The Early History Of Howdy Doody…Television's First Hit

For those not old enough to remember, "The Howdy Doody Show" was much more than just Buffalo Bob and Howdy Doody….it was the beginning of television as a brand new form of entertainment. It was radio with pictures and it was revolutionary. With a TV set and an antenna, suddenly the world could come to your living room. Although primitive by today's standards, it was the hottest ticket on the planet, and Howdy Doody was the first hit show on television!

Television's second hit was also from NBC, and debuted 6 months after Howdy…it was "The Texaco Star Theater" with Milton Berle. They called Milton "Mr. Television," because a lot of adults bought a set to see him. With a nation full of kids wanting to see Howdy though, you can rest assured; a lot of sets were bought to keep the children happy too.

As is often the case with history, in its retelling, the waters get muddied and important facts become mangled. Before long, it's hard to know if you are reading the truth or not. With that in mind, I have decided to retell the story of how it all started to the best of our ability, **AND…I'm doing it with the help of one of America's foremost authorities on Howdy Doody, Burt Dubrow. – Bobby Ellerbee / Eyes Of A Generation.com** (Revised May 2026)

Welcome To Eyes Of A Generation! - Eyes Of A Generation...Television's Living History





This is a 1952 photo of Buffalo Bob Smith with Howdy, and on the right, Bob Keeshan taking off his Clarabell makeup.

Before we get too deep, let's look at a short introductory piece from Mickey Rooney's PBS show from the '90s called "Remember When." Bob Smith tells a story that we will explore in depth on these pages. https://youtu.be/ZE5GPaT3W4U

In The Beginning…The Moon Came Over the Mountain

It is hard to know where to start, but I've chosen to start where Kate Smith enters the story. In 1931, Kate had recorded "When the Moon Comes over the Mountain," and the song's success on the radio had made her a star. About the same time, Bob Schmidt, at age 15 had joined The Hi Hatters trio as the piano player. The boys, named Elmer Hattenberger, Johnny Eisenberger and Robert Schmidt, performed at dances and weddings, but in 1933, beat out 950 other contestants to win a Monday, Wednesday and Friday spot on the "Simon Brewery Supper Club of the Air," on WBEN radio in Buffalo.

In 1934, Kate Smith, who was now a nationally popular recording artist, was playing a week long engagement in Buffalo, and did a guest spot on the Simon show. After hearing The Hi Hatters in the studio, she invited them to be her opening act on the rest of the long tour, and brought them to New York City to perform on her CBS radio program. At Kate Smith's urging, Bob Americanized his surname from Schmidt to Smith.

In early 1935, the seventeen year old Smith returned to Buffalo with Johnny Eisenberger after The Hi Hats broke up. They were performing as "Jack and Gil," and were welcomed back at Buffalos' WGR, where Smith also became a staff pianist. Smith could play almost any instrument and could arrange music for any size orchestra, and often did. His musical ability was what opened the door for him originally, but he could also write and do comedy bits, which eventually lead to another big break in radio.

In 1943, Smith was invited to team up with long time Buffalo morning man Clint Beuhlman for the "Early Date At Hengerer" radio show on WBEN. It was live from Buffalo's largest, and one of the counties' first department stores. The morning show in the Hengerer's Tea Room, was attended daily by an audience of about 70 women, and was a lot like the ABC hit show, "The Don McNeil Breakfast Club", which was live from Chicago, and their competition. Within six months, Beuhlman and Smith had five times as many listeners in Buffalo as McNeil's show.

The publicity from the morning show got the attention of NBC in New York and they sent someone to Buffalo to listen. Smith also did an afternoon solo show too, where he played the piano and did interesting bits that often made it sound like recorded artists were live in the studio with him. The NBC rep went to another station in the area and recorded an hour of the show on a large 16 inch disc and took it back to New York.

At the time, NBC Radio's morning show on their flagship station, WEAF, was doing technically "magic" things, like a live smorgasbord of morning shows and news from around the county. But, it did not have what the other big stations in NYC had…an anchoring personality. CBS had Arthur Godfrey who was very personable, but most of all, he was a habit, which is a big part of what morning radio is. NBC's scattergun programming lacked that, so they made an offer to Bob Smith to bring his show to WEAF.



Above left, is Bob Smith at WBEN hosting women's screaming contest on his show in 1945. On the right is WBEN's Clint Beuhlman. This is the radio show "Early Date At Henegerer's."

On August 5, 1946, Bob did his first morning show on WEAF. On November 10, 1946, WEAF changed its call letters to WNBC. Most don't know it, but even after Howdy Doody started on television, Bob continued to do the WNBC morning show from 6 till 9 every weekday morning, until his heart attack in 1954. He also did a weekly half hour variety show on NBC TV called "The Gulf Road Show" from '49 till '51.

Welcome To the Triple B Ranch! The Place Howdy Doody Was Born

In February of 1947, WNBC Radio had the idea of making Saturday mornings a time for kids shows, and in March, a block of six half hours children's programs hit the air, with great success. Among the new shows created were "The Horn and Hardart Children's Hour," with host Ed Herlihy, "The Paul Winchell and Jerry Mahoney Show", and something from Bob Smith…"The Triple B Ranch", which was an idea he and his radio writer Eddie Kean had come up with. The three Bs stood for Big Brother Bob Smith.

"Triple B Ranch" was a children's game show that pitted four kids age 8 to 11 from one school against four more from another. The contestants were seated on two wooden horses with four seats each, and every wrong answer got one of the kids "bucked off" of the horse, just like at the

rodeo. There was a good size studio audience of about three hundred of the contestants' school mates with them, cheering them on in Studio 3B, from 9:30 till 10.

After a few weeks on the air, the show's writer Eddie Kean told Bob the show needed a little more comedy and, with its western theme, he asked Bob if there was a character voice he wanted to do that could be fun and match the show. Smith went into a small studio and did a couple or three voices, and when he did a kind of country bumpkin voice for a character he called Elmer, Eddie's ears perked up when he heard what would become Elmer's tag line…"Oh, ho, ho, howdy doody, boys and girls." The next week, Bob added the Elmer voice to the program, letting him ask a few questions, and as always when Elmer came in and left it was always with the same line…"Oh, ho, ho, howdy doody." To be clear, there was no budget for the show and, no puppet named Elmer…just Bob talking to himself as both host, and as Elmer.

What happened next was quite interesting! After a month or so on the air, kids that came to the show began to tell Bob "**they came to see Howdy Doody, and were disappointed he had not been there**."

When Bob, his producer Jim Gaines and Eddie Kean understood that the kids were thinking Elmer's name was Howdy Doody, they decided they needed to not only change Elmer's name, but if kids wanted to see him, why not talk to the television people. And they did.

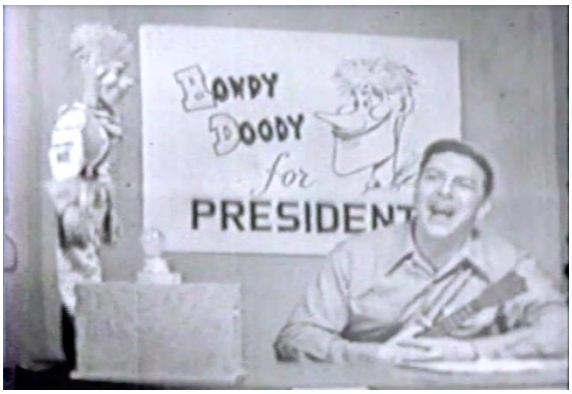
Roger Muir, who was a producer and director at NBC, had only been with the company for six months, but almost from the fist week, he began a conversation with the man who hired him about the need for some kids television on the network. That man was Warren Wade, the head of programming. One day, Wade met Muir in a hallway and as they were passing, Wade called out to Muir, "Your wish has come true!" "What do you mean" asked Muir. "We are going to start a kid's show and you are driving the boat!"

Wade's idea was for a half hour weekly program called "Puppet Playhouse." with three puppet shows in weekly rotation, Frank Pairs with "The Adventures of Toby Tyler," "The Paul Winchell and Jerry Mahoney Show," and Ed Herlihy with a puppet from "The Horn and Hardart Children's Show.". They were thinking of a start at the end of that month, just after Christmas. Tight scheduling, but doable.

