

TV FOR KIDS

Life, disappearance of a dog named Buster

BY SUZANNE GILL

Edith Ann's dog Buster may not be dead; even Lily Tomlin doesn't know for sure. Concerned children may want to repeat this reassuring thought when their baby-boomer parents gasp or even shed a tear during the opening minutes of "Edith Ann - A Few Pieces of the Puzzle," an animated special airing Tuesday, Jan. 18, on ABC.

The facts: Edith Ann, the precocious little girl Tomlin made famous (along with the unseen dog Buster) a generation ago on NBC's "Laugh-In," is seen in the special with a new dog, Hug the Pug, whom she describes as "Buster's pregnant widow." Buster, she says, was the victim of a drive-by shooting. There is a chalk outline of his body on the sidewalk.

But does this mean Buster is deceased, or is Edith Ann reaching into her fertile imagination? Stay tuned, says Tomlin, who plays the voice of Edith Ann in this first of two specials. Her long-time collaborator, Jane

Wagner, wrote the scripts.

"Maybe we didn't kill Buster," says Tomlin, tantalizing. "Maybe he'll turn up. I don't know. I can't tell you. I didn't write it, Jane did. But yes, she and I argued a long time about killing Buster," she says with a laugh. "I liked the idea of the drive-by very much, but I wasn't sure about being finished with Buster." She pauses, then adds firmly. "ABC will just have to give us a series."



Fox features Henry Winkler as a radio talk show personality in "Monty" on Tuesdays.

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