

*International Jack Benny Fan Club*

# *The Jack Benny Times*

January-April 2003

Volume XVIII, Numbers 1-2



## President's Message

This has been an unbelievably busy time for the IJBFC with preparations for 39 Forever, and lots of member activity and interest. We are currently launching our 39 Forever media campaign, so watch for us on the news and in the papers! If you know of anyone in your area who would be interested in getting more information about the event, please contact me by E-mail or regular mail at the address at the end of this letter.

The club has now grown to about 1,300 members in 15 countries: United States, Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Israel, China, Japan, and Australia. Through the Web, we are getting an average of a new member every couple of days. Wonderful to see all the continuing interest, and all the different places that people have encountered the humor of Jack Benny (including through recent retrospectives of CBS Television City and Bob Hope).

Thanks to so many of you for your help, support, and encouragement during this busy time. I wish all of you a healthy and happy holiday season, and I hope to see many of you next February! -- LL

## New Members

\*\*\*\* Tom Wagner \*\*\*\* David Wilk \*\*\*\* Chris McDonald \*\*\*\* Dan Eckelbarger \*\*\*\* Erica Fujiwara  
\*\*\*\* Jim Hilliker \*\*\*\* Lindsay Salvati \*\*\*\* Brandon Reed \*\*\*\* Cathy Rokicki \*\*\*\* Rick Clemons  
\*\*\*\* Steve Rodrigues \*\*\*\* Todd Dowell \*\*\*\* Dwayne L. Gobin, II \*\*\*\* Jack Richards \*\*\*\* Thomas  
Osborne \*\*\*\* Randy Larson \*\*\*\* David M. Lynch \*\*\*\* Lisa Stewart \*\*\*\* John Ambrose \*\*\*\* Rob  
Beaton \*\*\*\* Brian Tucker \*\*\*\* Mary Short \*\*\*\* Lizzy Barron \*\*\*\* Kevin Wierda \*\*\*\* Richard  
Carver \*\*\*\* Larry F. Herndon \*\*\*\* Chantell Richardson \*\*\*\* Jay Edwards \*\*\*\* Ralph H. Hall, Jr.  
\*\*\*\* Bob Wombacher, Jr. \*\*\*\* Terri Simon \*\*\*\* Steven Lewis \*\*\*\* Jerry McDaniel \*\*\*\* Anthony  
Miranda \*\*\*\* Chris Jackson \*\*\*\* John M. Brown \*\*\*\* Ralph Phillips \*\*\*\* Tony Ashlin \*\*\*\* S.  
Duncan Miller \*\*\*\* William and Patricia Lackner \*\*\*\* Will Stifel \*\*\*\* Richard Holland \*\*\*\* Jess  
Walker \*\*\*\* Dave Walker \*\*\*\* Paul Thornton \*\*\*\* Josef E. Silvia \*\*\*\* Chris Larsen \*\*\*\* Floyd Kirk  
\*\*\*\* David Lambert \*\*\*\* Nathanael Long \*\*\*\* Patrick Maue \*\*\*\* Len Winter \*\*\*\* Jeff Boldman  
\*\*\*\* Mark Stenger \*\*\*\* Art Leason \*\*\*\* Francis Hajash \*\*\*\* Jim Syoen \*\*\*\* Christine Schreiber  
\*\*\*\* Stephen Helfant \*\*\*\* Stephen M. Sipos \*\*\*\* Jay Ranellucci \*\*\*\* Evan Golding \*\*\*\* Colin G.  
Campbell \*\*\*\* Jennifer Morgan \*\*\*\* Ron Fleishman \*\*\*\* Mark Huffstutter \*\*\*\* Jerry Hippert \*\*\*\*  
Roger Weiss \*\*\*\* Steve Block \*\*\*\* Dave Hood \*\*\*\* Elisabeth Rossman \*\*\*\* David Law \*\*\*\* Carl  
Vitelli, Jr \*\*\*\* Chris Watkins \*\*\*\* Steve MacKay \*\*\*\* Paul J. Duggan \*\*\*\* Carol LeVan \*\*\*\* Frank  
Nova \*\*\*\* Matthew Bullis \*\*\*\* Edward Freeman \*\*\*\* Brian Gunther \*\*\*\* Mike Finger \*\*\*\* Marcus  
B. Johnson \*\*\*\* George Granger \*\*\*\* Lauren Rogers \*\*\*\* Gordon Stevens \*\*\*\* Deanna Nakashima  
\*\*\*\* Robert Cohen \*\*\*\* Andrew Godfrey \*\*\*\* Wesley Laverdure \*\*\*\* Andy Kasparson \*\*\*\* Vincent  
Spiteri \*\*\*\* Mark Bobbitt \*\*\*\* Wayne Taylor \*\*\*\* Gabriella Guilfoil \*\*\*\* Jessica Diggs \*\*\*\* DJ  
MacIntosh \*\*\*\* Jules Young \*\*\*\* Shelly Lester \*\*\*\* Alan Glaser \*\*\*\* Ivan & Eva Ulz \*\*\*\* Len  
Klatt \*\*\*\* Jack Sobel \*\*\*\* Donald DuBrule \*\*\*\* Mark Solkoff \*\*\*\* Richard Erickson \*\*\*\* Berdetta  
Moore \*\*\*\* Robert Glenn \*\*\*\* Erwin L Nudel \*\*\*\* J Hicks \*\*\*\* Jeannette Burris \*\*\*\* Dale Newman  
\*\*\*\* Michael Simons \*\*\*\* John Wong \*\*\*\* Gary Crowe \*\*\*\* Anthony F. Baechler, Baechler, III \*\*\*\*  
Noiel Spearman \*\*\*\* Mitch Roberts \*\*\*\* Matt Collins \*\*\*\* Brad Vereen \*\*\*\* Lisa L. Moll \*\*\*\*  
Charles Sellers \*\*\*\* Robert J. Seiler, Sr.

## 39 FOREVER

Sponsored by **JELLO** 

## And the Levine Communications Office

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday evening, February 14, 2003

**Birthday party and radio show recreation – featuring EDDIE CARROLL and NOEL BLANC**

Sheraton Gateway Hotel Los Angeles Airport, 7:00PM to 10:00PM

Opening night gala featuring Eddie Carroll (pictured at left), star of the long-running one-man Jack Benny tribute, Laughter in Bloom. This is as close as you can get to seeing Jack perform live. The "Not Ready for Sunday at Seven Players" will present a recreation of a program where Jack turns 40...or does he? Noel Blanc, son of legendary voice artist Mel Blanc, will reprise his father's role. Which one? Attend and find out!

Hors d'oeuvres, birthday cake, cash bar.