Roger asked Mr. Wade who they would use as a host. Wade told him that Bob Smith, the WNBC morning man was doing a Saturday morning radio show for children called "The Triple B Ranch" and that Roger should check him out. If he was any good, they would give him a try on the first show.

On both December 13th and 20th of 1947, Roger Muir was in the Triple B radio audience.

Roger liked what they saw, and talked to Bob about being a part of the first show with Paris, on a purely trial basis. With Smith's ability to be the host and MC, and along with a new Howdy Doody puppet, the show could go to an hour, and Smith could sing and play, plus narrate some old silent movie serials they had paid a lot for and wanted to include somewhere.





These are rare kinescope screenshots of Bob Smith hosting "Puppet Playhouse" around April 6, 1948. These are the earliest known images of the set. Notice there are 4 girls and 4 boys, sitting on the same "bucking bronco" saw horses that were used on the "Triple B Ranch" radio show. The desk was to the left of, and in front of the kids, so they could not see Bob's mouth move when he was voicing Howdy. They could only see the monitor and hear the conversation live.

Howdy Comes To Television…December 27, 1947

On Monday, December 22, 1947, Roger met with Warren and told him he liked Smith, but the show should definitely be an hour, and not the half hour Wade had planned. On Tuesday, December 23, 1947, Bob Smith was told by NBC Television Program chief, Warren Wade that the new show, "Puppet Playhouse," would start in five days. So, now what? Over the Christmas holiday, and still on the radio every morning, Bob Smith and his writer Eddie Kean talked about what to do.

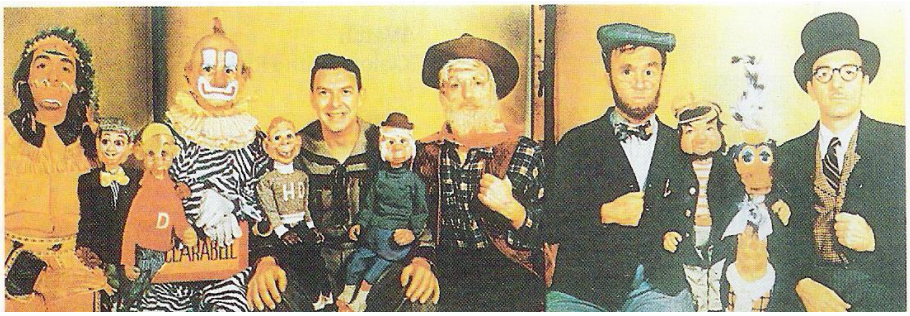
The way the first show was laid out, the opening segment would be a fifteen minute puppet show from Frank Paris and his puppeteers. Paris's puppets starred in "Toby At The Circus," which was presented in serial fashion, and picked up on a story which developed in each episode. There would also two ten to fifteen minute silent films shown that Bob would narrate, so that took up about forty minutes. The other twenty minutes would include questions and answers with the kids, a few games, and on the first show, The Galshint Brothers Poodles were brought over from Radio City Music Hall to entertain.

On the following Monday, after that first show, *Variety* said, "In the middle-class home there is perhaps nothing as welcome to the mother as something that will keep the small fry intently absorbed, and out of possible mischief, for an hour." Variety added, "If this program lasts, it can almost be guaranteed to pin down the squirmiest of the brood." That day, Warren Wade went to Smith and told him they had the makings of a hit, and wanted him as the permanent host.

But what about Howdy Doody? Well, there wasn't time to make a Howdy puppet for the first show, and after Bob was invited in permanently, they would have to make one, but it took three weeks before Howdy made an appearance, **but Howdy was there**…hiding in a desk drawer, too bashful to come out and play, with Bob providing the voice. Did they did sing the Howdy Doody song on the first show? No, but according to Eddie Kean, they did on the second show. Eddie Kean took the public domain song, "Tra La La Boom De Ay" and put the now famous words to it and taught it to the kids just before the show started at 5 PM. The third week when he went to teach the kids the song, some of them already knew it, and that was a good omen.

There couldn't have been a better day for the premier of "Puppet Playhouse". It was just after Christmas with lots of new TV sets in use, and outside, one of the worst snow storms in years had hit the northeast, which gave them a captive audience.

Inside NBC's only television studio, 3H, it was hot and everyone had a headache. It wasn't until April of 1948 that the new RCA TK30 Image Orthicon cameras were installed in 3H. The TK30s required less than a tenth of the 1200 foot-candles of light the old Iconoscope cameras required, and those lights were hot! Not being used to the bright television lights, Smith's head was throbbing and the puppeteers were 10 feet off the floor and in the hottest part of the studio…they were soaking wet with sweat. The first show ended with aspirins for all.



This is a 1955 Christmas card showing some of the shows main characters, l-r Chief Thunderthud, Inspector Fadoozle, Dilly Dally, Clarabell, Howdy, Bob, Mr. Bluster, Oil Well Wille, Cornelius J Cobb, Captain Scuttlebutt, Flubadub and Dr. Singasong. Bill LeCornec played three of the characters seen here…Thunderthud, Willie and Dr. Singasong.



This is the Frank Paris part of those first "Puppet Playhouse" performances. Shown here is a scene from "Toby At The Circus". The center figure is Toby. As we saw on page 5, Howdy had his own performance area.



This is the original Howdy Doody puppet, created by Frank Paris. The puppet Paris came up with was based mostly on the way Howdy sounded. Remember, the original character's name was Elmer, and I don't think Paris could shake that notion when he designed this unit.

Bob Smith never liked this Howdy and always referred to the original as "Ugly Doody", once the new one had arrived. In fairness, all Paris had to go on was the sound, and what he had heard Howdy do on the "Triple B Ranch." Even Bob had not yet fully developed Howdy's character or fleshed out what his general demeanor would be. It was all so new and happening so fast.





Above left is Frank Paris (center) in March of ’48, and on the right, Paris with the famous Carmen Miranda style puppet “Zizi” that he appeared with on “The Ed Sullivan Show” after leaving Howdy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4clIzQhNm0&feature=youtu.be&t=14m40s

At the link is a 1970s video of Frank Paris with his Zizi. This will start at the beginning of a fascinating performance, which includes full spins by the dancer. At 15:30, you’ll see how the incredibly talented Paris accomplishes this, as the camera tilts up. At the time “Puppet Playhouse” started, Paris was New York’s top marionette man, and perhaps the best in the nation.



This rare photo is from May of 1948. This is the last photo of Paris (center) working on “Puppet Playhouse,” with Rhoda Mann on the right. The camera is one of three newly installed RCA TK30s, which my friend Frank Merklein operated. Frank was with the show from February of ’48, till the last show in 1960. Notice in the inset how much “Toby” looks like the Velma Dawson Howdy.

The American Federation Of Musicians Television Ban

In early 1947, AFM boss Frank Patrillo had called for a ban on all live music on television until a new contract could be worked out with the musicians union. That meant that all music on television, in that period, had to be prerecorded. The only instrument not included in the ban was the ukulele, which was not considered an instrument. So, that's what Bob Smith played when the kids sang. On Saturday, March 20, 1948, Patrillo lifted the ban and later that afternoon, became the first musician to perform live on television after the ban. The show was "Puppet Playhouse" and Bob Smith accompanied Patrillo's trumpet with his piano. According to Bob Smith, **that made "Puppet Playhouse" the first live, post war, television show to feature live music**.

The Howdy Doody Schedules…1947-48: The show began December 27, 1947 as a one hour Saturday afternoon production. Due to its popularity, the show went to an hour on a Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday schedule, probably on Tuesday February 10th or 17th.

Sometime in early April of '48, the three RCA A500 Iconoscope cameras in Studio 3H were replaced by three RCA TK30 Image Orthicon cameras. Our friend Frank Merklein began as a cameraman on Howdy, March 8, 1948, and his first month was spent behind one of the Iconoscope cameras. Frank tells me that when the camera switch started on Saturday night just after the show, and that engineers worked nonstop, until just before the Tuesday show to install the new chains and switching equipment.

