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Sunday, 4 May 2025

The Horn Blows

On a whim, I decided to flip through some newspaper clippings about Jack Benny in May 1945.

You could certainly get your fill of Benny then, on radio and on the big screen.

Jack's last show before summer break was on the 27th, with Larry Adler as his special guest. The show also featured Prof. LeBlanc (Mel Blanc), a "typical American family" soap opera announcer (Bea Benaderet), Speedy Riggs' mother (Elvia Allman), and a plug for Yhtapmys Soothing Syrup with Jack chuckling in the background over Frank Nelson's delivery.

But he wasn't through with radio yet. On the 29th, he and Keenan Wynn co-starred in "Please, Charley" on NBC's *This is My Best* at 9:30 Eastern. It was based on Lawrence Riley's humorous short story. Then the following night at 11:30 Eastern, he emceed the second half of a two-hour Seventh War Loan show on the network. His gang was there, as was Ronald Colman to lend some seriousness to the proceedings. On May 16, he appeared from Hollywood in a segment of the series for wounded servicemen, *The Road Ahead*, airing on the Blue network at 9 Eastern and hosted by Clifton Fadiman.

Among the clippings is a story by Tom Dammann in the May 11th edition of the *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*. We quote part of it:

SAN FRANCISCO, May 11.—No gathering of people is complete without funny incidents.

The United Nations Conference is no exception. [...]

The other evening, to show you what we mean, we were standing with a large crowd just outside the Opera House to watch the delegates arrive for a plenary session. [...]

Where's Rochester?

Finally a long black limousine drove up and the crowd quieted, awed, because here perhaps was a Molotov or Stettinius. Out stepped a handsomely dressed man and three well gownned women. The crowd craned its neck, including us. Here was obviously a delegate of importance, but who was he? He walked hurriedly up the steps, followed by the three women. He got just inside the door when a sailor in the crowd recognized him.

"JACK BENNY!" the sailor hollered.

And it was Jack Benny, with Mary Livingston [sic] and two friends. He turned and shouted "Hiya, folks," and went on to watch the proceedings. The crowd laughed.

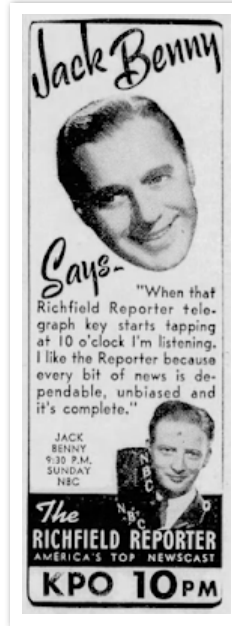
It seems others got to meet Jack in the flesh during his trip to the Bay area. His May 20th show came from San Francisco. Before and after the broadcast, the cast took part in an "I Am An American Day" show at the Civic Auditorium. As for the show, it made the May 19 edition of the *Fulton Daily Sun-Gazette* of Missouri.

Dudley Payne, Hospital Attendant 2-c at the U. S. Naval Hospital in Oakland, Calif., and son of Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Payne of Fulton, will play with a navy band on the Jack Benny radio program at 6 p. m. Sunday night.

Young Payne, who plays trombone, has written his family that he is a member of a band which has been judged the best at his base, and will make a guest appearance on the nation-wide radio show tomorrow night. In his letter he said, "If you hear an extra loud note on a trombone, that's me!"

He has been stationed in California almost two years and is movie projectionist and in charge of the sound equipment at the hospital. In this capacity, Payne has met and worked with many famous radio and motion picture stars and has written home often of his interesting and amusing experiences.

Jack stayed after the broadcast, as we learn from the *Vallejo Times-Herald* of May 22.



About Me



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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 May 5.

My Blog List

☐ Old TV History



February 1937 - Television got a shot at regular publicity in February 1937. That's when the publisher of "The Film Daily" began printing "Radio Daily". TV news was inclu...
17 hours ago

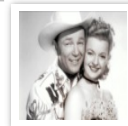
☐ Yowp



Iwao, a Happy 100 - Iwao Takamoto would have turned 100 today. While this blog isn't much on birthdays, Iwao's career at Hanna-Barbera began at the tail-end of "The Yogi Bear ...
5 days ago

Blogs to See

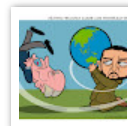
☐ Movies with Michael



Cowboy Church #216 - Hello my friends and welcome

back for another service of Cowboy Church. Today's musical selection begins with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans with "The Bible Te...
1 hour ago

☐ Fernando Llera Cartoons



Zelensky rejects Putin's truce proposal as "theatrical". -

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fernandollera.com
2 hours ago

Comedian Jack Benny, accompanied by members of his radio troupe, entertained Mare Island Hospital patients at a program in the hospital garden yesterday. After the outdoor show, Benny toured wards to meet patients unable to leave their rooms.

Feature films and Benny didn't mix, at least according to legend, but in May 1945 he could be seen in movie theatres across the country. Some theatres were playing *It's in the Bag*, in which he had a cameo with Fred Allen. Others were advertising his appearance in *Hollywood Canteen*, released in late December the previous year.

And then there was *The Horn Blows at Midnight*.

