

# Feets, Don't Fail Me Now



Just so I don't bury the lead, let me say right up front that my studio will be closing today at 2pm so I can keep a podiatrist appointment. Let me tell you, when your feet don't work properly, nothing comes easy. I'll be back to working normal hours Thursday at 9:30am.

The title of this post comes from a phrase which I admittedly had to look up. I had heard it, of course, but didn't know its origin. Now that I do, I apologize for any unintentional offense it may cause as some like to point to its racist undertones.

As best as I can find, the phrase "Feets, don't fail me now" (or something similar) originated from the vaudeville and minstrel circuits of old. It was used whenever a character would be facing a frightful situation and wanted to make a hasty retreat. It ultimately made its way into feature films and has been attributed to actors Stepin Fetchit and Mantan Moreland. However, the earliest documented film where the line

was uttered that I found was a 1940s Bob Hope, Pauline Goddard comedy called The Ghost Breakers. In it, actor Willie Best played Hope's valet who accompanied the two stars to a haunted mansion off the coast of Cuba. It was he who delivered the now clichéd phrase.

Best was highly regarded in his time. He received over 77 screen credits, unusual for bit players of the 30s and 40s. Famed director Hal Roach once called him the "greatest talent he had ever seen." Hope, while working with him on this film, said "he's the best actor I know." It is a pity more roles weren't made available for him other than the stereotypical parts he was asked to play.

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