After a week or two in shakedown testing, with all going smoothly, the show finally went to its new Monday-Friday schedule, airing from 5:30-6, in late April, 1948. When the show moved to the new Studio 3K color facility, September 12, 1955, **it became the first daily color show ever.** In June of 1956, the show went to a once a week broadcast on Saturday mornings from 10-10:30. Below is one of the first daily shows with the new RCA TK30s in Studio 3H.



Enter Clarabell! April 1948



Shown here…two rare kinescope screen shots from April 6, 1948, showing Bob Keeshan dressed in a classic Italian operatic clown suit, borrowed from NBC's wardrobe department. Prior to this, he had handed Bob props in his street clothes, but this is the obvious transition to the Clarabell character's creation.



According to Bob Smith, around April of 1948, Clarabell the clown made his first appearance on the show. The first of three men to play the famous clown role was Bob Keeshan, who later became Captain Kangaroo. But, this was not Keehsan's first rodeo…literally; he had worked with Smith in the "Triple B Ranch" days, and even earlier.

Smith, WNBC's morning radio host met Keeshan when he was a page at NBC, and called him Bobby. Back then, page jobs only lasted for six months, because there were so many people on the waiting list to become pages. Being an NBC page was a huge stepping stone for many, including Merv Griffin and Regis Philbin, just to name a couple.

When Keeshan was at the end of his six months, he asked Smith if there was a job he could do for him, and there was. Keeshan helped Bob with the many tasks of the weekday morning show, and was a key player in organizing the kids for the BBB show.

When they went to television, Keehsan's first job was writing and holding the cue cards for Smith. On that first show, Bob needed a prop and asked Bobby to bring it to him. For the first few months of the show, Bob Keeshan wore street clothes and dressed casually.

As Keeshan come on camera more and more, assisting, Director Roger Muir thought he looked out of place in street clothes and he requested a clown costume from wardrobe. The classic operatic clown suit seen above came, and set the stage for how Keeshan played the role…mute, as were the classic operatic clowns. Later, Keeshan was sent to Brookes Costume Shop, that had outfitted Smith. Muir had already called the store and told them to dress Keeshan as a clown, but keep the cost down. Brookes had a bolt of left over bright green and white zebra pattern material they were dying to get rid of and that's what they made the Clarabell suit from, and topped it off with a big yellow ruff around the neck.

The silly new suit was perfect, and NBC's head of makeup, Dick Smith was called in. He made a plaster mold of Keeshan's face and a few days later, came back with a bald pate fringed in red hair, and a big red nose. Dick Smith designed the face makeup too, and taught Bobby how to apply the grease liners and to draw huge purple and white eyebrows on his forehead. The same liners were used to make Keeshan's lips disappear, replacing them with a giant smile which covered most of his chin and cheeks.

Of course, there were clown shoes and a box was belted at the waist with a horn, and usually a seltzer bottle in the box. In the early to mid '50s, two horns were added to the box, and that gave Clarabell a way to say yes and no. The horn was inspired by the silent Marx brother, Harpo. Clarabell would use the seltzer bottle to squirt the always unsuspecting Smith on almost every show.

Many, including Bob Smith have said the reason Clarabell never talked was because, if he did, he would have to be paid union scale, but this is not true. In fact, there was no union for television actors yet, but Keeshan was instrumental in helping the transitional organization…the

Television Authority codify new rules. One of rules was custom made, and it stated that even if a major character had few or no lines, they should be paid as Principal Actors. Keep this in mind; it will come in handy when we get to the events of 1952.







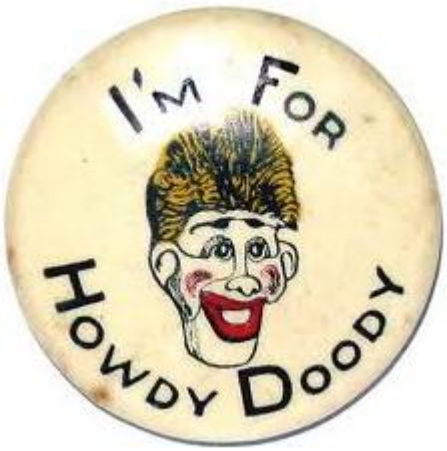
The surrounding color photos show the third of three Clarabells, Lew Anderson, but these are the only color photos of Clarabell's suit and makeup. Above right is Bob Keeshan as Clarabell with Bob in their new costumes. Clarabell got his costume from the same costume shop that dressed Smith in the lion tamers outfit (above right) when the show got a new circus set. Bob's change to the buckskin fringed "Buffalo Bob" style costume came sometime around 1950, after Chief Thunderthud made him an honorary Indian with the Buffalo Bob name and a change of sets and studios as they moved from Studio 3H to Studio 8G, and the Doodyville set.

According to Bob Keeshan, the reason Clarabell never spoke was because "classic clowns" had always been played in pantomime. Keeshan had zero musical talent, and even with pros trying to teach him, he just couldn't get the hang of things. He had no training on stage or as an actor either, but turned out to be pretty good at slapstick.

A final note on Clarabell…when Keeshan was fired, Bob's long time friend from Buffalo, Robert "Nick" Nicholson was ready to go, and as a matter of fact, before it happened, he and Bob had gone to the studio in off hours to see if Keehsan's suit and pate fit him and it did. Nick was a Jonathan Winters type guy and never really enjoyed being Clarabell, and after two years, let Bob's other friend Lew Anderson take over the roll, which is when Nick became the Cornelius J. Cobb, live character, and a few others.

Smith, Nicholson and Anderson were all very good musicians and arrangers and had that in common. Nick played the trombone and Anderson the sax and clarinet, and had a hot 16 piece jazz band. Bob had met Lew on his "Gulf Road Show", which he did from '49 till '51, when Lew's group, The Honey Drippers were on the variety show Smith hosted once a week on NBC.

The End? Or, Here Comes The Big Time! March 1948



1948 was a presidential election year in the U.S., and the show's writer, Eddie Kean, came up with the idea that Howdy should run for president of all the kids in the country.

This was a huge stroke of luck! As it turns out, the campaign was the saving grace of the show.

Howdy Doody announced his campaign on the 11th show, which aired March 4, 1948. The campaign tied in with a concern of NBC's sales department. As mentioned earlier, the show did not have a sponsor and that meant NBC was bearing the cost of the show, so they were a little anxious.

In those early days of television, there was no Neilson Ratings, or any sort of audience measurement tool, except for a fairly crude write in method. Radio had The Hooper Ratings, but there was nothing for television. Roger Muir, the show's producer-director, thought of offering a button that said "I'm for Howdy Doody" to anyone who wrote in and requested one. He ordered 10,000 buttons.

On Thursday afternoon, March 4, Howdy and Bob announced his campaign and asked children to write in for their button. The requests poured in and two days after the button offer was announced, NBC issued a press release that 6,304 requests have been received. A day later, that figure was revised to 26,000, and grew by leaps and bounds daily.

Smith told People magazine in 1989: "The response was overwhelming. We had no idea it would be that successful." Smith estimated that eventually, more than 250,000 kids wrote in asking for the button.

By 1948, NBC's television network had added two more cities to the New York, Schenectady, Philadelphia, Washington base…Boston and Baltimore, and when Howdy Doody was on, kids crammed into the homes of whoever had a television set to watch.

Based on the response to the button give-away, sponsors lined up to buy air time on Howdy Doody. Colgate was an early supporter of the show, and Kellogg's too. The NBC sales department was happy and so was the programming department. At this point, the show was on three days a week, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 5 -6.

In April '48, Bob and NBC agreed to air the show every weekday afternoon from 5:30 - 6. A move which coincided with the new RCA TK30 cameras being installed in Studio 3H. That cut a half hour off the show, but made it daily with less lead time to write, but was a good move and drew even more advertisers. They were not the only ones that took notice of Howdy's popularity. **This is where the plot thickens!**

Toy makers took notice of Howdy's appeal too. So did Macy's. They were getting requests for a Howdy doll of some sort and came to his office one afternoon to talk to Bob Smith about it, and offer their assistance in helping him pick a manufacturer.