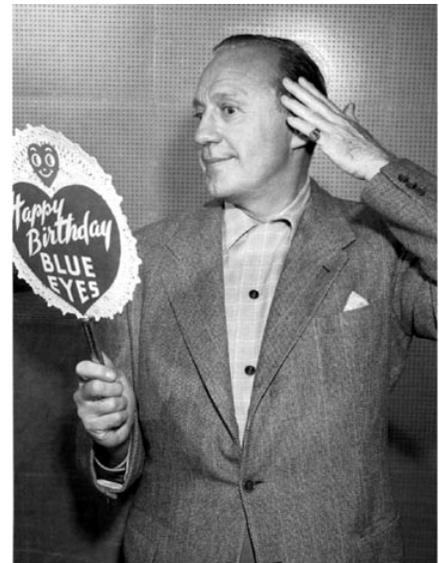
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**Saturday morning/afternoon, February 15, 2003**  
**The Jack Benny Marathon**

Sheraton Gateway Hotel Los Angeles Airport, 8:00AM to 4:30PM

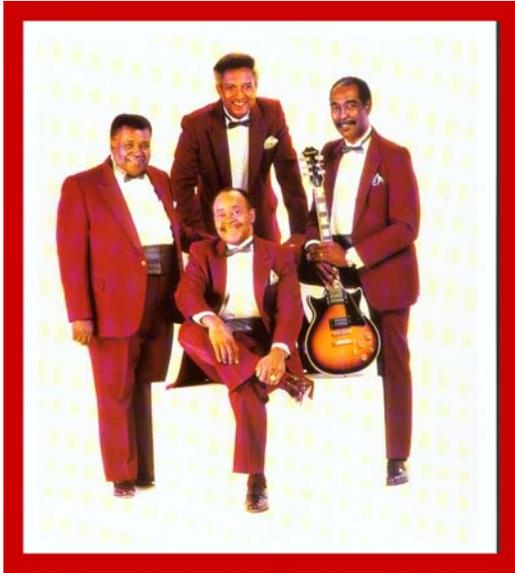
- Jack Benny speakers featuring those who knew and worked with him, including:
  - Daughter JOAN BENNY** - hosted by writer and talk radio personality [Michael Levine](#)
  - Manager IRVING FEIN**
  - Grandson MICHAEL RUDOLPH**
- Jackpardy: the Jack Benny jeopardy-style team challenge
- Screening of Jack Benny television programs
- Jack Benny art show competition
- Auditions for and performance of the winner of the Jack Benny script writing contest
- Dealer room of memorabilia on Jack Benny and other favorite comedy and nostalgia personalities



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**Saturday evening, February 15, 2003**  
**39 Forever Celebrity Banquet at the Beverly Hills Friars' Club**  
Cocktails 7:00PM, Dinner 7:30PM, Entertainment 8:30-10:30PM

A star-studded evening of food, music, and comedy devoted to the legacy of Jack Benny. The evening will be capped by the formal induction of Jack into the National Comedy Hall of Fame, with awards being presented to Joan Benny and the family.



**featuring...the fabulous INK SPOTS!**

The Ink Spots and the Manny Harmon Trio will share their extraordinary musical legacy at the 39 Forever banquet. The Ink Spots appeared on the Jack Benny program in 1948 and 1950, and continued to be one of Jack's favorite musical groups.

The Ink Spots have had 86 hit recordings ... many of them million sellers. "IF I DIDN'T CARE" (their "anthem") has sold 19 million copies. Some of their other million sellers are:

My Prayer	Whispering Grass
For Sentimental Reasons	Maybe
Marie	We Three

and many more!

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**Sunday afternoon, February 16, 2003**  
**Down Memory Lane**

- All-day Museum of Television and Radio Benny exhibits and screenings or rarely-seen Benny material, including Jack Benny's specials, Shower of Stars appearances, Carnegie Hall Salutes Jack Benny, and Jack Benny programs featuring guests such as Harry Truman, Fred Allen, Frank Sinatra, Groucho Marx, Ginger Rogers, John Wayne, Rock Hudson, and many more.
- Self-guided tours of area Benny sites, such as: his house in Beverly Hills, Graumann's Chinese Theatre, Hillside Cemetery, and more.
- 12:00PM - Memorial/Yizkor service at Jack Benny's grave at Hillside Cemetery
- 1:00PM - Informal lunch at Canter's Delicatessen (near CBS Television City)

**ATTENDANCE FEES**

\$30 Birthday party and radio show recreation - featuring EDDIE CARROLL and NOEL BLANC  
\$50 The Jack Benny Marathon - featuring JOAN BENNY, IRVING FEIN, and much more!  
\$100 Celebrity banquet at the Beverly Hills Friars' Club - featuring THE INK SPOTS  
\$180 ALL EVENTS

Pay online with your credit card on our Web site, or make checks payable to IJBFC and mail

☆ **BY DECEMBER 31, 2002** ☆

to IJBFC, P.O. Box 11288, Piedmont, CA 94611.

### **HOTEL INFORMATION**

The Sheraton Gateway Hotel Los Angeles Airport, located at 6101 West Century Boulevard, Los Angeles, California, is the official hotel of the 39 Forever Celebration. All Friday and Saturday events (except for the Friars' Club banquet) will be held at that location. We have negotiated the following excellent rates:

Room	Single Rate	Double Rate
Nonsmoking King	\$89 per night	\$89 per night
Nonsmoking Double	\$89 per night	\$89 per night

These prices are exclusive of applicable state and local taxes.

#### **How to Reserve**

Please contact the hotel's reservation department at 310-642-1111 or through the Central Reservation Office at 800-325-3535. Identify yourself as being with the International Jack Benny Fan Club. **All reservations for these special rates must be made by January 24, 2003.**

#### **Related Information**

Shuttle service is available from Los Angeles Airport. All reservations will be held after 5:00PM and guaranteed for late arrival only if accompanied by a first night room deposit or guaranteed to a major credit card. Guests will be responsible for their own guest room, tax and incidental charges.

### **HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED!**

#### **Script Contest**

Always envied George, Sam, Milt and Tack (or Hal and Al...or Morrow and Beloin...or, you get the idea)? Now's your chance to write your own Jack Benny radio program. Here are the rules:

- Entries must be a maximum of 15 minutes in length (approximately 11½ pages with 1½ line spacing). There is no minimum length.
- Entries must have a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 6 characters.
- Only sound effects that can be done with materials that can be readily found within the hotel should be included.
- Entries should not include language or references that would not be appropriate for performance before an audience that includes children. The IJBFC may turn an entry back to the author for editing if something is deemed inappropriate.
- Entries must be submitted via E-mail to [jackbenny@aol.com](mailto:jackbenny@aol.com) no later than midnight, December 31, 2002.
- Entries must be in an MS Word-compatible format, rich text, or plain text. Entries may also be sent within the body of the submitting E-mail.

