

Shampoo Promotion Gets Actress' Dander Up


"I'm Tallulah The Tube Of *Prell*
And I'll make your hair look swell
It'll shine, it'll glow- so dandruff-free
For radiant hair, get ahold of me!"

--- Tallulah The Tube



Lincoln, Me. (DG) ---

In 1949, *Procter & Gamble* launched a new advertising promotion for its *Prell Shampoo*. Little did anyone know how this supposedly harmless campaign would stir up some nasty controversy.

With the magic of radio, the listeners heard a new character known as "**Tallulah The Tube**" on the *Prell* radio commercials for NBC's *LIFE OF RILEY* and *ROSEMARY* on CBS. While other tubes lay prone on a flat surface waiting for someone to squeeze its innards out, Tallulah displayed "**her**" talents as a radio singer (through the musical services of singer Fran Barber ). The listeners heard Tallulah sing this classic ditty:



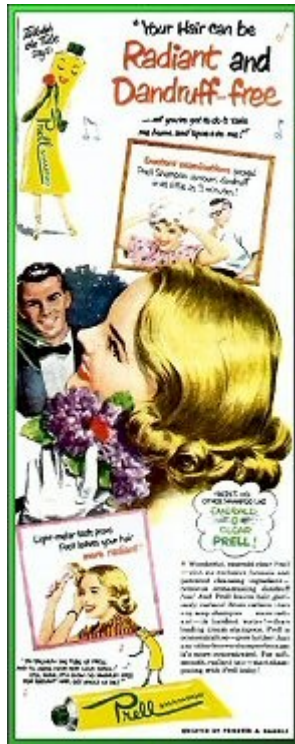
"I'm Tallulah The Tube of *Prell*
And I've got something to tell
Your hair can be radiant and dandruff-free
All you've got to do is take me home
and squeeze me!"

For the majority of radio listeners, the introduction of Tallulah The Tube was nothing more than a new promotion to sell *Prell Shampoo*--- certainly nothing to get excited about. Unfortunately, there was one person who took a definite dislike to it--- actress Tallulah Bankhead. Her dislike led to some problems for everyone responsible for the creation of the *Prell* promotion.

Ms. Bankhead believed the *Prell* character was created and designed in her image. She was distressed, humiliated, and exposed to public ridicule and contempt for this outrage. Ms. Bankhead sued *Procter & Gamble*; *Prell's* advertising agency; the CBS Radio Network; and the NBC Radio Network for \$1 million dollars.

In its March 28, 1949 issue, *Life Magazine* featured the article *Tallulah The Actress Vs. Tallulah The Tube*, which detailed the controversy. In the article, Ms. Bankhead maintained her first name

was unique and deeply resented being identified with a singing tube of shampoo. She also bristled at the thought of someone taking her home and squeezing her.



As for Ms. Bankhead's name being unique, the article disputed her claim. The magazine had pictures of other women, fire engines, dogs, temperamental cats, a Cherokee Native American, a river, and a gorge all named "**Tallulah.**" As for the **Prell** character being designed in her image, the enclosed magazine ad also disputed that claim. Tallulah The Tube was nothing more than a face on a yellow **Prell** tube with arms, legs, and feet. As you can see in the enclosed ad, there was nothing visually that resembled Ms. Bankhead's appearance.

As for the people who created the advertising promotion, when Tallulah The Tube was created, they weren't even close of thinking about Ms. Bankhead--- in fact, "**Tallulah**" wasn't the first name they came up with. In order to fit with the jingle, the name "**Ruby**" was used. While the sound went along with the jingle, the name didn't fit because Ruby was a red colored jewel--- and **Prell's** shampoo color was emerald green. The name "**Tessie**" was also considered, but that too was cast aside. Finally, the **Prell** character was named "**Tallulah**" based from the song *I'll Take Tallulah* from the 1941 MGM movie *Ship Ahoy*. The creation of Tallulah The Tube passed muster with everyone involved with **Prell's** advertising.

What did the people think of this situation? Letters to **Life Magazine** concerning the article was a clear indication. The general opinion was nothing more than a publicity stunt to boost Ms. Bankhead into the spotlight. When they heard the radio commercials, the people didn't associate Tallulah The Tube with Ms. Bankhead--- until Ms. Bankhead hammered the whole idea into their heads. One writer to the magazine said Ms. Bankhead's tirades sold more shampoo than Tallulah The Tube ever could--- and that **Procter & Gamble** should pay her the \$1 million for free advertising.

Even Ms. Bankhead took time to write a letter to the magazine. She acknowledged her name was associated with other people, animals, and things--- but she was the only "**Tallulah**" millions of men, women, and children in this continent, Europe, and Asia has heard about.

Ms. Bankhead's lawsuit was instituted on February 24, 1949. The case was eventually settled out of court, with Ms. Bankhead receiving \$5000 in damages. As for the fate of Tallulah The Tube, she continued to sell **Prell** until 1950, where she was retired and the next **Prell** ad promotion took over.