

BOB HOPE BIOGRAPHY

May 29, 1903 - July 27, 2003

For a man who played third billing to Siamese twins and trained seals, Bob Hope became one of the most recognizable profiles and talents in the world. And, in the entire history of show business, no individual traveled so far - so often - to entertain so many.

Hope's entertainment persona was evident in every decade of the 20th Century, from impersonating Charlie Chaplin in front of the firehouse in Cleveland in 1909 to his lifting the spirits of American men and women in uniform from World War II through Desert Storm to celebrating an unprecedented 60 years with NBC in 1996.

And with the year-long national celebration of Hope's 100th birthday, embraced by the media and the American public, his remarkable profile has been well established in the 21st Century. The fifth of seven sons, he was born Leslie Townes Hope in Eltham, England on May 29, 1903. His English father, William Henry Hope, was a stonemason - his Welsh mother, Avis Townes Hope, an aspiring concert singer.

In 1907, Leslie's father brought the family to Cleveland, Ohio. In 1920, by virtue of his father's naturalization, 'Bob' - the name by which the world would later know him - and his brothers became US citizens. (Bob jokes, "I left England at the age of four when I found out I couldn't be king.")

As a youth in Cleveland, he earned spending money selling newspapers and as a constant entrant in amateur shows. During his years at East High School, he worked as a delivery boy in his brother Fred's meat market. He was also a soda jerk, a shoe salesman, and a pool hustler.

After high school, Bob took dancing lessons from entertainer King Rastus Brown and from vaudeville hooper Johnny Root. A natural, he took over some classes for his teachers. Bob also worked briefly as a newspaper reporter and tried amateur boxing under the name of Packy East. Bob gave up boxing when he "was not only being carried out of the ring, but into the ring."

At 18, Bob persuaded his girlfriend, Mildred Rosequist, to become his dance partner. Appearing at nearby vaudeville houses, they worked their way to the princely wage of \$8 a night and were ready to take their show on tour. However, the curtain fell abruptly on Hope and Rosequist when Mildred's mother finally saw the act.

Bob then teamed up with a friend, Lloyd Durbin. After developing their act in local bookings, they were hired by the Bandbox Theater in Cleveland as a "cheap act" for the Fatty Arbuckle Show.



One year later, Bob teamed with George Byrne for a tour with tab shows. They polished their act and soon were playing major houses including Keith's Flushing in New York City.

In New York, they were chosen for the Broadway show "Sidewalks of New York" which starred Ruby Keeler and Smith & Dale. The show enjoyed a long run. Hope & Byrne did not! On the advice of their agent, Hope and Byrne headed west to change their act and start over again.

They secured a three-day date in a tiny theater in New Castle, Pennsylvania. On opening night, Bob was asked to announce the coming attractions to the theater audiences. Encouraged by the audience responses and theater manager, Bob enlarged his introduction routine to five minutes. At the conclusion of the three-day engagement, Bob became a 'single.'

In 1932, Bob was on Broadway again in "Ballyhoo." But Bob's first major recognition, by critics and the public, came in 1933 for his wise-cracking role as Huckleberry Haines in the highly successful Broadway musical, "Roberta."

Bob's personal life changed during "Roberta." One of his co-performers in the musical, George Murphy, introduced him to a young singer, Dolores Reade, then appearing at the Vogue Club on 57th Street. After a brief courtship, the couple married in February 1934. They have four children: Linda, Anthony, Nora, and Kelly; and four grandchildren.

Following "Roberta," Bob opened in the Broadway musical "Say When" (1934) followed by the 1936 edition of "Ziegfeld Follies" in which he shared the spotlight with Fanny Brice. Bob's success in "Follies" led him to a role in "Red, Hot, and Blue" (1936) with Ethel Merman and Jimmy Durante.

Although Bob had made seven one-reel comedies for Educational Films with Warner Bros. in New York, it was his performance in "Red, Hot, and Blue" that opened the door to his first major feature film for Paramount Pictures, "The Big Broadcast of 1938."

Bob's first radio hit grew out of a personal appearance at New York's Capitol Theater. In the interest of using radio to promote its box-office attractions, the "Capitol Family Hour" hosted by Major Edward J. Bowes originated from the theater every morning. Bob, as one of the theater attractions, was booked for the show.