- Entries will be posted to the IJBFC Web page after January 1, 2003. The author's name and state/country will accompany the posting.
- Members will be invited to review the entries and vote on their favorite.
- Voting will be concluded at midnight, January 31, 2003. The results will be tabulated and reviewed by the IJBFC council to insure fairness and accuracy.
- The winning entry will be announced at the opening gala on February 14, 2003, and performed during the 39 Forever Celebration on February 15, 2003. Auditions will be held for all parts in the morning, and the performance done at approximately 4PM.
- No prizes other than the performance of the winning script will be awarded.
- All entries become property of the IJBFC, which reserves the right to publish any or all of the entries, in whole or in part.
- Entries must be original works, but may reference or use portions of scripts within the Fair Use Act restrictions. The IJBFC is not responsible for any copyright violations.
- The IJBFC reserves the right to refuse any entry that does not conform to these rules.

### **Art Contest**

A picture is worth a thousand words...but our Jack Benny art contest isn't just limited to pictures. If Jack inspires you to draw, paint, carve, sculpt, or work in any visual media, you can be in the 39 Forever art contest. Here are the rules:

- Entries may be of any media that can be readily exhibited without requiring additional technology (e.g., no sound recordings, slide shows, etc.).
- Entries should not include any subject matter that would not be suitable for an audience that includes children.
- Artists will be responsible for transporting their work to the hotel and displaying it in a location to be assigned for art contest entries. No specific lighting or display supports will be provided.
- Artists may retain ownership of their entry after the contest, or donate it to the IJBFC. Items donated to the IJBFC will be auctioned off during the 39 Forever Celebration.
- Artists must make known their intent to enter the art contest via E-mail to [jackbenny@aol.com](mailto:jackbenny@aol.com) no later than midnight, December 31, 2002. This E-mail must include: the artist name, address, phone number, a brief description of the intended work, and whether they are willing to donate it for the art auction.
- Artists must submit a photo of their work, by E-mail or regular mail, by midnight December 31, 2002.
- Entries will be displayed at the 39 Forever Celebration during the day's activities of February 15, 2003. Attendees will be invited to vote for their favorite via secret ballot, to be placed in a sealed box by the display area.
- Voting will be concluded at approximately 4:30PM, February 15, 2003. The results will be tabulated and reviewed by the IJBFC council to insure fairness and accuracy.
- The winning entries will be announced at approximately 5PM, February 15, 2003. The prizes will be as follows:
 

First prize	Five years of <u>The Jack Benny Times</u> (\$62 value)
Second prize	A copy of the 1984-1995 back issues (\$45 value)
Third prize	A copy of <u>39 Forever</u> (\$15 value)
- The IJBFC reserves the right to publish photographic or other reproductions of any work, in whole or in part.
- Entries must be original works. The IJBFC is not responsible for any copyright violations.
- The IJBFC reserves the right to refuse any entry that does not conform to these rules.

## 39 Forever T-Shirts

Back by popular demand, we are offering T-shirts commemorating 39 Forever. These sharp-looking shirts are black with the photo of Jack playing the violin that graces the cover of this issue. The shirts will also feature the fan club and event names, and the dates below the photograph. **ORDER NOW**, as the quantity will be based on response and very few extras will be available. Available in adult S, M, L, XL, XXL. Wear your shirt to the celebration as a proud IJBFC member and to connect with other members—or wear it at home and be there in spirit.

The cost is \$16 per shirt. Shirts will be available for pickup at the front desk of the Sheraton Gateway Hotel. If you will not be at 39 Forever, include \$4 postage for the first shirt, and \$2 postage for each additional shirt. Please send checks (payable to IJBFC) to: P.O. Box 11288, Piedmont, CA 94611.

**ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 15, 2003.**

## What's Up in Waukegan?

I am pleased and proud to announce that Eddie Carroll has been named Honorary Mayor of Waukegan. Here's the text of the official proclamation:

### RESOLUTION 02-R-63

**WHEREAS**, on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2002 Eddie Carroll attended the Jack Benny Bash at Bonnie Brook Golf Course; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2002 Eddie Carroll attended the Dedication of the Jack Benny Plaza and Statue; and

**WHEREAS**, Eddie Carroll entertained the audiences at both events with his wonderful impersonation of Waukegan's favorite son Jack Benny; and

**WHEREAS**, Eddie Carroll has dedicated a substantial portion of his entertainment career instilling the memory of Jack Benny into the hearts and minds of audiences throughout the world,

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Waukegan recognize Eddie Carroll as HONORARY MAYOR of the City of Waukegan.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a suitable embossed copy of this Resolution signed by the Mayor and City Clerk be presented to Eddie Carroll.

**DATED THIS 15<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JULY, 2002** – Richard Hyde, Mayor of Waukegan

The renovation of the Genesee Theatre is moving along even more quickly than expected. The opening, originally planned for Fall of 2003 may be as early as the Spring. We will keep you informed of the official dates and planned events as they unfold. You can find more information at [www.genesetheatre.org](http://www.genesetheatre.org).



I recently received a beautiful banner that was the prototype for several such banners that have been hung in downtown Waukegan around the Benny Plaza. These banners are purple and turquoise, and feature the face of the famous Bouché line drawing (pictured at left).

The IJBFC has also donated a copy of our entire MP3 library to the Waukegan Public Library. We are proud to be able to bring a full collection of Jack's audio work to his hometown, so that Waukeganites can learn more about their own famous son. We encourage members in the Chicago area to go to the Waukegan Library (just a block West of the statue) and enjoy the collection.

## The Tale Piece

Here's one from Hal Stone, author of the recent release Aw...Relax, Archie! Re-laxx! about his work in radio (best known as Jughead in Archie) and as a television director. The book is available for \$26 from Bygone Days Press, P.O. Box 4418, Sedona, AZ 86340 (and Hal's not even giving me a percentage for that plug). This story is from the OTR Digest, to which everyone OTR fan on the Web should subscribe (see the bottom of our Links page for help in doing so).

"I met Jack Benny once. I didn't work for him, but does 'auditioning' for him count?"

"Benny had to be in NY for some reason, and was arranging to originate his program from there. (For how many weeks I don't remember). It seems a young kid was needed on the show in a small part. I was called to go read for Jack Benny personally. It was the first and only time in my career that I auditioned outside of a radio studio. I had to go to the Plaza Hotel where Mr. Benny had a suite of rooms. I knocked on his Hotel Room door and it was answered by Mr. Benny himself. (Not Rochester) :)

"He ushered me in (wearing slacks and a fancy dressing gown), and after a few pleasantries, I looked over the script, read the part for him, and that was it. I didn't get the job, and I don't even recall who did. He probably interviewed a few youngsters that morning, and he was undoubtedly looking for a specific type.