Frank Paris got wind of this, and since he was the one that made the puppet, he wanted a cut of the merchandising money. As it turns out, Howdy was the intellectual property of Bob Smith and was fully trademarked and registered by Smith. NBC had paid Paris $500 to make the puppet as a "work for hire". When they explained this to Paris…let's just say it was a bad day!

Paris was irate and told them if he wasn't included, he and Howdy were leaving, and they did, four hours before show time! As the person who handled Howdy for five years, puppeteer Rhoda Mann, mentions that Smith never liked Paris, because he was "light on his feet," so there was no love lost.

Now what? Here is NBC's hot hit, with NO STAR! Thankfully, Howdy was running for president, and as we all know, that means campaign stops around the country. So, Eddie Kean quickly rewrote that show, and covered Howdy's absence for a few weeks by putting him on the campaign trail, starting in Portland, Oregon.

"We picked the farthest place we could," Kean once said, "and explained that after Howdy met his handsome rival, Mr. X, he realized he wouldn't get any votes from girls unless he had plastic surgery." So, while Howdy was out campaigning, he was also having plastic surgery.

During the marionette's absence from the show, Howdy was heard on the show over a loudspeaker, called the Super Talk-O-Scope. Howdy would tell everyone about the hospital and how he was fine, didn't mind plastic surgery, and knew he'd get the girls' votes now that he'd be handsome too. In other words, they stalled and stalled. This appeased the kids, but not the sponsors. They wanted Howdy in the commercials and not just on the Super Talk-O-Scope. Eddie Kean rose to the challenge again, suggesting that we find a puppet, dress him in Howdy's new costume, and bandage his head. The puppet appeared on the air, assuring the boys and girls of his excellent health, and urging them to brush with Colgate Dental Cream.

The bandages finally came off June 8, 1948, revealing the red-headed, freckle-faced boy that became an icon. Sponsors began to join in Howdy's campaign efforts. Children were invited to vote by filling out a form printed on the end of Wonder Bread bags. Post Cereals included a Howdy Doody for president ring.

Like any good politician, Howdy told the children what they wanted to hear, promising more holidays from school, and more pictures in history books. *Time* magazine even took note of the campaign, reporting that Howdy was pushing for free admission to the circus and rodeo.



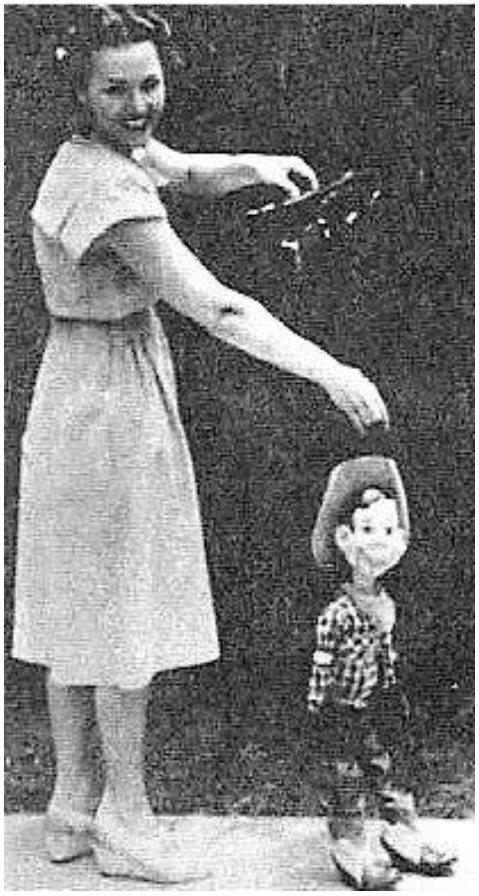
Above is a Howdy campaign photo taken a few days after the bandages came off. The legs belong to Howdy's puppeteer Rhoda Mann. **At the link, Howdy winning the election and his acceptance speech**, from NBC's 10th Anniversary Reel in 1949.
https://youtu.be/e_UiotAS0Nw?t=6m10s

The Second Birth Of Howdy & Clearing Up Some History…

At the very beginning of this, I mentioned one of the reasons I was writing his was to help set the record straight on the facts that surround the Howdy Doody story. Some of that, we have already done, but there is more and this part is especially critical.

Just who created the new Howdy? Several sources both in print and on line offer conflicting information on this subject. Some credit Rufus and Margo Rose as the creators of the cute Howdy puppet we all know and love, but this is wrong.

Actually, it was Velma Wayne Dawson that created this Howdy puppet. Burt Dubrow knew her well, and has the original mold she used to create the head, which was designed from drawings made by two Disney artists Mel Shaw and Robert Allen, which were friends of friends of the show. Even Bob Smith has told this story a few different ways over the years.



On the left is Velma Wayne Dawson with her original Howdy Doody creation.

Velma was a very talented lady with a husband that, with her help, designed and built the first golf courses in the Palm Springs area. Velma loved the arts and took a course in puppetry and got pretty good at making them. Enough, so that people in Los Angeles knew of her work.

She would eventually make other duplicate puppets, but as we will soon see, they were all just a tiny bit different.

On June 8, 1948, this puppet made his debut on the show. NBC was thrilled, and immediately ordered a back-up puppet, with changes to make the face more expressive. Velma said that would alter the look too much, but they said do it. So she did, and when the back-up arrived, sure enough, it wasn't quite Howdy.



On the right is Velma's original Howdy. On the left is the second version she did…the one that NBC had ordered a few changes on. This was to be the backup puppet that could be used for costume changes, or if there were broken strings during the show.

When Eddie Kean saw Velma's second new Howdy, he instantly knew who the mysterious Mr. X, Howdy's presidential opponent was, and wrote another chapter in the saga of Doodyville.

It would be Howdy Doody's twin brother Double Doody! Double had run an all negative campaign promising no ice-cream and school every day so that his brother Howdy could win the election. On the left is Double Doody as "The Inspector", John J Fadoozle…America's number one private eye. Howdy's twin appeared only once as Double Doody, and after that became the Fadoozle character, with the help of Scott Brinker. This photo was taken at Scott's home in New Jersey the week he transformed Double Doody to The Inspector.

Just to be clear on all this, when Paris left with the original "Ugly" Doody puppet, Howdy was already running for president. While Velma was making him, Howdy was not only on the campaign trail, he was also having plastic surgery to be as handsome as his opponent, Mr. X.

The backup Howdy, Double Doody, arrived about a month later, in August. Election Day was November 2, 1948 and this was a famous photo from that election. President Harry Truman, shown here was reelected, but The Chicago Daily Tribune jumped the gun and got it wrong.



That nine-month campaign, offered a chance to educate children about the various states Howdy visited. There were shows that talked about making cheese in Wisconsin and coal mines in Pennsylvania, and growing peaches in Georgia. Eddie Kean always tried to teach, but in a gentle way. Though the campaign, a lot of four- and five-year-olds learned the names of the states. The new Howdy even had 48 freckles…one for each state of the union.

No less than *The New York Times* paid attention to Howdy's victory. TV columnist Jack Gould reported that Howdy beat Mr. X by "a margin of 10,000,000 ballots, more or less." Gould wrote that Howdy finished third in the overall presidential race, behind Harry Truman and Thomas Dewey. Kean's recollection is that Howdy received more than 25 million votes while Mr. X got one.

No matter. Howdy couldn't lose the election. With Kean in control, the fix was in. Howdy was inaugurated Jan. 14, 1949, as President of all the Kids in the United States. He was sworn in by Ben Grauer, announcer for the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

Eddie Kean…The Man That Put The Words In Howdy's Mouth



Above is Eddie Kean and Howdy in 2006, four years before his death. Young Edward went to music camp in upstate New York, where he first began writing songs and directing shows. In his early 20s, he wrote a song with a friend, "Where Is Sam?" which came to the attention of Bob Smith, who hired him as a writer for his morning radio show at WNBC, soon after arriving from Buffalo. When NBC asked Mr. Smith to go on television, Mr. Kean came along as the writer. Here is Kean's "Where Is Sam?" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDhCmhVUK-k

Eddie Kean was Howdy's chief writer, philosopher and theoretician. Mr. Kean wrote almost every line spoken and every note sung, and came up with every major creative decision, story line and character on Howdy Doody, material today imprinted on the brains of my generation.

