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As I was saying ...

# When comedy was truly, memorably funny

## **By JACK HILSHER**

You have to feel sorry for Generation X because they don't have much to laugh at on TV. There are no comedy shows anymore, and I don't mean those insipid sitcoms where a dopey audience laughs loudly at every limp quip. I mean like the "Shows of Shows" with Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca; or especially like the Jack Benny Program.

This generation's comedy seems based on what shock value is left in four-letter words. One standup comic in ten is fairly funny but you can't recall many of their routines a day later. In the case of Mr. Benny however, routines built into his shows stick in your mind forever. We'll share one shortly.

First, for those who weren't around at the time, Jack Benny and his humor were fixtures on radio and television for 30 years. In the 40s with "JELLO AGAIN!" he sold so much of that product his sponsor had to switch to Grape Nut Flakes. In '48 he jumped networks for a reported 2 1/2 million, which was really big bucks

in those days.

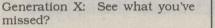
Although a household word most of Americans couldn't wait until next week's show - Benny was hardly a single act. Consider his cast of memorable characters: Wife Mary Livingstone, who didn't have a well-defined role on the show but who still got her share of laughs; Phil Harris, whose idea of being a bandleader was to sing "That's What I Like About the South." (His real claim to fame was probably his marriage to the luscious Alice Faye.) Then there was singer Dennis Day, everybody's kid next door, who, according to his contract, also mowed Benny's lawn; Don Wilson, a sort of pre-Wilbur Scott, was the announcer, and of course, Rochester of the gravelly voice, Jack's valet and chauffeur for his old Maxwell automobile. But of them all, my favorite was the little Mexican as played by Mel Blanc.

Blanc was the radio-movie-TV voice for the Bugs Bunny cartoons, Tweety Pie the Canary, and many others. He even imitated Jack's Maxwell trying to start in a truly amazing vocal performance. The Blanc-Benny classic coming

up was based entirely on single syllables, one after another, and it is difficult to picture anyone but Mel Blanc doing the Mexican. Its humor stays fresh, even if you can remember the original. Let's see if you do:

JACK: Excuse me, are you waiting for the train? MEL: SI. JACK: You're meeting someone on the train? MEL: Si. JACK: A relative? MEL: Si. JACK: What's your name? MEL: Cy. JACK: Cy?

MEL: Si. JACK: This relative - is it a woman? MEL: Si. JACK: Your sister? MEL: Si. JACK: What's her name? MEL: Sue. JACK: Sue? MEL: Si. JACK: Does she work? MEL: Sew. JACK: Sew? MEL: Si.





### Bike shop opens

Joel Eneboe has opened the Dallas Bike Works in the Dallas Shopping Center. Eneboe, a 1974 Lake-Lehman graduate, lived in the Back Mountain from age 9, and his family has owned bike shops in California for several years. The shop will stock bicycles for all ages and tastes, as well as custom bikes, wheels, clothing and accessories. It also offers complete bicycle service.

## Library news

ts May meeting on the 16th in the reference room at the library. A otal membership of 186 was reported by treasurer, Elin Northrup with \$1,730 membership dues received for the purchase of books for the Book Club shelf. Membership is \$10 for a single and \$15 for a double and

lay through Sunday. Attorney Joseph Kluger is general chairnan of the auction for 1994 and anyone interested in working at the auction in any area may call he library and leave a name and ohone number and a member of he auction committee will con-

The program was presented by