"My impressions from meeting the big star that Mr. Benny was, are as follows. A nice guy, pleasant and highly professional, (but obviously, no judge of talent. :) Sorry, folks, I'm just kidding around. I had to throw that line in for a laugh. I have a reputation to protect.

"In short, Benny seemed like a very personable guy. It was a kick for me to meet him one on one like that. I guess I was somewhere between the age of 12 and 15. I just remember being there. I can't remember dates."

## The Regulars

The past few months have brought some rather interesting tidbits about various regular members of the Benny cast. Here's a tray full of newsbytes on the names after Jack and Mary (and one that wasn't, whom we all know anyway!).

### Artie Auerbach

(From Shelly Lester, niece of Artie Auerbach) "I was 11 when my uncle died. He was born in New York City of Polish descent. His father was a dancer in London and won a medal from Queen Victoria (my twin brother has it). I believe he was born in 1903, but I have to check my records. His father (Wolfgang, also known as William) died young and the family was poor. He (nor did his two sisters, my mother Dorothy and Aunt Anne) never went to high school. He got a job as a photographer for the Daily Mirror. SUPPOSEDLY, he took a picture (illegally) of a person in the electric chair, but I could

never substantiate that although I have seen the picture in the paper . According to my mother he got his education in the New York Public Library. They spoke Yiddish in the home, but he had no accent in real life.

“He lived in Hollywood with his wife Doris (in fact, I lost touch with her and I presume she is dead, but she was a good deal younger than he and I wonder if she is alive somewhere). They never had kids. Supposedly he was married to Lucille Ball's half sister (first wife) but I cannot substantiate that either.

“He was funny even before radio and TV - always playing practical jokes on the family. When we were toddlers he brought me those wooden beads with the shoe strings - we sat on the floor and played with them for hours. He adored us, but we did not see him that often. One thing he used to say - my mother used to quiz him about the actors he lived next to (Hopalong Cassidy) and he said, ‘They all sh\*t the same way.’ He was the most down to earth person - I only wish I knew him better as I was so young when he died. He never made it big, but did okay!

“He died of an embolism in the aorta, not a heart attack as originally thought. He was in his fifties. I have a picture of him somewhere. My mother had very little memorabilia, which I feel bad about.

“Here is the clincher. I found out a few years ago that I was adopted and that Uncle Artie arranged for the adoption and paid for it.”

(Shelly is looking for videos, DVD, photos, or other media that feature her father. If you are able to help, please let me know at the address at the end of this newsletter and I will put you in touch with her. - LL)

### **Dennis Day’s death date coincidence**

(From Brad Zinn) “June 22 marks the anniversary of the passing of Dennis Day in 1988. I find it interesting that this same day marks the passing of Fred Astaire and Judy Garland.”

### **Dennis Day’s recording career**

(Not an exhaustive discussion...anyone want to write an article?)

(From Tom Wagner) “In 1946, right after he got out of the service, he recorded for Capitol Records. He recorded about 12 songs and then moved on to RCA Victor.”

At Victor, he had several hit records which were (according to Joel Whitburn’s Pop Memories):

Label/#	Title	Charted	Peak	Weeks
Victor 2211	Mam'selle	5/3/47	8	5
Victor 2810	Clancy Lowered the Boom	3/26/49	23	1
Victor 3102	Dear Hearts and Gentle People	1/14/50	14	4
Victor 3870	Goodnight Irene	8/26/50	17	8
Victor 3753	Mona Lisa	8/26/50	29	1
Victor 3870	All My Love	10/14/50	22	4
Victor 4140	Mister and Mississippi	6/9/51	13	7

### **Eddie Anderson's singing, dancing, and other performances**

(Again not an exhaustive discussion...another potential article.) (From Michael) "I just got through watching my copy of "Buck Benny Rides Again", and all I have to say is WOW is Eddie Anderson a great dancer! I especially love the song he sings with Josephine (while Jack is standing outside in the rain)! Now for the question. Are there any other films where one can see Eddie Anderson in action? I've seen him in the Charlie McCarthy film "You can't cheat an honest man" but I feel he is SADLY wasted in that movie."

- Two great dance numbers in Man About Town
- (From Gerry O.) MGM's "Cabin In The Sky". Eddie has a leading role in this musical, and he does a great dance while Ethel Waters sings "Taking A Chance On Love".
- (From Gerry O.) Paramount's "Star Spangled Rhythm". This WWII musical was one of those all-star revues which featured many specialty acts and only a HINT of a plot line! Eddie is dressed in a zoot suit and performs the lively number "Sharp As A Tack".
- (From Kurt) Anderson had two good dramatic parts in pictures: With Bette Davis in "Jezebel" and as Uncle Peter in "Gone With The Wind," in which he's so heavily made up, you wonder why they cast him. He's also very funny in "Topper Returns" and "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad Mad World," although both performances are marred by racist stereotyping.

### **Eddie Anderson's recording of "My, My"**

(From the OTR Digest) Anderson made a commercial recording of "My! My!" that was released on a Columbia 78 rpm single, catalogue number 35442. "Let's Scuffle" was on the flip side.

### **Eddie Anderson's racehorse**

(From Kurt, excerpted from Paul Moran's story "Black Owner Seeks Date with History" in Newsday, May 5, 1988; the article discusses Jim Cottrell's horse in the Kentucky Derby)

"Black owners have been few and far between in the Derby's first 113 years. Since 1943, Cottrell is only the second black owner of a Derby starter, and he is believed to be the first black man to breed a Derby horse.

"Henry Greene, who was co-owner of a colt named Partez, the third finisher in the 1981 Derby, claimed to be the first black owner of a Derby starter, but there were at least four others before him. An exact number is unknown because black jockeys and trainers were regular participants during the Derby's early years, and it is believed that blacks occasionally owned Derby starters then.

"There is a gap of 38 years between Greene's appearance here and 1943, when actor Eddie Anderson, who played Rochester on the Jack Benny radio and television programs, sent a colt named Burnt Cork to the Derby. The colt was beaten by 38 lengths, and Anderson was criticized for using the Derby for publicity purposes, a charge he denied."

### **Phil Harris' bar order**

(From Kurt, excerpted from a larger Los Angeles Times article on Boardner's)

"It was a 20-year golden age for Steve Boardner and his cocktail lounge, a time when former Tommy Dorsey singer Jack Leonard (Scotch and water) would regularly drop in, as would Errol Flynn (beer), and members of Xavier Cugat's band after playing at their boss' club. Another big presence was

Boardner's longtime friend, the singer and bandleader Phil Harris (coffee and anisette), whose routine was to say goodbye to his wife, Alice Faye, after the two dined at Musso & Frank, then head over to Boardner's for a rendezvous with his mistress.”

