

# An Interview with the World Famous Comedian

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The morning after Jack Benny's USO troupe appeared at the Stuttgart Bowl, your reporter presented himself at the quarters of Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burrell, where the world famous comedian was a guest along with the rest of his performers.

After infiltrating past two sentries, and finally reaching Yen, the General's valet, I was ushered into the presence of the radio star and his songstress, Martha Tilton, with the announcement, "The Gentleman of the Press!"

Boy, did I get a kick out of that!

Thus began my interview with Hollywood's loveable old jokester, and one of his side-kicks, the attractive singer who used to send them with Benny Goodman's band.

The grey-haired comedian had made a change from his flannels and snappy tan sport coat, and was dressed in sun-tans. He was munching his morning toast and finishing his coffee, but even at that early hour, his ready wit and genuine personality were just as evident as when he was before the huge audience of the night before.

The beautiful Ingrid Bergman, and the fourth member of the troupe, Larry Adler, didn't put in an appearance at the breakfast interview, but Miss Tilton graciously supplied the answers to the many questions that I asked.

When asked what they thought of Germany, the songbird replied, "It was a real thrill to actually see all of the former Nazi strongholds that we had read about for so long."

This was echoed by the man who the night before was tearing down a former Nazi stronghold himself by rocking it with GI laughter, with such famous Benny gags as his advice to Army cooks "to put lace panties on Spam and call it lamb chops!" Or his telling in all seriousness of the budget he allowed himself to frolic in Paris—"8 francs for two days"—which also had the boys rolling in the aisles, most of them knowing their Paris.

Benny was asked about the difference in touring the Pacific Theater, where he was last year at this time, and the ETO.

He said that living, travelling, and entertaining conditions were better here, though he admitted that over there he had travelled more with the enlisted men. He added that although he enjoyed dining with the officers, he preferred "chowing" with the GIs.

Miss Tilton summed it up for the whole troupe when she said that "we are all grateful that we are permitted to come overseas and see you boys. And if we have been able to give you a few laughs and entertainment to make the 'waiting' seem a little easier, we feel that we've been more than rewarded for our efforts."

Although the luscious Bergman didn't come down to breakfast, I was still under the spell of her performance of the night before. The Academy Award winner—for her superb work in the film, "Gaslight"—thrilled the GI audience with a soliloquy from Maxwell Anderson's new play about St. Joan of Arc. La Bergman will act the name part when the play opens on Broadway in the fall.

Her natural beauty, her real personality, and her greatness as an actress will thrill anyone who loves the theater. In fact, when she did the soliloquy, the hush that came over the thousands of GIs in the stadium was a great tribute to her artistry.

Larry Adler, the harmonica genius, was also a terrific hit with the men of the 100th. This is the third time he has been overseas with Jack Benny; he has played for troops in Sicily, the South Pacific, the Near East, and now six weeks in the ETO.

Adler's favorite story is how he got started on his career. About twenty year ago, back in his home town of Baltimore, Maryland, he entered a contest with his mouth organ. All the other contestants played either "The St. Louis Blues" or "Turkey in the Straw." Not Adler, however; he gave with a classic instead and won the prize hands down.

No matter where he goes, and in Germany particularly, the harmonica virtuoso is always looking for more instruments. One GI obliged him and tossed one up on the stage, whereupon Adler tossed him back a 10-buck note.

Not to be outdone, Benny tossed a few cigars out and when the GIs reminded him of what Fred Allen says about him, the great comedian shrugged and followed suit with a ten-spot.

Benny went easy on his other friendly rival, Bing Crosby, and merely said that it's a good thing that the curfew was lifted, as now Bing's horses can come home anytime they way. The fiddle also came out of its case during the show and, over the protests of the troupe and the assembled GIs, Benny played in his inimitable manner.

All in all, a wonderful evening by top-notch entertainers, and swell people besides.

OK, USO, bring on Bob Hope and Colonna. We'll pack the stadium again.

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