After the first show, Eddie Kean wrote the lyrics to the show's theme song, "It's Howdy Doody Time." Kean is probably best known for coining the word **"Kowabunga"** as a greeting for the show's Chief Thunderthud character. The word has become part of American vernacular, used by the cartoon character Bart Simpson and by the crime-fighting Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Although he didn't make the puppets, Mr. Kean conceived and named all of them, including the cantankerous Phineas T. Bluster and Howdy's best friend, the harebrained Dilly Dally. Eddie Kean wrote more than 2,000 episodes of the show. From 1948 to 1956 it ran Monday through Friday, and was eventually carried by more than 200 stations. From late '56 till 1960, the show ran for a half hour on Saturday mornings. Eddie left the show in late 1955 and worked for a few public relations firms, before returning to his first love…music.

When Eddie left, new writers for the show were needed, and although I'm not sure how it all came about, Willie Gilbert and his writing partner Dr. Jack Wenistock were hired.

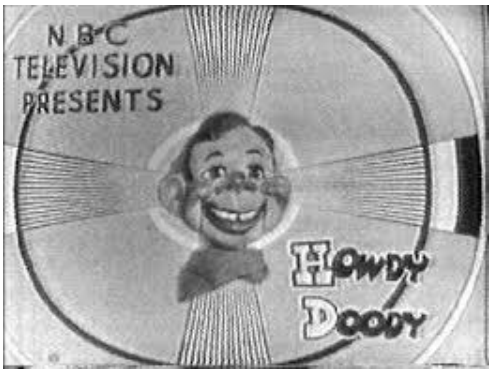
After college, Gilbert moved to New York City to pursue a career as a comedian. There he discovered that his physician, Jack Wenistock, had a skill for writing, and soon the two were contributing sketch comedy to nightclub performers including Kaye Ballard and Eileen Barton, and a Broadway revue called "Tickets Please."

They had also worked in early television with Dumont, as writers for "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet" and even sold material to such mainstream performers as Jackie Gleason. They achieved their first Broadway success as co-authors of the book for *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying* in 1962, for which they shared in two Tony Awards.

Later, Gilbert and Wenistock wrote *Hot Spot*, which starred Judy Holliday, and *Catch Me If You Can*, a murder mystery based on a French play by Robert Thomas. Wenistock died in 1969, as the team was writing another Broadway musical, *The Candy Store*. In the 1970s, Gilbert returned to children's television, writing gags for Yogi Bear, Scooby Doo and other Hanna-Barbera characters.

Technically Speaking….

This is where we look a little deeper into the limitations of television and some of the early changes on the show. Below is the test pattern NBC began broadcasting around 3 each afternoon, once Howdy Doody became a hit. It was literally and figuratively the first program on the network. In 1948, there was nothing on television before this anywhere…just the test pattern. Unbelievably, until early 1949, there was nothing after it until 7:15 and the test pattern went back up after the show.



Below is the second set with the circus motif from around March of 1949. Notice the set up. Howdy was on the elevated stage behind Clarabell, which allowed Bob to turn his back to the Peanut Gallery when talking to Howdy. This was because, until the show went daily, Bob was doing Howdy Doody's voice live in the studio. With his back to the kids, it was easier to maintain the illusion. When the show went daily, the first thing Smith did every day was record the voice parts for Howdy, but not on tape…that wouldn't come in till mid '49. The only way to do this at the time was to record to a vinyl disc. Each track was separated in order for Smith's reply, but it still took a very good audio man to slip cue each track perfectly.



"The Howdy Doody Show" Name…

http://eyesofageneration.com/december-27-1947-howdy-doody-debuts-exclusive-video/

At the link is one of, if not the, earliest recorded episodes, from April 6, 1948, with the original Frank Paris Howdy Puppet! This was shot using the old RCA Iconoscope cameras in 3H, just before the switch to the new RCA TK30 Image Orthicon cameras! Our thanks to Burt Dubrow for allowing us to post this exclusive video, not available anywhere else.

No one is quite sure exactly when "The Puppet Playhouse" became "The Howdy Doody Show", but this April 6, 1948 video starts with the announcer saying, "And now, here's Howdy Doody Time" over the first film intro. Seconds later, the second film intro rolls, with Bob Smith's voice as Howdy saying "NBC Television presents, Howdy Doody".

As odd as it sounds, there are kinescopes around from as late as March of 1949 that still include a mention of "The Puppet Playhouse" in the filmed open, which may have just been a money saving move to keep from having to pay for a new intro. Most likely, the new "Puppet Playhouse" film intro was produced just before Paris quit, but NBC kept using it anyway.

Above, I mentioned the show changed studios, and here is a bit more on that. Of course it started in NBC's Studio 3H, but around 1950, the show moved to the much larger Studio 8G so they could handle more kids in the Peanut Gallery. This was also when the circus sets and lion tamer uniforms for Bob changed to the Doodyville set, and the fringed buckskin style suit, which came about after Chief Thunderthud pronounced Smith an honorary tribe member and gave him the name, Buffalo Bob. This is an early Doodyville pix with the new costume for Bob. This first one was brown, later there was a blue one, but when the show moved to color Studio 3K, he went to a mustard colored suit for technical reasons.





On the right, the cast is celebrating another fist for the show…the 1,000th episode! Howdy was the first TV show ever to have over 1,000 and later 2000 episodes. At the end of the run, the

show had produced 2,343. Sometime around 1958, after color videotape had been perfected, the show began to tape 3 or 4 half hour episodes per week for the Saturday morning playback.



Although Bob Smith was the voice of Howdy, **Rhoda Mann** was the person that brought him to life. Rhoda worked on the show from its debut, until Christmas Eve of 1952. She was Frank Paris's assistant and when Howdy came to the show three weeks later, she was assigned his handler. When Rufus Rose was hired to take over from Paris, Rhoda was the one that introduced Rufus to the puppets and their qualities, which he quickly learned with Mann's help. As you'll read at the end, this history is dedicated to Rhoda Mann Winkler who passed away while we were writing this.



On the left, Bob with the new Howdy toy doll. This was the merchandising move that caused Frank Paris to leave with the original Howdy. Notice Bob is still in his circus costume, as he is below; there were 3 versions of this circus outfit before going to the fringed buckskin Buffalo Bob costumes.



The First Peabody Awards To Television…April 1948

The fist television program to ever win a Peabody Award was "Actors Studio" on ABC, yet at the same ceremony, Howdy Doody won the first award ever presented in the Children's Television category. In the words of the Peabody board, NBC's program had "devised a formula that is frequently educational, never frightening or offensive, and invariably hailed with rapture by children themselves."

The SECRET Part Of The Show! Shhhhhhh

The **secret part** is the totally **adults only part**! Had anyone ever known what really went on during the daily rehearsals, they may have been shocked, but would have laughed their ass off! One of the main character voices on the show, Dayton Allen, was a well known comedian and had "a dirty mouth," but he wasn't the only one. They could all cuss a blue steak, and often did! Even the mute Clarabell would chime in, as well as Buffalo Bob, and Rhoda Mann. Doody rehearsals were the highlight of the day for NBC employees, who always come to watch. One day at the start of a silent movie clip, Allen goosed Rhoda, who was heard behind Smith's movie narration exclaim; "Goddammit Dayton, keep your fu_king hand off of my ass!"

Every so often in rehearsal, Howdy humped Princes Summerfall Winterspring, and Mr. Bluster, and Flubadub, and Dilly Dally, and…well, you get the drift. Prop man and puppet builder Scott Brinker got the best of Allen one day when under Howdy's clothes, he installed a "genital package." Often, Allen would rub Howdy's crotch and say "Oh Boy." Brinker's new addition surprised Allen and he screamed "Oh Shit", and fell over laughing. Buffalo Bob was in stitches. Even Judy Tyler, the real life Indian princess character, could make a sailor blush. I would have loved to have seen this!

