came to Looney Tunes offerings on network TV.

2 days ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Laughs For Awful April 17, 2025 -

2 days ago



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am finally getting to the transfers. Network did a great job explaining issues. This time a dramatiza...
3 days ago



Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon



Feedin' the Kiddie (1957) - This short film is the third Tom

and Jerry CinemaScope remake. These films were shot for shot remakes of past Tom and Jerry shorts, now formatted for ...
5 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Felix and the Dooits - Howdy Folks, Here's the Felix strip from 12-4 to 12-17-1932. Felix is settling in to the Dooit home in the dailies, which results in gags featuring Felix t...
1 week 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...
5 months ago

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