

**Sample of a Successful Production Application**

This document contains the narrative and treatment of a previously funded grant application. Every successful application is different, and this application many have been prepared to meet a slightly different set of guidelines. Each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations, as well as the requirements in the current notice of funding opportunity (NOFO). Prospective applicants should consult the current Media Projects NOFOs at [http://www.neh.gov/grants/public/media-](http://www.neh.gov/grants/public/media-projects-development-grants) [projects-development-grants](http://www.neh.gov/grants/public/media-projects-development-grants) for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Public Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

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Project Title: *Bob Hope: America's Entertainer*

Institution: WNET

Project Director: Michael Kantor

Grant Program: Media Projects: Production

***Bob Hope: America’s Entertainer***

A Production Funding Request from the National Endowment for the Humanities

**NARRATIVE**

1. **Nature of request:**

WNET is seeking a production grant from the NEH for a multi-platform project about Bob Hope, his extraordinary career and his enormous impact on American entertainment and American culture. The centerpiece of the project is a documentary biography that will be broadcast in late 2017 as part of WNET’s ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** series.

Among the many entertainers who defined 20th century American show business, Bob Hope occupied a unique place. No other star achieved such astonishing and long-lasting success in every major popular entertainment medium of the century: vaudeville, Broadway, movies, radio, television and live concerts. His tours to entertain U.S. troops and his patriotic wartime radio broadcasts helped buoy the nation's spirits during World War II. His topical comedy monologues made him the nation's unofficial comedian- laureate for half a century. He was one of the most beloved and omnipresent entertainers of his time, a one-man advertisement for the optimistic, irreverent, can-do American spirit. And yet, in the crucible of the 1960s, as the mass-audience consensus that had fueled his enormous popularity started breaking down, he became a controversial figure, alienating much of a generation and permanently damaging his legacy. Today, this giant of American entertainment is largely overlooked, taken for granted, or dismissed as a relic.

*Bob Hope: America's Entertainer* will be the first documentary to take the full measure of Hope's achievement, set against the backdrop of the times that shaped him and that he helped to shape. The documentary will draw on groundbreaking new research done by Richard Zoglin for his definitive, widely acclaimed 2014 biography *Hope: Entertainer of the Century.* In addition, it has the full cooperation of the Hope estate, which is providing access to his hundreds of radio and TV shows, feature films, rare clips from his vaudeville and Broadway performances, as well as all of Hope's personal archives, including thousands of letters, scrapbooks, home movies and other memorabilia. The documentary will also include many new interviews with Hope family members, friends, former colleagues, co-stars, critics and scholars.

Along with the documentary film, the project’s digital elements, including a dedicated website, a substantial social media presence, and an educational outreach component, will help increase the reach of the project and deepen audience participation.

1. **Humanities content:**

*BACKGROUND:*

Bob Hope was born in 1903 and lived exactly 100 years — almost precisely spanning the 20th century. In many respects, to recount his career is to recapitulate the history of modern American popular entertainment.

His was a classic immigrant success story. The fifth of seven sons, Hope was born Leslie Towns Hope in Eltham, England. His father was a stonemason with a drinking problem; his devoted Welsh mother kept the family together in good times and bad. The Hopes moved to America when Leslie was just four and a

half and settled in Cleveland. There they struggled to make ends meet. Mom took in boarders to make extra money, and all the Hope boys had to work to support the family. Leslie began taking on odd jobs at age 12 and never finished high school. But he learned to dance, hooked up with various partners, and soon was touring the small-time vaudeville circuit as one-half of a comedy song-and-dance team.

Hope spent nearly 10 years in vaudeville, and it was his formative show-business experience. It gave him all the performing tools he needed — dancing, singing, sketch acting, joke telling — along with his love of live performing and a powerful work ethic. As a vaudeville comedian, Hope was an innovator, marking a clean break from the usual run of vaudeville comics with their baggy pants and loud suits, ethnic (often Jewish) characters, and packaged routines that they could tote around from city to city. Working solo as an emcee, Hope learned how to improvise onstage: throwing in offhand jokes as he introduced the acts and kept the audience engaged in between them. In doing so, he created a more spontaneous, conversational comedy style — the seeds of what we think of as modern stand-up comedy.

In 1932, Hope graduated to the Broadway stage, where he was a dapper co-star of some of the era's most celebrated musicals, among them Jerome Kern's *Roberta, Ziegfeld Follies of 1936,* and Cole Porter's *Red, Hot & Blue,* where he introduced the Porter standard "It's De-Lovely" with Ethel Merman. He was 34 years old when Paramount Pictures lured him out to Hollywood — almost middle-aged for an actor just starting out in movies, and well after most of his vaudeville contemporaries, like Jack Benny and George Burns. But with his first film, *The Big Broadcast of 1938* — highlighted by his duet with Shirley Ross on the wistful love song "Thanks for the Memory" — Hope was an instant hit. That same year he made his debut as the host of his own radio program, *The Pepsodent Show.* Within three years Hope had the top-rated program on radio and was one of the top-ten movie box-office stars in America.

Few entertainers could match Hope's ability to glide so successfully from medium to medium. "Hope was a versatile performer who achieved success across the major mass media," says Kathryn Fuller- Seeley, professor of radio, TV and film at the University of Texas and a project consultant. "This was a lot harder than it is today. Each major media was owned and operated separately, and while they at times cooperated, in many other ways they threw up barriers to crossover or integration. Hope was one of the first and biggest trans-media stars."

