

Announcer's Dilemma: Wild Ending & One Final Commercial

"I WANT MY PANTS!"

-- Jack Benny

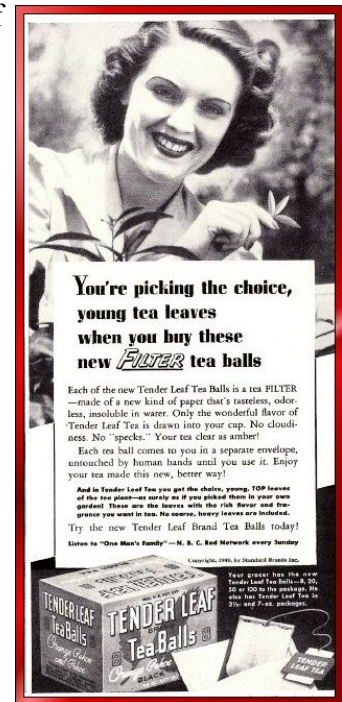


Lincoln, Me. (DG)---

Only on live radio can the radio listeners expect the unexpected. One of the most bizarre events to air live over the microphone occurred on the May 26, 1946 broadcast of *THE FRED ALLEN SHOW*.

Since Allen's return to NBC, the relationship between the comedian and the management of the network was strained at best. One of the network's pet peeves was Allen deliberately had his program run beyond the 30 minute time limit. What happens, the program was cut off in mid sentence by the sounding of the NBC chimes. To Allen's delight, the listeners got mad at the network for cutting his program off. The May 26, 1946 broadcast was **almost** one of the long running broadcasts had it not been for the closing commercial and the quick narration of announcer Kenny Delmar.

The broadcast featured "**Mary Livingstone's husband**" (Jack Benny) as the special guest. If you know your old time radio, you already know of the long running "**feud**" between Fred Allen and Jack Benny. When the two men got together in front of the microphone, fireworks usually followed.



On this particular broadcast, Allen was unusually subdued. Both he and Benny got in some cracks at each other, but it wasn't anything unusual. The final routine on the program was a skit called *King For A Day* with Allen as the M.C., and Benny as the contestant under the alias of "**Myron Proudfoot**." To the surprise of absolutely no one, Benny won the contest and was King For A Day. Allen presented him with some cheap gifts. The final prize was to have Benny's suit cleaned and pressed--- **AT THAT VERY MOMENT!** Two men grabbed Benny while a third man pulled off his pants in front of the studio audience, who couldn't believe what they were seeing.

With the audience laughing hysterically and Benny yelling for his pants, there was a small problem--- one that could get Allen in trouble with his sponsor, *Standard Brands*. That problem was one more commercial had to be presented--- **with only seconds left!** Delmar had to read the

closing commercial for *Tender Leaf Tea* so fast, the listeners could barely keep up with him.

To his credit, Delmar got the entire *Tender Leaf Tea* commercial on the air before the **NBC** chimes sounded off. He also narrated the commercial with the commotion taking place in front of him--- and that had to take considerable concentration not to become distracted.