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Thanks for the Memory

I like politicians who pray. It keeps their hands out where you can see them. --Bob Hope

News last week of the passing of Bob Hope brought to mind the many USO Christmas tours the funny man organized for our troops away from home during the holidays. Hope's unwavering commitment to the morale of America's men and women in uniform is certifiably entertainment history.

Cited by the Guinness Book of Records as most honored entertainer in the world, Hope garnered more than two thousand awards and citations for humanitarian and professional efforts, including 54 honorary doctorates. Five times Bob was honored by Congress; including a unanimous vote on Resolution 75 making him an Honorary Veteran—the first individual so honored in U.S. history. Also, the *USNS Bob Hope (AKR 300)* the first of a new class of ships bears his name, as does the *Spirit of Bob Hope*, a U.S. Air Force C-17.

During World War II, Bob's radio shows were performed and aired from military bases and installations throughout the United States, Europe and the South Pacific. His first trip into the combat area was in 1943 when he and his small USO troupe – Frances Langford, Tony Romano and Jack Pepper visited US military facilities in England, Africa,¹ Sicily and Ireland. Bob's annual Christmas tour began in 1948 at the request of then Secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington, to entertain the troops involved in the Berlin Airlift.²

Bob Hope was also a major movie star during Hollywood's "Golden Age." He starred in more than 50 feature films, and introduced two Academy Award-winning songs: "Thanks for the Memory" in *The Big Broadcast of 1938* and "Buttons and Bows" in *The Paleface* (1948). His numerous "Road Pictures" with Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour made Hope a huge box office attraction—without gratuitous sex, violence or "adult language!"

But then, that was the "Golden-Age" of Hollywood.

Some time ago, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee (who is also a Baptist preacher) wrote an article about the "Golden-Age" when Hollywood regulated itself according to a self-imposed standard of moral restraint designed to uphold social virtue and cultural cohesion. He says, "An industry committee, the *Hays Association*, checked every film for content expressing 'blasphemy, filthy language, explicit eroticism or perversion, superfluous violence or brutality, ethnic slurs, or anti-American sentiment. It made certain that any offensive material was edited out—otherwise the film was unable to achieve general release to the public."³

Huckabee says this cooperative association for self-censorship endeavored to uphold community values in virtually every arena that the art of film might embrace. Thus, according to the Hays Code:

"The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation; brutal killings are not to be presented in detail; revenge in modern times shall not be justified."

"Theft, robbery, safe-cracking, and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc. should not be detailed in method; arson must be subject to the same safeguards; the use of firearms should be restricted to essentials; methods of smuggling should not be presented."

"Illegal drug traffic must never be presented."

"The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing. Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated or justified, or presented attractively."

"Scenes of passion should not be introduced when not essential to the plot. In general, passion should be so treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element. Seduction or rape should never be more than suggested, and only when essential for the plot, and even then never shown by explicit method; they are never the proper subject for comedy."

"Sex perversion or inference of it is forbidden." "The treatment of low, disgusting, though not necessarily evil subjects, should be subject to the dictates of good taste and regard for the sensibilities of the audience."

"Obscenity in words, gesture, reference, song, joke, or by suggestion is forbidden." "Pointed vulgarity or vulgar expressions, however used, are forbidden."

"Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact, or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture."

"No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith." Ministers of religion, in their character as such, should not be used as comic characters or as villains."

What sort of movies could possibly have been made under these kinds of restrictions, you ask? "Very simply," says Governor Huckabee, "all of Hollywood's classics:

All Quiet on the Western Front, It's a Wonderful Life, The Good Earth, Stage Coach, Sergeant York, The Grapes of Wrath, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, It Happened One Night, Mutiny on the Bounty, Moby Dick, Gone with the Wind, Citizen Kane, Watch on the Rhine, The Thirty-Nine Steps, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Casablanca, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Miracle on 34th Street, Key Largo, All the King's Men, The African Queen, The Maltese Falcon, A Place in the Sun, An American in Paris, High Noon, On the Waterfront, East of Eden, Stalag 17, They Might Be Giants, and From Here to Eternity."

Bob Hope's movies were not classics (he once joked, "Oscar night at my house is called Passover). But he was a major player in a generation that valued wholesome entertainment.

Although we will eventually forget his silly pratfalls and portrayals of loveable cowards, we will long remember what Bob Hope did for our troops when they needed some encouragement from home.

You were one-of-a-kind, friend, and we will miss you. And—thanks for the memory!

Rick Forcier

Executive Director

¹ Hope entertained my Father's Navy unit in North Africa during WW11. A sudden air raid cut the performance short.

² Biographical information from Bob Hope web site at: www.bobhope.com/bob.htm

³ Extended article with excerpts from [Kids Killing Kids: Confronting Our Culture of Violence](#), Gov. Mike Huckabee and Dr. George Grant, Broadman and Holmon Publishing.