Benny fans know he used this unusual film as a whipping boy, whipping up laughs on his radio show. At the time, it got mixed reviews, more so, I believe, than any other film he made in the '40s. The *Oregonian's* Drama Editor wrote on May 16:

Benny Film Needs Help

Jack Benny came to the Orpheum screen Tuesday in "The Horn Blows at Midnight." The film proves definitely that Mr. Benny should have stuck to his violin and "The Bee."

However, died-in-the-wool Benny fans will perhaps gather joy from this production for it does hold a few laughs.

The story is one of those dream affairs with the comedian playing the role of a third-rate trumpet player on a radio program. He falls asleep as the program is about to go on the air. The picture is devoted from this point to the Benny dream.

The *Louisville Courier-Journal* of May 11 had a different take.

Not since the heyday of Harold Lloyd has a comedian created so much unalloyed hysteria in audiences as does Jack Benny in his roof-top escapades in "The Horn Blows at Midnight," [...]

Mr. Benny, we might add, is very pleasantly cast in this film, playing with a droll sense of bewilderment and timidity.

Jack put his name to a column that was kind-of about the movie. The only version I can find is in the *Charlotte News* of May 26, 1945.

That There Benny Fellow Is A Card

(Editor's note: The following story by Jack Benny was apparently hidden away in an old show since the picture he refers to has long since been completed. Proceed at your own risk.)

By JACK BENNY

HOLLYWOOD — Oddly enough, my day starts in the morning. At 6 A. M., an alarm clock rings in my ear, so I take it out of my ear and go back to sleep. About half an hour later I hear a bell ringing again, but this time it's a telephone call from the Make-up Department of Warner Bros. Studio, urging me to hurry over — because putting enough make-up on my face so that I will look ten years younger, is equivalent to making a "Dogwood Sandwich". I would resent that if there weren't a clause in my contract telling me to "SHUT UP". So I inform them that I will rush over to the studio as soon as I comb my hair. But they tell me not to bother because they got it there and it's combed already.

It is now 6:30 and still dark, so not wanting to wake up Mary or my daughter, Joanie, I tip-toe through the hall, slip out the front door, ease down the curb where my convertible is parked. Just as I open the car door, I hear a window being raised, and Mary's voice raised even higher yelling, "It's about time you got home." I would give her an argument but I recall that she had "that same certain clause" put in our marriage license: so I throw her a kiss and drive off.

COFFEE TIME

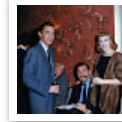
In no time I am at Schwab's Drug Store where I always stop in for my morning cup of coffee: 5 cents, plus doughnuts; 15 cents, plus sales tax \$1.30. Finishing my breakfast, I jauntily flip a 10-cent tip on the counter. It comes down tails so I have to leave it there. This is the third time it's b[words missing] and I'm really becoming quite popular.

Anyway, I jump in my car, drive through Laurel Canyon to Burbank, and there in spite of yesterday's rain, stands Warner Bros. Studio. As I pass through the main entrance, I wave a cheery hello to the gateman, who waves back and yells, "STOP." So I back up, show him my studio pass which has my picture on it. He seems quite interested, and shows me a picture of his wife and son; so I show him a picture of Mary and Joanie. At this point we are even. Then he shows me a picture of his dog, so I show him a picture of a girl I used to go with in Waukegan. The competition being too tough for him, he lets me through, and I park my car

News From ME

Bob Morris, R.I.P. - My favorite Southern California restaurateur, Robert J. "Bob" Morris died peacefully at his home on April 13, 2025. Morris was kind of a "Johnny Appleseed"...
12 hours ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



And This Blog Loves Ernie Kovacs - * Who's the individual

cited most often here at Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog? The unimaginably imaginati...
1 day ago

The Exposure Sheet



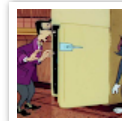
Video of the Week: The Flintstones Playset Toy Commercial - The

Flintstones have been the subject of numerous toy lines over the years, and in the seventies, Mego had a short-lived go at the license. Mego, for thos...
2 days ago

Cartoon Research

The Powers That Be: Saturday Morning's Offbeat Superheroes - The 60s and 70s television landscape on Saturdays was filled with superheroes who were decidedly different but definitely memorable.
2 days ago

Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon



Tom's Photo Finish (1957) - This short film marked

the last theatrical short to feature Spike the bulldog in a main role, though he would have a tiny appearance in "Tot Watchers..."
3 days ago

AFRTS Archive

Chiquita 1955 - In 1945, the Armed Forces Radio Service initiated direct programming for its Hispanic audience with the Chiquita program, hosted by Chiquita Juarez. Ms. Ju...
4 days ago

right between Barbara Stanwyck's and Ann Sheridan's which keeps my motor from getting cold.

And so to work making love to Alexis Smith and Dolores Moran in "The Horn Blows at Midnight."

Editor's second note: Ho. Hum. And unquote.

Here's the oddest Benny connection I found in newspapers of May 1945. I don't know the background behind these panel cartoons, if some Hollywood war bond campaign organisers asked the stars for captions. But several of them have Jack's name on them. The ones below were found together in the May 30th issue of the *Goldsboro News-Argus*. Goldsboro, coincidentally, is where L.A. Speed Riggs of the Benny opening/closing commercials worked as a tobacco auctioneer.



☐ [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...
3 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...

6 months ago

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