

## **Bob Hope, 1903-2003: He Entertained People for More Than 70 Years**

The comedian performed in movies, on television and for American troops around the world. *Transcript of radio broadcast:*

14 July 2007

VOICE ONE:

I'm Phoebe Zimmermann.

VOICE TWO:

And I'm Dick Rael with the VOA Special English program PEOPLE IN AMERICA. Today, we tell the story of Bob Hope. He was one of the world's most famous comedians. His life in show business lasted for more than seventy years.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:

Bob Hope was born in Eltham, England in nineteen-oh-three. His parents named him

Leslie Townes Hope. Many years later, he began calling himself Bob.

Leslie was the fifth of seven sons. He and his family moved to the United States in nineteen-oh-seven. They settled in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. Leslie's mother taught him how to sing. As a child, he had a good singing voice. Later in life, Bob Hope often said he never wanted to be anything but a funnyman.

Leslie attended Cleveland public schools. He sold newspapers and worked for a meat market and a shoe store. After high school, he learned how to dance. He also showed an interest in the sport of boxing.



**Bob Hope**

VOICE TWO:

When Bob Hope was eighteen years old, he asked his girlfriend to become his dance partner. They began appearing at local vaudeville theaters. Vaudeville was the most popular form of entertainment in the United States in the early nineteen hundreds. Vaudeville shows presented short plays, singers, dancers, comedians telling jokes and other acts.

Bob Hope's dance act with his girlfriend did not last long. A short time later, he heard that a Cleveland theater needed performers for a show with the famous

actor Fatty Arbuckle. Hope developed a dance act with another friend, and they were chosen for the show. The team performed briefly as part of Arbuckle's traveling vaudeville show.

VOICE ONE:

Later, Hope formed a song and dance team with George Byrne. They performed at theaters across the United States. The two men were offered work in a show on Broadway in New York City. But they did not stay very long. They left New York to change their act and start over again.

They performed at a small theater in Pennsylvania. On opening night, Hope was asked to tell the crowd about future shows at the theater. The people liked the way he sounded. So did the supervisor of the theater. Hope then expanded his announcement to five minutes.

Bob Hope started to perform by himself. He became skilled at standing in front of crowds and telling jokes, often very quickly. He collected jokes and told them during his performances. Hope did not wear special clothing or use tricks when performing. But he made funny expressions with his face to make people laugh.

VOICE TWO:

Bob Hope returned to Broadway in the nineteen thirties. Theater critics and the public liked his performance in the musical "Roberta." The show changed his life in more than one way. One day, another performer took Hope to meet a young singer who was also working in New York. Her name was Dolores Reade. She and Hope married in nineteen thirty-four. They would stay together as husband and wife for the next sixty-nine years.

After the musical "Roberta," Bob Hope performed in a number of other Broadway shows. They included "Ziegfeld Follies" and "Red, Hot and Blue." Hope's acting success led to his first major film, "The Big Broadcast of Nineteen-Thirty-Eight." In the film, he and Shirley Ross sang a song called "Thanks for the Memory." Many people think of Bob Hope when they hear this song.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:

In nineteen thirty-seven, Bob Hope agreed to do a series of radio programs called the "Woodbury Soap Show." The next year, he agreed to do a radio show for another company that made Pepsodent toothpaste. His Tuesday night radio show soon became popular. Hope continued doing radio shows for almost twenty years.

His success in radio led to a long-term relationship with a major film company, Paramount Pictures. The actors who worked in Hope's films also made appearances on his radio shows.

In all, Hope was the lead actor in more than fifty films. He also had small parts in fifteen others. Bob Hope never won an Academy Award for his acting. However, the American film industry did honor him five times. His series of films with actress Dorothy Lamour and singer Bing Crosby became world famous. Hope and Crosby were close friends. Here they sing a song from the movie "The Road to Morocco."

(MUSIC)

VOICE TWO:

Bob Hope began performing on television in nineteen fifty. He made a special program for NBC television. His show included a famous personality, a singer and a beautiful, young woman. Hope used this successful combination again and again. He decided to avoid all the work involved with a weekly television show. However, he continued making television specials every year until nineteen ninety-five.

VOICE ONE:

For more than fifty years, Bob Hope traveled around the world, giving shows for members of America's armed forces. It started in nineteen forty-one when he and several other performers went to an air base in California. Later that year, the United States entered World War Two after Japanese forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Hope attempted to join the armed forces. He was told he could better serve his country as a performer, building support for the war effort. So he took a team of performers to bases around the country to perform his radio show.

VOICE TWO:

Hope and his team performed for millions of soldiers during World War Two. He performed almost all of his shows at bases across the United States, Europe and the South Pacific. Listen now to part of a show broadcast to soldiers after the war had ended.

(SOUND: "The Bob Hope Radio Show" )

Hope began what was to become a Christmas tradition in nineteen forty-eight. That is

when he and his wife went to Germany to perform for troops involved in the Berlin Airlift. Later, he performed for American soldiers serving in South Korea, Vietnam and Lebanon. In nineteen ninety, Hope and his wife performed for troops in Saudi Arabia. At the time, he was eighty-seven years old.



**Bob Hope performing in Vietnam**

VOICE ONE:

Bob Hope was a friend to many American Presidents. He played golf with Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and George Bush. Several presidents also honored the famous comedian. President John Kennedy gave Hope the Congressional Gold Medal. President Lyndon Johnson presented him with the Medal of Freedom.

United States Congress honored Hope four times. In nineteen ninety-seven, Congress made him an honorary veteran of the armed forces. He was the first individual so honored in American history. The following year, Britain's Queen Elizabeth made Hope an honorary knight. She recognized his work in films and his service to allied forces during World War Two.

VOICE TWO:

People in many countries celebrated Bob Hope's birthday on May twenty-ninth, two thousand three. He was one hundred years old. The celebrations included the naming of a famous area in Hollywood, California as Bob Hope Square.

Sadly, Hope was too weak to attend. Two months later, he became sick and developed pneumonia. Bob Hope died at his California home on July twenty-seventh, two thousand three.

(MUSIC: "Thanks for the Memory")

VOICE ONE:

This Special English program was written by George Grow. It was produced by Lawan Davis. I'm Phoebe Zimmermann.

VOICE TWO:

And I'm Dick Rael. Join us again next week for another PEOPLE IN AMERICA program on the Voice of America.