### **Don Wilson on Batman**

(From Walt Pattinson) “I just saw Don Wilson as a newscaster on a Batman episode with the Penguin, episode titled "Dizzoner the Penguin," second of a two parter where Penguin and Batman run for mayor. Don plays the role of Walter Klondike. What a surprise!”

### **Don Wilson on children’s records**

(From Charlie Willer) CLASSICS FOR CHILDREN Vol. 1 and 2, "Delightful stories introducing young people to great music"

Performed by The Continental Symphony Orchestra                      Narrated by: Art Gilmore and Don Wilson

### **Don Wilson obituary**

(From The Washington Post, April 27, 1982, Tuesday)

*Teamed in 1934; Don Wilson Dies; Was Jack Benny Foil for 40 Years*

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. - Don Wilson, 81, the rotund announcer who was Jack Benny's foil on radio and television for more than 40 years, died Sunday in a hospital here after a stroke.

Mr. Wilson was found unconscious Sunday afternoon by his wife, the retired actress Lois Corbet, at their home in Cathedral City, Calif. He was pronounced dead at the Eisenhower Medical Center. Mr. Wilson moved to the Palm Springs resort area after Benny's television show went out of production in 1965. During the past several years, Mr. Wilson had done commercials and hosted a local afternoon television talk show produced by his wife, often interviewing old friends from Benny's radio and television shows.

Mr. Wilson became Benny's announcer on radio in 1934. He stayed with the show when it successfully moved to television in 1950.

"I'm not really an announcer for Benny in the sense that fellows are on other shows," Mr. Wilson once said in an interview. "The reason for that is because Jack worked me into the cast over the years."

Benny, who died in 1974, often joked on the show about Mr. Wilson's weight. The 6-foot-2 announcer weighed about 240 pounds. The comedian made him sound a lot bigger.

Mr. Wilson's show-business career also included appearances in several Broadway plays, movies and other television shows.

"Jack has been very nice to me," he said. "He doesn't mind me doing other things. Some comedians wouldn't think of letting a character from their show work with other comics, but Jack doesn't even object to that."

Mr. Wilson was born in Lincoln, Neb. He began his career as a singer with a trio that made its radio debut in 1924 on Denver's radio station KFEL. The group toured the mountain states until 1927 and then signed up to sing for one year in San Francisco over KFRC.

Mr. Wilson later moved to Los Angeles where he was an NBC staff announcer. He took his first straight announcing job in 1929. He was a sports announcer for the next four years before joining the Benny show.

He married Miss Corbet in 1950, one year after receiving a divorce from his third wife, dress designer and former Polish countess Marusia Rudunska.

## Jack On Stage

Bryan Olsen asked on our Web Forum about Jack's work onstage, and if there are any tapes of it. Here is my response, and I would be interested to know if anyone else has more information about recordings of Jack's work live on stage:

An excellent question, and one I've heard many times. The nightclub/Vegas routines (I assume that's what you mean by "stand up act") are one of those great, lost Benny treasures. We do have some members who were lucky enough to see him live, but I know of very few videos. I believe someone mentioned to me that there is a bootleg from Vegas where someone sneaked in a camera and shot a show (or part of it), but I have not yet seen it.

However, there are a few things that we did know about the nightclub/Vegas work. I have copies of portions of Jack's monologues from Vegas appearances in 1968-72. Jack's character and style is so firmly established that reading the scripts is, to me, almost the same as watching a tape of the performance. You can clearly hear and see (in your mind's ear/eye) Jack doing the material. Some of these are in the UCLA and Wyoming collections of Jack's papers.

Also, he reused some routines on the air and his stage performances. A couple of them were gags that went all the way back to Harry Conn (one of Jack's first radio writers, who worked for him until 1936). The first of two skits that come to mind is the Boswell Sisters (evolved over time to a variety of names, finally becoming the Smothers Sisters). The group includes a very homely and/or tough woman (at one time played by Iris Adrian), a very heavy-set woman (originally played by Mary Kelly), and a very pretty woman. The skit goes through a conversation between Jack and the ladies, then into a rather bad musical number by them.

The other Conn skit is the Japanese wrestler bit. Jack talks about a Japanese wrestler that he'd seen, who can take on some amazing number of guys at the same time. So out onto the stage comes a tiny man, and four or five burly stagehands. Jack makes a big deal about how amazing this little wrestler is. Finally he tells the guys to go at it, and within a few seconds, the stagehands pummel the tiny guy into the floor. They walk off leaving what's left of the guy, and Jack doing a classic stare from the failed wrestler, to the audience, back to the wrestler...

Jack worked on stage with Gisele MacKenzie, and they did their "Getting to Know You" routine, among others. Jack reprised that same bit on stage and TV with Toni Marcus, a 12-year-old violinist. Jack also used the two older ladies as "President and Vice-President of the Jack Benny Fan Club....Pasadena

Chapter" on both his TV and stage performances. There is a photo in one of the biographies (I think it's Irving Fein's) that shows Jack standing on stage with a group of ladies holding instruments. I have a feeling that was a stage version of the 12-13-59 show where Jack visits a meeting of the Jack Benny Fan Club and plays his violin for them. As they all gasp and swoon on the high notes of "Love in Bloom", eventually some join in on instruments and end the episode by parading around the room with Jack in the lead. (This is one of my favorite JB TV episodes...wonder why...)

I wish there was more audiovisual documentation of Jack's nightclub/Vegas work, but I hope that gives you a taste of what it was.

## **Jack Benny, Musical Interludes, and Minstrels**

(A question was asked on the OTR Digest about why so many non-musical shows had musical interludes, such as Dennis' song. Here is the analysis provided by the ever-informative Elizabeth McLeod.)

"This actually goes back even further than vaudeville in the United States—all the way back to the traditional American minstrel show. From its beginning in the 1840s, the standard minstrel format was a mixture of music, comedy, and "specialty acts"—you'd start with the opening chorus routine featuring the byplay with the end men (the origin of the concept of the two-man comedy team, with the Interlocutor the original "straight man,") and then a tenor solo (the origin of the Dennis Day-type singer in American popular entertainment), followed by an "olio" of specialty acts—instrumental novelties, comedy monologues, singers, eccentric dancers—and then a Grand Finale which was often a broad comedy sketch satirizing some current touchstone.

"If this format sounds familiar, even to those who've never studied minstrelsy, it's because this is the basic skeleton of the radio comedy format pioneered in the 1930s by Jack Benny. It had been strained through the filters of vaudeville and the Broadway revue by this time—but it still retains recognizable roots in an entertainment form created ninety years before.