The show at the Capitol proved to be another career milestone for Bob. It marked the first time he appeared with singer Bing Crosby.

Bob's first major radio appearance was on the "Fleishmann Hour," which starred Rudy Vallee.

In May 1937, Bob signed a twenty-six week radio contract for the "Woodbury Soap Show" which was broadcast from NBC in New York. Later in the year, he traveled to Hollywood to film

"The Big Broadcast of 1938," but continued doing his radio show via transcontinental hookup. In 1938, Bob was signed by Pepsodent for his own show on NBC. He became a Tuesday night habit and his show was soon rated number one with American listeners. Bob did his last regular radio show in April 1956.

Bob employed show regulars Jerry Colonna, Brenda and Cobina (Brenda Frazier and Cobina Wright, Jr.), Vera Vague, the vocal group Six Hits and a Miss, Skinnay Ennis and His Orchestra and announcer Bill Goodwin. Later, Les Brown and His Band of Renown and Wendall Niles joined the show. Featured singers on the show included Judy Garland, Frances Langford, Doris Day, and Gloria Jean.

Bob's success in radio led to Hollywood and a long-term contract with Paramount. The costars of his movies became the guest stars of his radio shows.

Bob makes light of the fact that he has never won an Oscar for his acting. ("Oscar night at my house is called Passover") But in truth, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences has honored him five times — two honorary Oscars, two special awards and the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award.

'Best Actor' or not, Bob's impact on moviegoers has grown stronger with time. The "Road Pictures" with Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour made Hope a box office star. A Bob Hope movie on television, be it the 'early movie' or the 'late-late show', is watched and enjoyed by all ages. Consequently, his movies claim a large and faithful following with each generation.

In all, Hope starred in more than 50 feature films and has appeared in cameos for another 15 — the last being "Spies Like Us" in 1985. As with radio — Hope earned the status of #1 at the box office.

Bob has introduced two Academy Award-winning songs: "Thanks for the Memory" with Shirley Ross in "The Big Broadcast of 1938" and "Buttons and Bows" in "The Paleface" (1948).

To his credit are "Two Sleepy People" from the movie "Thanks for the Memory," "Silver Bells" from "The Lemon Drop Kid," and with Crosby and Lamour in the "road" pictures: "Put It There Pal," "Teamwork," and "We're Off on the Road to Morocco."

Ah yes, the "road" pictures! Paramount had been planning a movie called "The Road to Mandalay" (later changed to "The Road to Singapore") for George Burns and Gracie Allen. Because Burns and Allen were not available, Paramount tapped Fred MacMurray and Jack Oakie — they were also overbooked. Enter Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, and Dorothy Lamour... and film history is made.

Radio, movies, and a heavy schedule of personal appearances made Bob a star! But it was television that made him a super-star and a welcomed guest in every living room of America.





Although he flirted with the 'new' entertainment medium as early as 1932 for an experimental station for CBS; appeared on the first commercial television broadcast on the West Coast in 1947; and was a surprise guest on Ed Sullivan's "Toast of the Town" in 1949 — Bob was a latecomer to TV, not at all convinced it would succeed.

Bob made his formal debut on NBC television Easter Sunday, 1950. Frigidaire sponsored the special, "Star Spangled Revue," which featured Bob's guest stars, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Beatrice Lillie, and Dinah Shore.

The formula, along with Bob's unshakable decision to avoid a weekly show, proved extremely successful. For 60 years (radio and television) Bob was an NBC headliner and Nielsen ratings king.

Bob has been honored and befriended by Presidents of the United States since Roosevelt. Hope's golfing buddies have been Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton. He was hailed as "America's most prized ambassador of goodwill throughout the world" when presented with the Congressional Gold Medal from President Kennedy. President Johnson honored Bob with the Medal of Freedom and President and Mrs. Carter hosted a White House reception in celebration of his 75th birthday. Harry Truman played the piano for him and Bill Clinton bestowed on him a Medal of the Arts. George W. Bush televised birthday greetings to him on his 100th birthday.

Likewise, he has been feted by his native England. In 1998, by order of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Bob received an honorary knighthood - Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE) in recognition of his contribution to film, to song and to the entertainment of troops in the past. Upon hearing the news, Bob said, "I'm speechless. 70 years of ad lib material and I'm speechless."

And by papal order of Pope John Paul II, Bob was honored as Knight Commander of St. Gregory with Star.