The Christmas Massacre Of 1952

By this time "The Howdy Doody Show" was doing very well and the show's anniversary date, which was always when new agreements with the talent were done, was approaching. When Bob Keeshan contacted his agent about a salary increase, the agent, who also handled three other Doody people went to the produces and asked for a raise for all four.

With jurisdiction over television performers in dispute, the Television Authority was created on April 16, 1950, which negotiated the first network television contract in December. On September 17, 1952, the Television Authority and AFRA merged to create a new union: AFTRA…the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Eddie Kean remembers that Christmas Eve. Eddie said that according to the new AFTRA rules, not more than one member of a cast can request a pay hike via one agent…they must be done individually. At the time, Howdy Doody was not a union show, and Smith did not want the unions involved. At the end of the Christmas Eve show, Smith called Rhoda Mann, Bob

Keeshan, Dayton Allen and Bill LeCornec to the studio floor and asked all the cast and crew to gather round. The agent had asked for $525 each pr week for each. Smith informed them, and all that were gathered, that they would not get their raises, and invited them to leave the show. Smith, not wanting to pay unemployment, forced them to quit, and they did.

Smith took this move as an attempt to unionize the show and was quite angry. The casualties included Bob Keeshan (Clarabell), puppeteers Rhoda Mann and Dayton Allen and Bill LeCornec who played Chief Thunderthud. LeCornec also did the voice of Dilly Dally. Without any success in finding a sound alike, LeCornec was rehired. Robert "Nick" Nicholson took over the Clarabell spot and also played the part of the live character, Cornelius J. Cobb. Allan Swift took over the Howdy puppet from Mann and the puppet and voice jobs from Allen. A few years later, Allen returned for the 7th and 10th anniversary shows as Pierre The Chef. Keeshan made no effort to return, and if he had, Smith probably would not have taken him back, because he viewed Keeshan as the ringleader.

The Heart Attack

In September of 1954, Bob Smith had been doing not only the daily Howdy show for television, but was also, still the WNBC morning radio host. That month, it all caught up with him in the form of a heart attack that kept him on the sidelines until Labor Day of 1955, just one week before Howdy Doody became the first daily show on NBC to be broadcast in color. On September 12, 1955, NBC dedicated their first in house color studio, and moved the show there, to Studio 3K.

NBC managed to keep the show going with guest hosts, including Gabby Hayes and New York disc jockey Ted Brown as Bison Bill, explaining that Smith was vacationing at Pioneer Village. While kids generally were satisfied with the explanation, show sponsors insisted that they wanted Smith himself to hawk their products. In response, NBC set up a special studio at Smith's home so that he could appear live "from Pioneer Village" to do commercials. During Smith's absence from the show, Howdy was voiced by Allen Swift. Swift continued to voice the character for a short time even after Smith's return to the show in September 1955.

Bob continued the daily color schedule until **June of 1956, when the show moved to Saturdays** only, in a morning timeslot (10-10:30), continuing there until its final broadcast on September 24, 1960. By 1958, they also began taping the shows in advance. That early evening time slot of 5:30 til 6, had by this time become prime real estate for local stations, and at the network level. Cartoons and kids shows were starting to bloom on CBS and ABC, in an otherwise arid territory…Saturday mornings, and NBC went along.

Before closing, I must mention the great Howdy prop man, **Scotty Brinker**. Scott not only made the props, but about a year into the show was given the assignment of creating all the puppets that Eddie Kean had dreamed up and added to the cast of characters of the show, like Flubadub and Dilly Dally. Except for Howdy and Captain Scuttlebutt, Brinker made all the puppets. Rufus Rose made Scuttlebutt. There were tons of prop gadgets on the show, and with Keane only

writing a few days in advance, Brinker had to work fast. Usually, Kean would give Brinker an idea of what he wanted in a puppet or prop less than a week in advance, but somehow got it done on time and he always hit the nail on the head. Scotty was with the show from the first day till the last.

The Last Show, And Beyond

Clarabell never had a line to say until the show went off the air (after 2,343 performances) on Sept. 30, 1960, at which time he looked into the camera and said simply and wistfully, "Goodbye kids". At the link, we see that last episode, the only surving color episode, cued to the start of the final segment that reveal's Clarbells big surprise, and those famous last two words of the show.

https://youtu.be/IJ6ybvlsb4s?t=3m52s

Afer the show left the air, Buffalo Bob moved to Florida, bought three radio stations and a liquor store, and thought he was out of the Howdy Doody business.

But it was not to be. It could never be a permanent goodbye for the youngsters who grew up watching Buffalo Bob…they went off to serve in the war in Vietnam or to oppose it. After the tumult of the 1960's, they felt they needed to return to simpler times. A Howdy Doody revival started at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970. Someone asked students there what they would like to do most of all, and many of them said they would like to revisit the world of Howdy Doody. On Feb. 14, 1970, Buffalo Bob and Howdy showed up at Penn and served as hosts for a repeat of Howdy's 10th anniversary show of Dec. 28, 1957. They were a hit and Buffalo Bob never stopped being Buffalo Bob after that.

Although Burt Dubrow had known Bob Smith since he was an 11 year old, growing up near Smith in New Rochelle, this is were he becomes a part of the Howdy Doody story. Burt actually knew Bob's older brother Vic Smith (he changed his last name too) very well, and durring summer vacations in high school, sold shoes in Vic's store. Unbeknowst to most, Vic actually did some personal appearances dressed in his brothers Buffalo Bob costume. In the '50s, Bob was very busy, and he didn't like to do many appearacnes…only did the big ones, like at Macys. Vic was a dead ringer for Bob's voice, and looked enough like him to pull it off without a problem.

It was during this personal appearance period that Burt became involved in the Howdy Doody legacy, as an assistant to Vic. After Bob's University of Pennsulvania appearacne, booking requests for the show flooded in, and Bob needed a road manager. This is when Burt asked Vic to approach Bob about hiring their friend, and new college grad for the position.

Burt and Bob travled the country for many years and he became not only great friends with Bob, but the entire cast of the show, and an expert on its history. Burt's freindship with the final, and longest serving Clarabell, Lew Anderson was especially close.

If the name Burt Dubrow sounds familiar, it should. After Bob retired from the road, Burt became a producer for "The Mike Douglas Show." That's when he discovered the talent of an little know radio host, Sally Jessy Raphael, and brought her to televison and national stardom, as "the female Phil Donahue." He had the same success with another discovery...Jerry Springer. Now Burt produces "Dr. Drew On Call" for CNN.



This is Burt Dubrow and Buffalo Bob On "The Sally Jessy Raphiel Show" December 7, 1990. Here's a link to part of that show. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS3shTjqcxE



This is Burt with the Clarabell box and seltzer bottle that were used by Lew Anderson. He has many incredible artifacts from those days, including Smith's Buffalo Bob's last costume and his Howdy Doody puppet. Burt also had a very good relationship with the great ventriloquist Paul Wenchell, who was the inventor of the first artificial heart.

I can't thank Burt enough for his help in creating this history of television's first hit, first post war show to use live music, first Peabody Award winner in the children's category, fist daily NBC color show, and 13 years of great memories for Baby Boomers like me.





This is my 91 year old friend Frank Merklien. On the left, Frank is on Howdy set 1n 1953, with the show's director, Bobby Rippen goofing as Frank's dollyman for the photo. On the right is Frank at my house behind an RCA TK41 color camera, just like the one he operated from 1955 till the show ended in September of 1960.

How's this for sereindipty? When I sent this to Burt to review, he noticed **the script below** was the one used the fist time he was a member of the Peanut Gallery, with tickets from Bob Smith. This would have been a treat for Burt's birthday, in April of 1960.





In the final photo of this presentation, we see the one and only Rufus Rose (right), the head puppeteer who replaced Frank Paris. Rhoda Mann (center) was his "first assistant," which she had been for Paris. When Paris left, we took "The Toby Tyler Show" to WPIX in New York, and for a while, even used the original "Ugly Doody" puppet there, until NBC called and demanded he destroy the puppet. As the story goes, Frank took him to the basement incinerator of his apartment building, and that was the end of the original Howdy puppet. Or was it? Years later the puppet came out at a party at Paris's home. A duplicate? The man on the left goes unnamed for now, but he was also a member of the original Frank Paris troupe and is shown with Paris at the top of page 8

HOWDY DOODY FIRSTS….