"To illustrate—the roles of Interlocutor and End Man shift around quite a bit among the cast members at the start of a typical Benny show, but whoever fills the specific role at a given moment, the dynamic is precisely the same, as is the basic feel of the opening sequence—all that's missing is a call of "Gentlemen Be Seated!" and "Jell-O again" sort of fills that role. And Phil Harris' character, especially, is a figure with deep roots in minstrelsy—the swaggering, hard-drinking, comically ignorant 'dawwwwwg'.

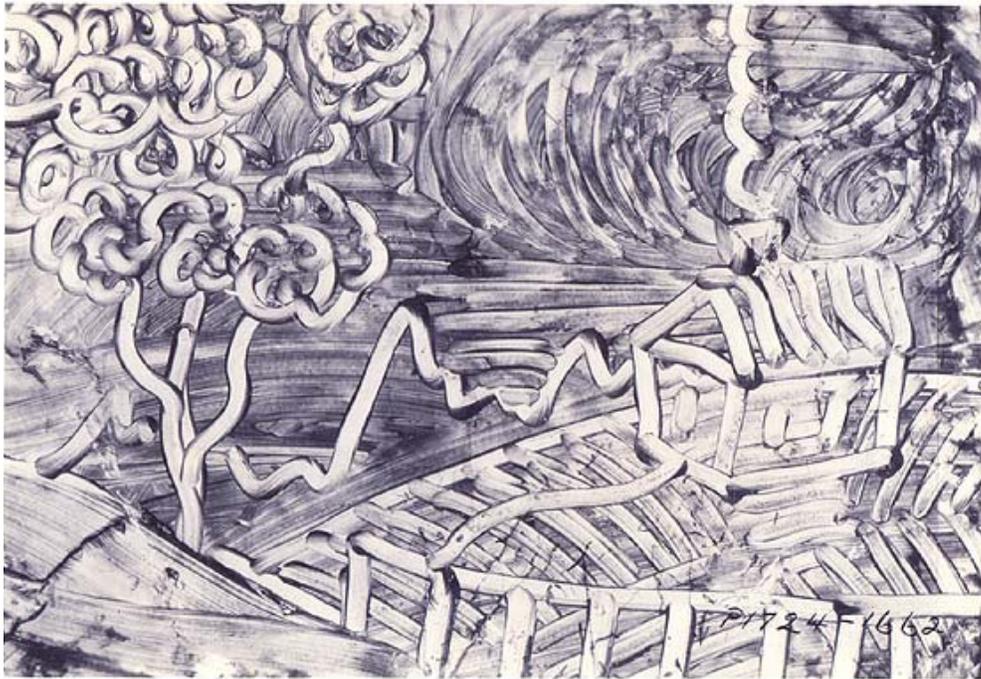
"To continue the analogy, the tenor vocal selection by Kenny/Dennis and the middle band number represent the Olio portion of the show, and the sketches satirizing movies and plays that conclude most 1930s Benny shows are straight out of minstrelsy by way of Broadway. (When you examine the structure of his 1930s programs closely, it becomes evident that Benny owes far more to the classical minstrel show than 'Amos 'n' Andy' ever did!) Benny's influence in the 1930s was such that his format became the standard, imitated by dozens of other performers over the years—which is why the conventions he established became so common.

"The minstrel format may be the single most enduring institution in American popular entertainment—you can find traces of it in vaudeville, the circus, radio, the stage revue, burlesque, and even modern

television. (The ‘end men’ dynamic lives on in the exchanges between any late night comedian and his announcer/bandleader/stooge, and the broadly satirical spirit of minstrelsy lives on in the sketches of SNL, MadTV, etc.)”

## Do You Know?

Was pleased to recently get a photo on Ebay of Jack Benny’s first....painting. And here it is:



Typed on the back of the picture is this information: “THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT – Jack Benny, star of Paramount’s ‘Artists and Models Abroad’, turns artist in all seriousness. Here’s his first work of art, after lessons from Ruth Faison Shaw, the originator of ‘finger-painting.’ Jack apparently found his artistic mood influenced by the fact that he has just moved into his new home in Beverly Hills.” (Funny...it doesn’t **look** like 1002 North Roxbury...)

Anyone know any more about Jack’s painting or where any of the canvases are today?

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(From Jim Hilliker) “When was the first time that Jack Benny spoke over the radio? I had always heard that it took place in 1932 on a nationally broadcast program hosted by newspaper columnist Ed Sullivan from New York. But, in doing some of my radio history research of early radio in Southern California, I see that Jack took part in a radio broadcast in 1930 in Los Angeles, over Hollywood station KFVB (owned by Warner Brothers Pictures). This was 2 years before he did the Sullivan radio show.

“I’ll quote from the ad printed in the Los Angeles Times on April 26, 1930:

”Tune in Tonight! Hear Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, Jack Benny, Benny Rubin, George Olsen, Abe Lyman, Ben Bernie, and scores of other stars of the stage and screen. One of the greatest arrays of talent ever paraded before the microphone is offered you tonight when the National Vaudeville

Association Benefit Show will be broadcast from Shrine Auditorium over KFVB, starting at 8:30 p.m. Dont miss it! Program broadcast through the courtesy of Packers of MJB Coffee'

“What would Jack have done on this program? His vaudeville act? And would this have been different than the Jack Benny we became familiar with through his later radio and TV programs on his own shows?”

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(From Jim Hilliker) “This doesn't have to do with the Benny program specifically, but I had a book with photos of radio performers...The short bio for Kenny Baker said he got his start singing professionally on a radio station in Long Beach, CA. They had 2 radio stations in Long Beach for many years, so my question is, was it KFOX or KGER?”

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(From Mark) “Does anyone have a list of charities that Jack Benny donated to?”

(From James Darnell) “I'm not sure of every charity he gave to, but am certain he was supportive of the Heart Fund, American Cancer Society, and also contributed to the effort for the state of Israel.”

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(From C. Caramella) “At the Democrat Convention in Orlando, Florida, there were many gatherings of VEPs (Very Earnest People) holding VECs (Very Earnest Conversations)—heaven knows that I have attended enough political gatherings over the years to know what he was describing. These people were described as standing around and holding their arms and hands in certain positions. After describing what is acceptable, he added: ‘Whatever you do, never put TWO fingers against your cheek; that’s known in political circles as ‘doing a Jack Benny’. It is a faux pas of the first order and you will never be taken seriously in politics again.’

“I wonder if anyone still around remembers or even knows how or when it started after all these years. It would be interesting to know the answers, because, when I was active, the term was not used (of course, Jack was alive); thus it had to have started after he left us, but when and by whom?”

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(From me) I was running off the first Jell-O program (10/14/34) for an IJBFC library order, and did a quick sound check on it. Unless my ears are out of whack, it sounds like Jack goes to say a line in a southern drawl like, "That's a durn good idea" but it comes out "That's a damn...uh...durn good idea."