Cited by the Guinness Book of Records as most honored entertainer in the world, Hope has more than two thousand awards and citations for humanitarian and professional efforts, including 54 honorary doctorates. He also authored 13 books, seven of which were national best-sellers.

Bob Hope's unwavering commitment to the morale of America's servicemen and women is entertainment history, indeed, world history. Many say 'legend.'

For nearly six decades, be the country at war or at peace, Bob, with a band of Hollywood gypsies, traveled the globe to entertain our service men and women.

The media dubbed him "America's No. 1 Soldier in Greasepaint." To the GIs, he was "G.I. Bob" and their clown hero. It began in



when Resolution 75 was unanimously passed by members of both houses making him an Honorary Veteran - the first individual so honored in the history of the United States. He was feted in the US Capitol Rotunda by members of congress, military personnel and veterans.

The next day, Bob, family and friends were guests in the oval office for the signing of the resolution by President Clinton.

Bob's next visit to Washington, D.C. was in May 2000 when he officially opened the Bob Hope Gallery of American Entertainment at the Library of Congress. In July 2001, the 'Pentagon' (US Army Adjutant General Corps) paid a visit to Bob Hope's home in Toluca Lake, California for the presentation of the Order of Horatio Gates Gold Medal for his life-long contributions toward maintaining the high morale of soldiers around the world. And on his 99th birthday, May 29, 2002; The Chapel at the Los Angeles National Cemetery was named The Bob Hope Veterans Chapel.

Bob was the ultimate sport fan. A boxer, a pool hustler, he also once owned part of the Cleveland Indians and the Los Angeles Rams ("Both before they learned how to play their game," he said.) He loved football. On television, it was his tradition to introduce the AP All American Football Team on his Christmas special each year. And it was always a treat for him to visit or watch his favorite team, The San Diego Chargers. BUT, golf was his game - his passion. He was an avid golfer - his famous quote being, "Golf is my profession. I tell jokes to pay my green fees."

Bob was one of the foremost proponents of the game and has contributed immensely to the popularity of golf - as a participant, a spectator and as an author. His book, "Confessions of a Hooker," which spotlights the memorable moments of his more than 50 years of golfing, was on the New York Times 'best seller' list for 53 weeks.

He was proud of several trophies: the Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Golf Writer's Gold Tee Award and a PGA medal honoring him as "one of the three men who have done the most for golf," and a silver cup from Sports Illustrated commemorating his fifth hole-in-one fired at Butler National Golf Course in Oak Brook, Illinois.. (He added two more holes-in-one to his record at courses in Palm Springs, by the way.)

Enshrined in the World Golf Hall of Fame is a bas relief of his profile with a plaque that reads, "BOB HOPE - known by his nose, applauded for his humor, envied for his wit and loved by millions for his unselfish concern for all beings, Bob Hope is truly one-of-a-kind. He popularized golf to the unknowing, sponsored it for charity and played it for fun. Not a golf champion but a great champion of golf."

Probably his greatest achievement in golf was the development and hosting of the Bob Hope/Chrysler Classic, a pro-am tournament held annually in Palm Springs, California. Now in it's 48th year, the Classic draws one of the largest field of professional and amateur golfers. A total charity effort, the Classic has raised over 40 million dollars for the Eisenhower Medical Center and 70 other desert charities.

Bob has played on some 2,000 courses - from Brazil to Bangkok, Alaska to Australia - in the company of golf's top professionals, caddies, celebrities, generals and sometimes even presidents. In 1995, the favorite foursome to tee off at the Desert Classic featured President Bill Clinton, former presidents George Bush and Gerald Ford, and Bob Hope. Hope's 'take' at the end of play included "Clinton had the best score, Ford the most errors and Bush the most hits...me, I cheated better than ever."

It has been said of Hope that "if he could live his life over again — he wouldn't have time." In the words of John Steinbeck, concerning Hope: "It is impossible to see how he can do so much, can cover so much ground, can work so hard and be so effective. There's a man. There really is a man."

Bob Hope died July 27, 2003 at his home in Toluca Lake, California. The United States flag was lowered to half-staff across the country, heads were bowed throughout the world and the lights on Broadway were dimmed to mourn his passing and to celebrate his life.. . and all the man ever wanted was to be remembered for . . . "making people laugh."