1ST Daily show on network television

1st Hit television show

1st Television show to surpass 1,000 episodes

1st Television show to surpass 2,000 episodes

1st Children's show to win a Peabody Award, which was the second Peabody ever awarded

1st Daily color television show

1st Postwar television show with live music performances

A REAL HOWDY SCRIPT…

Before we go to the script, I'll leave you with one final video. This Howdy's 40 Anniversay Special that aired early in 1988 on NBC. Everybody from Milton Berle and Monty Hall drop in to say hello and there are of course some great video clips from the old days.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQa0Tmx7Zqs

Now...about the script, which is from our frined Gady Rehinhold at CBS. This is 12 pages of the April 9, 1960 show and is a partial script but as far as we know, it is one of only a few still around. It is quite detailed and even includes a couple of pages of copy for Nabisco for a live spot.

The Abbreviations in the script:

BB = Buffalo Bob

GG = Gus Gasbag (a character just for this show I think)

CB = Clarabelle

PM = Peppi Mint, Peppi (played by Marti Barris) was Hazel Witch's maid.

SW = Sandra Witch - Voiced by Rufus Rose

HD = Howdy Doody of course

PG = Peanut Gallery

In this episode, the only puppets in use are Howdy and Sandra Witch, all the other characters are played by on camera actors

LIMBO: this is the limbo stage…an extra set where commecials are done, but can also be used for backdrops for short bits that fit into action taking place in other parts of the studio.

Note: This is the final year, and Howdy had been in color daily since 1955. At several points, a "blue" set and "blue" leaotards are called for…this was to enable the scene to be chromakeyed. That is the process where the camera becomes blind to blue for a this scene in order make the blue parts of the set and charcters disapear which enables the techincal director to insert film of clouds and sky behind the characters floating away on balloons.

The first two pages are the rundown sheets that give a quick outline of the show, list the scenes, artwork, commercials, props, and characters that will be in the episode. The show script starts on the third page down.

HOWDY DOODY PROP LIST AIR DATE: APRIL 9 TAPE: APRIL 8

THE BALLOON MAN
C-K SHOW

A) FILM
Peacock

B) LIMBO Guild Area.
1. Costume for Guss Gasbag (Ed Alberion): Tophat
Frock coat
Flowing tie
Spats
2. Balloons (possibly GG will supply his own)

C) FILM
Howdy Opening

D) LIVE - PG
Carl
1. Several giant balloons inflated - one tied off

E) NABISCO #1 - props to follow

F) PG

G) CANTEEN Make - Pigeon hole - phone.
1. Hotel sign on wall - from Larsen E Grand show
2. Suitcase for Gus Gasbag - balloons inside Get. Large
3. Pin for CB

H) ARTWORK - DV PARK Make Card
1. C-K
2. Sound Effx - rubbing of balloons
3. Blue tights, etc for Nick and Bill to work balloon characters
4. Swarm of animal balloons - strings tied to balloons - strings have hooks at end - ~~kak~~ hook onto CB's costume.
Carl Large Drapery hooks.

I) PG

J) NABISCO #2 - props to follow

K) PG
1. Music to @Animal Song@
2. GG makes animals for kids in gallery

L) CONTINENTAL #1 - props to follow

HOWDY DOODY PROP LIST APRIL 9 APRIL 8 PAGE 2

M) PG

N) CANTEEN

1. Wizard Board - this has been used before (blackboard and pad and pencil above etc)

2. Answer from WOW - @Can't come ... too busy. Will send you Flying Carpet ... The Wizard"

O) ARTWORK: DV PARK

1. Flying Carpet
2. Remote control box on carpet
3. Sound Effx - humming
4. Sound Effx - buzzing

P) ARTWORK: SURFACE OF BALUNA - A LA MOON SURFACE

1. Some more balloon animals float in - courtesy Nick andBill

Q) THRONE ROOM (LIVE SET)

1. Balloon King (note: If the actor who plays GG cannot read lines Nick will be King - if he can he will play King part.

2. King is swathed in balloons (see script #17)
3. Animal balloons suspended all around room like courtiers
4. Next to throne is a tremendous round balloon with stripes like prison bars.
5. Condor bird puppet - with especially sharp nose attached Note: This nose should be removable since Bob wrenches it off the bird
6. Long hatpin to break prison balloon with

R) PG

S) CONTINENTAL #2 - props to follow

T) BILLBOARD

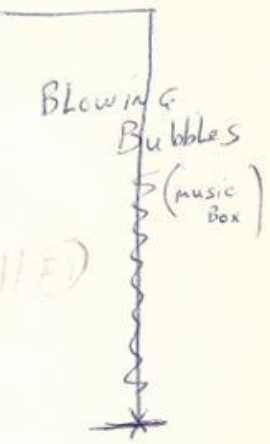
U) GOODBYE SONG

V) CHURCH PLUG

W) CLOSING CREDITS

-2-

2) LIMBO: GUS GASBAG IS BLOWING UP AND MAKING A BALLOON ANIMAL. SW IS HOVERING NEARBY. GG WEARS TOPHAT, FROCK COAT, FLOWING TIE AND SPATS.



SW: Hello, kids! Know who this man is? He's Gus Gasbag. He makes toys out of balloons. Man, he's the greatest. He's on his way to DV ... and somebody in DV is going to get into an awful lot of trouble because of him. Wanna know who? ... Keep watching!

3) FILM: HOWDY OPENING FILM SOF 35

ANN: It's the 2319th Howdy Doody Show starring Howdy Doody and Buffalo Bob Smith! And today we salute station WIIC TV, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

-3-

4) LV: PG: BB & KIDS

BB: HD, b & g ... Howdy!

KIDS: Howdy!

BB: Well, kids ... last week a balloon man by the name of Gus Gasbag came to DV and things really started to pop! ... Just like a balloon.

(CB ENTERS HOLDING TWO GIANT BALLOONS BY THE NECKS...)

Why, CB! Those are wonderful balloons! (MIME) You want to give one to me? (YES) Oh, no! I know your old trick. When I reach for it, it'll go flying off like a jet!

(CB TRIES TO ASSURE HIM OTHERWISE)
(PM ENTERS)

PM: Hi, BB. Oh, CB -- those balloons are beautiful! May I have one?

(CB NODS ... HANDS HER A BALLOON. SHE GRABS IT NEAR THE TOP. THE NECK IS TIED OFF SO BALLOON DOESN'T JET AWAY)

Oh, thank you, CB!

(EXITS WITH BALLOON. BB SURPRISED)

BB: I'm sorry, CB. I thought this was one of your tricks. Since it isn't, I really would like a balloon like this. May I have it?

(CB NODS ... HANDS BB THE BALLOON... IT JETS OFF. CB LAFFS)

Oh, you silly clown! I should never have trusted you!

5) NABISCO #1

FORM C-170 (7-59)

TELEVISION

Kenyon & Eckhardt Inc.

247 PARK AVENUE • NEW YORK 17, N. Y. • YU 6-9000

Job No.: 362-TV60-12 3/29/60

Program:	HOWDY DOODY SHOW	Date:	APRIL 9, 1960 (Taping-Apr.8)
Client:	NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY	Time:	60 SECONDS
Product:	WHEAT HONEYS & RICE HONEYS	Network:	PRODUCT

1. HOWDY, CLARABELL & MR. BLUSTER AT CANTEEN. CLARABELL STANDING RIGID AS IF HYPNOTIZED.

HOWDY: Gosh, Mr. Bluster, have you really hypnotized Clarabell?

BLUS.: He's completely under my power. Watch ... I'll make him eat a bowl of that Brand X cereal.

2. CUT TO CLARABELL AT COUNTER. BOWL OF CEREAL & BOX MARKED BRAND X.

Clarabell ... eat! Even though this cereal is not Nabisco Wheat Honeys--eat it.