The word "idea" is just my filler in the line, I wasn't focusing on the rest of it. Does it sound to anyone else like Jack slips and says "damn"? And on the very first show for a new sponsor. People talk all the time about when Bing Crosby said "hell" on the show, but I've never heard anyone mention this slip.

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(From me) For 39 Forever, I would like to play the full Jack Benny eulogy delivered by Bob Hope. Can anyone suggest a tribute or recording that has the *complete* eulogy (the KCRW tribute has only portions of it, but well-edited)?

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(From TEADJones) “Has anybody made or acquired any Jack Benny Desktop Themes, Icons, etc.?”

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(From Michael) “I've recently downloaded some Jack's Canada Dry Programs. The only problem is the opening theme (sounds weird not to hear Love In Bloom) is just distorted enough that I can't make out all of what they're singing. Can anyone out there help me out with this?”

Here's my best guess on it:  
(Male trio or quartet) "Here we are again, happy as can be,  
All good pals and jolly good company  
[Can't get this line]  
All good pals and jolly good company.

(Woman's voice) Never mind the weather, never mind the rain,

(Male trio or quartet) Now we're all together, whoops she goes again,  
La dee dah dee dah, la dee dah dee dee  
All good pals and jolly good company."

Can anyone confirm or fill in the blank?

## You Do Know!

We have talked for a long time about whether Mary Livingstone (original name Sadie Marks) was related to the Marx Brothers. Jack's autobiography says that she was a distant cousin, and Mary's ghostwritten biography of Jack says that she was no relation. Thanks to a little help from Joan, I hope to put the matter pretty much to rest.

The Marx Brothers' parents were from Germany (their father immigrated there from France). The original name in the old country was Marris. Mary's father's name was more likely Markowitz (or similar variation), and he came from Eastern Europe, probably Roumania. Therefore, I believe it is highly unlikely that the two families are related.

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(From Martin Grams) "In 1938, a short 7 minute cartoon entitled It Happened to Caruso was released in the theaters, and it was a direct parody of radio's JACK BENNY PROGRAM. The plot concerned Westchester, the vegetarian cannibal (a parody of Rochester), who becomes Robinson Caruso's Man Friday (Jack Benny's cloned voice). Caruso ends up killing a tiger with his violining and there's even a scene where Westchester and Caruso are riding in a broken down car (the old Maxwell). It's a funny parody from 1938, I saw it last week when I purchased it on video at the Fanex convention in Baltimore, Maryland, that sadly, is not usually aired over the networks, because it supposedly contains racist material in it. The cartoon is not one of the popular "Censored Eleven", but certainly comes close."

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(From David M. Lynch) "I always had a soft spot in my heart for actor Keefe Brasselle, for two reasons. One was his starring role in The Eddie Cantor Story, which I first saw as a child, and the other was that his early 1960s summer show featured Noelle Adam, who was my first celebrity 'crush' when I was only six years old. A few years ago, however, I found out that Brasselle (evidently) didn't like Jack, to the point where he used Jack as the basis for an unflattering character in his novel The CanniBaL. [sic] Does anybody out there know why Brasselle disliked Jack?"

(From Gerry O.) "In looking through a history of CBS, I was surprised to discover that although Jack had never met Keefe Brasselle, Jack INDIRECTLY was the cause of Brasselle losing his 'executive' position at the network!

“It seems that in the 1960's, after attempting a career as a performer, Brasselle became the right-hand man to James Aubrey at CBS. Aubrey was a programming executive who was known as ‘The Smiling Cobra’. Aubrey was a vicious sadist who was famous for not only canceling TV series, but for also getting a sicko charge out of giving the cancelled shows' performers and staff the bad news. During Jack's last TV season on CBS, it became painfully clear that the show's ratings were going down the tubes. Stiff competition from NBC's "Bonanza" [LL: Actually, not so...Jack was opposite Bonanza in 1961-2] plus changing tastes meant certain cancellation of the weekly Benny program.

“However, William Paley had a long and friendly history with Jack and was grateful for what Jack had done through the years to help make CBS the ‘Tiffany Network’. Also, Paley did not want to lose Jack's services entirely. He had some ideas in mind for hour-long Benny specials and the like. Paley wanted to handle giving the bad news to Jack personally...and he also wanted to lead into more upbeat talks about future Benny-CBS projects. However, Aubrey (who had rapidly been losing favor with Paley to begin with) beat Paley to the punch. Aubrey gave the news to Jack in a VERY rude manner...something to the effect of ‘You're through, Old Man!’ Jack was so humiliated and upset that he left CBS and immediately signed with NBC for a final season of weekly programs.

“When Paley found out about this, he was FURIOUS with Aubrey...It was truly the last straw! Because of the terrible and heartless handling of Jack Benny, Paley fired both James Aubrey and Aubrey's right-hand man, KEEFE BRASSELLE!

“It was Brasselle's firing that prompted him to write the bitter ‘novel’ about a TV network (which EVERYBODY knew was supposed to be CBS) and its ‘loser’ performers. So in some twisted way, Brasselle could have blamed Jack Benny for his being fired from CBS!”

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(From Kurt) “The press book for Casablanca has an item, for release in newspapers, that says Our Jack can be seen very briefly in one scene of the Humphrey Bogart classic. Jack was then, of course, under contract to Warner Brothers (making George Washington Slept Here), which, as emcee of the 1944 Academy Awards, he joked about as if it were The Horn Blows at Midnight.”

And where is Jack, you ask? (From David M. Lynch) “Well! (to coin a phrase) At least we're all in agreement as to when and where Jack appears, i.e. over ‘Sam's’ right shoulder (on our left) during Dooley Wilson's musical bit which occurs about seven minutes into Casablanca. But to clear up any confusion as to the actual number(s) being performed, the soundtrack CD to Casablanca (which didn't exist until 1997!) lists it as a medley of ‘It Had to Be You’ and ‘Shine’. Jack's brief appearance is during the segue from one song to another, when ‘Sam’ is singing that his hair (Sam's, not Jack's!) is curly. By the way, although Dooley Wilson sang all of ‘Sam's’ material (all of which was recorded ‘live’ on the set, unlike the film's other musical numbers) it was Elliot Carpenter who actually played the piano.

“Hmm. Wonder if the cigarette Jack was smoking was a Lucky? Ahh, it doesn't matter anyway, they weren't his sponsor yet!”

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(From LH) “Jack can be found on the 1930 census in California, Los Angeles county, E.D.# 196, page 27A, line 23.”

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(From Michael) "I've been listening to a number of Lucky Strike era shows and am wondering if Mr. Boone and Mr. Riggs are actually saying anything before they say 'Sold American!' I've been to real auctions where the auctioneer has gone about as fast as these two, but I could understand them.... I think Riggs starts off by saying 'Sixty-five.'"

(From Kurt) "Lee Aubrey Riggs, who died in 1987 at 79 (Congestive heart failure. Draw your own conclusions, I guess.) was able to chant at 469 words per minute, believed to be the fastest in the world. Hence the nickname of 'Speed.' He once participated in a comedy routine with Fred Allen in which he threw some extra words into the chant. But as far as what he actually was saying, only another tobacco auctioneer probably could tell you."

(From me) Going from memory, one call (I believe it's Riggs) calls "49 American", indicating the lot was sold to American Tobacco for 49 dollars (or 49 plus some number of zeros). The other call starts at 65, and has a lot of what I've heard auctioneers call "filler" (dingle-ingle-ingle doodle-oodle-oodle...) Filler is used by some auctioneers while waiting for a higher bid to keep the action moving but letting bidders consider their next move. Some will use just nonsense words, while others will just repeat the same line over and over ("I've got twenty I've got twenty I've got twenty over here Twenty twenty twenty twenty THIRTY! Now I've got thirty I've got thirty...")

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(From Mike Amowitz) "The Kids in the Hall were apparently Jack Benny fans; their name was taken from the 'kids in the hall' [LL: Probably Hal Goldman and Al Gordon, whom Jack called "the kids"] who would pitch jokes to Jack Benny as he came to his office."

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(From Thomas Kessel) Fred Allen is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne, New York (Westchester County). His tombstone lists both his birth name (John F. Sullivan) and Fred Allen.

## **Jack Benny Classifieds**

§§§ Unbelievable offer for Jack Benny programs and appearances on 16mm:

### **JACK BENNY PROGRAMS:**

DON BREAKS HIS LEG  
SMOTHERS BROTHERS SHOW  
PETER, PAUL & MARY SING JACKS SONG  
THE NEW TALENT SHOW w sponsor tags  
HARLOW GETS A DATE  
ISSAC STERN STORY  
JACK MEETS A JAPANESE TALENT AGENT (Jack Soo)  
DON'S HOUSE TO DINNER ( Famous scene where he's held up )  
JACK FIRES DON

### **THE DANNY THOMAS SHOW:**

THAT OLE DEVIL, JACK BENNY 1958  
JACK STEALS DANNY'S JOB 1950

GE THEATER:  
THE FACE IS FAMILAR

CHECKMATE: 1 HOUR SHOW  
A FUNNY THING HAPPENED

JACK BENNY LOW FADE CARTOONS:  
MALIBU BEACH PARTY- Low Fade  
THE MOUSE THAT JACK BUILT (features Jack IN COLOR @ end) Low Fade

My price is \$1600 for all plus shipping. All prints are in good used condition, no vinegar. I also have a Low Fade LUCY SHOW featuring Phil Harris singing with JACK BENNY TEXACO COMMERCIALS/ CRAZY GOOGINHEIM for MALT O MILK and a PET COOLY DRINK COMMERCIAL for \$65. I am not willing to sell shows separately, it's either ALL or nothing.. Tom Williams, tfwms1@bellsouth.net

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§§§ [Alice Faye: A Life Beyond the Silver Screen](#) by Jane Lenz Elder.

Now for the first time, fans of the fabulous Faye can enjoy a full-scale biography of the beloved star. Four years in the making, [Alice Faye: A Life Beyond the Silver Screen](#) is published by the University of Mississippi Press as part of its Hollywood Legends series. Film historian Jane Lenz Elder conducted interviews with Alice's friends and family, consulted leading oral history collections, and dug through archives in California, New York, and Linton, Indiana (home to the Phil Harris-Alice Faye Collection), to create the most compelling, comprehensive, and accurate depiction of Faye's life yet published. 6x9 inches, 256 pages, 25 black & white illustrations, filmography, bibliography, index, ISBN 1-57806-210-1. Call 1-800-737-7788 to order toll-free.

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§§§ (From Ben Ohmart, [benohmart@yahoo.com](mailto:benohmart@yahoo.com)) "I wondered if you'd be interested in contributing to a new book about Jack Benny. I don't know if you know Midnight Marquee books, but they've been doing a series of books of nonfiction essays on horror films. There haven't been any books of this sort done yet on OTR, and I think it would be a good idea to start. The first would be on Jack Benny, though all major series (like Amos n Andy, Fibber McGee, etc.) could have their own volume later. To give you an idea of topics for this book: a history of the Benny-Allen feud; the changing role of Rochester from the early years in which there was an emphasis on his fondness for chicken and for playing craps to a more positive image, perhaps best illustrated by the New Year's Eve show in 1950 when he shares a toast with Jack as a colleague and friend; the railroad shows and how they captured a sense of the adventure of traveling by train; a rundown of the bloopers; the wonderful use of sound effects on the show and how they contributed to the enjoyment of the listeners by appealing to the imagination; specific writer contributions to the series; the masochistic Jack and the anatomy of an ego. There are lots more ideas possible, and in fact, I'd like to hear ideas from you rather than just take something from this brief list of samples.

"I'd like to solicit different topics from different writers, perhaps 20, plus pictures. Submissions can be between 1000 to 4000 words, however much it takes to say what you want to say. I'll start with Benny, and if it interests enough people, move on to other shows. I haven't solicited many writers about this yet, though Clair Schulz, Laura Wagner and Martin Grams Jr. have signed up so far. Already published

writers and/or incredibly smart Jack Benny fans only please! I can pay \$50 plus 2 copies of the book for use of the non-fiction. If you're interested, let me know. Thanks."

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§§§ Jack Benny's First Farewell Special is available for \$5.00 from Satellite Media Production, P.O. Box 638, Walkersville, MD 21793-0638, (800) 747-0856, [www.satellitemediaproduction.com](http://www.satellitemediaproduction.com).

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§§§ Would very much appreciate advice on how to obtain the episode "Jack Joins the Acrobats" on video (no luck from MCA).I was advised that all episodes from 1965 were filmed so hopefully this one is available. It is Episode 250, aired February 19th 1965, Production Code 24614.

[mail\\_mi\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:mail_mi_2000@yahoo.com)

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§§§ I am searching for the following tapes if anyone has: "A Love Letter To Jack Benny" NBC 1981, 80 years of Frank Sinatra: My Way ABC 1995, any appearances of Don Rickles on Johnny Carson. [bjglaw0326@aol.com](mailto:bjglaw0326@aol.com)

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Please send all questions, comments, corrections, and additions to:  
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[JackBenny@aol.com](mailto:JackBenny@aol.com)  
[www.jackbenny.org](http://www.jackbenny.org)  
Laura Leff, President

Please, friends, send no bombs.



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