3. CLARABELL TRIES TO FORCE HIMSELF TO PICK UP SPOON BUT CAN'T DO IT.

HOWDY: No use, Mr. Bluster. Clarabell just won't eat anything but Nabisco Wheat Honeys ... or Nabisco Rice Honeys.

BLUS.: I'll make him think they're Nabisco Wheat Honeys. Clarabell--do you hear me--these are Nabisco Wheat Honeys.

4. CLARABELL AGAIN TRIES TO FORCE HIMSELF TO EAT, BUT CAN'T.

HOWDY: Clarabell can't pretend those are Nabisco Wheat Honeys ... cause no other cereal tastes like Nabisco Wheat Honeys.

5.	CUT TO BOB SMITH WITH WHEAT HONEYS PACKAGE.	BOB: That's right, kids. There's just no other cereal that kids like as much as Nabisco Wheat Honeys or Nabisco Rice Honeys--for breakfast ... or for snacks anytime--right out of the package.
6.	CUT TO BOWL OF CEREAL.	That's cause they're real puffs of wheat and pops of rice ... golden toasted ...
7.	SUPER: HONEY.	and covered all over with natural honey flavoring.
8.	CUT TO CLARABELL EATING FROM BOWL.	
9.	CUT TO WHEAT & RICE HONEYS PACKAGES.	Remember--ask Mom to get you swell tasting Nabisco Wheat Honeys and Rice Honeys.
10.	DOLLY IN FOR CU OF BUFFALO BEE.	The package with Buffalo Bee on the front.

6) PG: BB

BB: Say, do you b & g like to play with balloons?

(YES!)

Do you think balloons could cause trouble?

(NO!)

Well, we had some trouble last week because of balloons. It all started when a friendly little man came to DV with a bunch of balloons.

7) CANTEEN: CB, PM & HD. HOTEL SIGN ON WALL.

HD: Oh, gosh ... I think I have Spring Fever. Let's do something interesting.

PM: I know what, Howdy. Let's play ping pong.

HD: Oh, no! I have a better idea. Let's play baseball.

PM: Oh, I'm no good at baseball.

(CB GETS BRIGHT IDEA ... MIMES)

HD: Oh, no, CB ... we can't go ski-ing. It's Springtime!

(MIMES)

Oh, you mean water-skiing.

(BB ENTERS WITH GG. BB CARRIES GG'S SUITCASE)

-5-

BB: Right this way, Mr. Gasbag. This is our DV Hotel. We can fix you up with a nice room upstairs. Hi, gang -- meet Mr. Gus Gasbag. He's going to spend a few hours here. This is PM, HD, and our clown, CB.

(CB CURTSIES)

GG: How do you do?

BB: Mr. Gasbag is a very talented man. He's a real artist. He creates toy animals out of balloons.

HD: Really? Gosh, Mr. Gasbag ... could you make some for us now?

PM: I'd love to see how you do it.

GG: If you wish ... I'd be delighted.

(TAKES SUITCASE, OPENS IT ... TAKES OUT BALLOONS AND GOES INTO HIS ACT WITH HIS OWN CHATTER ... BB & PM AD LIB. AFTER HE FINISHES THE FIRST ANIMAL HE HANDS IT TO HD, OR SETS IT NEAR HIM.)

Blowing Bubbles (about 1:30)

GG: This one is for you, Howdy.

HD: Oh, boy oh boy! Thank you, Mr. Gasbag.

PM: Would you make one for me, please. I'd like a swan.

(GG MAKES A SWAN FOR PM)

BB: Say, I'd like one to give to DD.

(GG MAKES ANOTHER ONE FOR DD. MEANWHILE CB SNEAKS A BALLOON FROM THE SUITCASE, BLOWS IT UP, STARTS TWISTING IT UP)

BB: CB! Don't do that! That doesn't belong to you! (TAKES IT AWAY)

GG: You're right, BB. These are special balloons. They have feelings.

BB: You should be ashamed of yourself, CB.

(CB HURT)

(GG CONTINUES WORKING ... FINISHES AND HANDS TOY TO BB)

GG: And there's one for your friend, DD. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go up to my room and unpack. Please take good care of those balloons. As I told you before they have feelings and ... they're very sensitive.

(TAKE SUITCASE AND EXITS)

HD: What does he mean when he says the balloons have feelings, BB?

BB: I'm not sure, exactly, Howdy ... but if Mr. Gasbag says take good care of them, he must have a reason.

PM: Gee, BB ... they do look like real animals, don't they?

(CB ANGRY, HAS TAKEN A PIN (CU) AND IS BEHIND BB. HE POPS BB'S BALLOON)

BB: CB! That's a terrible thing to do!

(CB RUNS AROUND AND POPS PM'S BALLOON, THEN HD'S BALLOON ... BB TRYING TO CATCH HIM. CB RUNS OFF)

HD: Oh, gosh, BB! And Mr. Gasbag said take good care of them!



BB: Well, right now, I'm going to take good care of CB! (EXIT)

PM: You know, Howdy -- I like CB ... but I hope he gets punished for doing this.

HD: Well, he may, Peppi. Mr. Gasbag said these balloons have feelings.

8) ARTWORK: DV PARK:

CB ENTERS. HE IS ON C-K. HE LOOKS AROUND, GUILTILY. SUDDENLY, HE HEARS BALLOON SOUNDS: (S.E.: RUBBING OF BALLOONS.) A SWARM OF ANIMAL BALLOONS FLOAT IN. THEY HAVE STRINGS ATTACHED WITH A HOOK AT THE END OF EACH STRING. THEY SURROUND CB AND HOOK THEMSELVES TO HIS COSTUME. (NOTE: BILL AND NICK IN BLUE SUIT WILL OPERATE BALLOONS AND DO THE HOOKING.) CB PUZZLED AND FRIGHTENED, WHEN ALL BALLOONS ARE HOOKED ... INCREASE VOLUME OF THE SQUEAKING. BALLONS AND CB FLOAT STRAIGHT UP OUT OF THE PARK SCENE. (PAN DOWN ON BLUE SET))

EERIE CB SONG

Go up when CB does

(CUT C-K. BB RUNS IN LOOKING UP. HD AND PM JOIN)

BB: Oh, no! Look! Those balloons are carrying CB away!

HD: Gosh, BB ... they look as if they were alive!

BB: I've got to get Mr. Gasbag and see if we can save him. (EXIT)

PM: Where are they taking him, Howdy?

HD: I don't know, Peppi ... but I'm sure of one thing. This is happening because CB broke those balloons!

DJ BIK

9) PG: BB

BB: Yes, b & g -- Howdy was right. In spite of Mr. Gasbag's warning, CB got carried away with his mischief-making ... and that's why he was carried away by the balloons. I'll tell you later what happened.

10) NABISCO #2




Dedicated to Rhoda Mann Winkler

Although we had talked many times, it was March 23, 2015, that I finally met Burt Dubrow in person, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Atlanta. Our two hour lunch covered a lot of great Howdy stories, but one bit of sad news. Burt had told me I would love talking with Rhoda Mann, and that was something I wanted to do, but he gave me the news that Rhoda had passed away on March 15th, at the age of 87.

We decided to dedicate this project to Rhoda Mann Winkler. For the first five and a half year of the show, Rhoda was the exclusive operator of the Howdy Doody puppet, and a pioneer in her field.

A New York City kid from a modest home, Rhoda taught herself to work marionettes at age 9. Her first job in show business was working as assistant to Ali Benali, the Moroccan Wonderman, aka Henry Gross of the Bronx.

At 20 she was supporting her family as the exclusive operator of Howdy Doody. She later learned she was being paid as an extra, and sued the network successfully for years of back pay – a whopping $4,000! She was the first woman on the set permitted to wear pants. Aside from Dinah Shore, Mann is credited with being the first woman to do voiceover for a car commercial in the 1960's. In 1974, Rhoda voiced the part of Mother Nature in "The Year Without Santa Clause", a children's holiday special that is still running. Here's a short clip of Rhoda as Mother Nature.

https://youtu.be/BadOQnwjS3w?t=1m10s