In movies, Hope developed an appealing and resonant comic character: the brash coward, wisecracking his way through predicaments both natural and supernatural: battling spooks in the haunted-house comedy *The Cat and the Canary* (1939), satirizing spy-film derring-do in *My Favorite Blonde* (1942) playing a jittery movie star who accidentally gets drafted in *Caught in the Draft* (1941). Most especially in his teaming with Bing Crosby in the hugely popular *Road* pictures, Hope's breezy, informal style brought something new to movie comedy: a more intimate, improvisational feeling, far removed from the high-style sophistication of 1930s romantic comedy or the surrealistic anarchy of the Marx Brothers. And Hope was perfectly pitched for the times: his nervous-Nellie character offered a welcome escape and a cathartic outlet for the fears of a stressed-out nation on the brink of a world war.

World War II was transformative for Hope. Even before the U.S. entered the war, he began taking his radio show to military camps around California, establishing an instant rapport with the GI's and introducing a nation to the men who would soon be defending them overseas. After Pearl Harbor, Hope was at the front lines of Hollywood's war effort. He made four celebrated tours to entertain U.S. troops abroad, visiting both the European and Pacific theaters, often venturing into dangerous territory and entertaining men just days away from battle. He visited hospitals and lifted the spirits of grievously injured soldiers. ("Don't get up!" Hope would typically cry as he barged into the wards.) He and his

troupe survived harrowing plane flights and punishing air raids. "I was in two different cities with them during the raids, and I will testify they were horrifying raids," wrote war correspondent Ernie Pyle. "It isn't often that a bomb falls so close that you can hear it whistle. But when you can hear a whole stack of them whistle at once, then it's time to get weak all over and start sweating. The Hope troupe can now describe that ghastly sound."

After the war, Hope returned to show business as usual. His movie career soared even higher; in 1949, helped by hits like *The Paleface* and *Sorrowful Jones*, Hope was the number-one box-office star in America. A year later, he made the jump into television, the first big movie star to take a chance on the new medium. His first show for NBC, in April 1950, drew the biggest audience for any special yet aired in the medium's short history, and launched Hope on a television career that would last for more than 40 years, longer than any of his comedy contemporaries.

He was a show-business pioneer in countless ways. He virtually invented stand-up comedy in the form we know it today — pioneering the topical monologue that became a template for every late-night TV host from Johnny Carson to Jimmy Fallon, and a frame of reference for virtually every stand-up comedian, even those who took the form in much different directions. He was a shrewd businessman, one of the first stars to set up his own production company and own his own work — a model for the production set-ups that are now commonplace for virtually every major Hollywood star. He was the first entertainer to fully recognize the power of his own brand: he wrote bestselling books, penned a daily newspaper column, licensed his name and likeness for a DC comic book, and hosted an annual celebrity golf tournament in Palm Springs. As the longest-running host of the Academy Awards, he was the face of Hollywood and its chief goodwill ambassador for more than 30 years. Most important, he had a role on the public stage matched by no other entertainment figure of his era: a friend to every President from Harry Truman to Bill Clinton; an ambassador to the troops and patriotic morale booster for the nation; and a star who set a new standard for public service in Hollywood.

Hope was just one of many stars who entertained the troops during World War II. But unlike most of the others, he continued after the war, establishing a permanent bond with America's fighting men and making it a central part of his image. In the mid-1950s he launched an annual Christmas tradition of traveling somewhere in the world to entertain servicemen each holiday season. In 1958 he went to Moscow to film the first American TV special from behind the Iron Curtain — one of the first cultural exchanges between the superpowers at the height of Cold War tensions. He played golf with President Eisenhower. President Kennedy awarded him the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's highest civilian honor. And when he went to Vietnam for the first time, in 1964, he welcomed the chance to do his bit to lift the spirits of the men helping stop the spread of Communism in a little country in Southeast Asia.

But soon he found himself in the crosshairs of the most divisive political fight of a generation. Hope went back to Vietnam for nine straight years, as the American commitment rose from a few thousand "advisers" to half a million troops, and the nation was torn apart by the war. Hope was blindsided by the antiwar protests, and they angered him. He began speaking out in a way he never had before: urging support for the military effort, denouncing the antiwar protesters as disloyal, campaigning openly for President Nixon. He seemed increasingly estranged from the cultural upheavals taking place around him: his smug, old-generation jokes about long-haired hippies, buxom starlets and those crazy rock groups from England made him sound out of touch, and hopelessly out of date.

His fall from grace was a symbol of the wrenching changes the country was going through during the cultural upheaval of the 1960s. During the 1940s and '50s, Hope could still get the nation laughing

together, offering a caustic, irreverent (but never threatening or partisan) lens through which to view the newsmakers, issues, fads and fears of Cold War America, from McCarthy's red-baiting to Elvis's pelvis-shaking, from the space race to the Hula Hoop. But with the ruptures of the 1960s, Hope's big- tent mass audience was rapidly breaking down.

Hope inability to see this was a function of his driven personality, as well as of his enormous success. Hope was rapacious in his drive to make it in show business — in every medium, before every kind of audience, in every part of the world. Behind the ingratiating public facade, however, was a personality that could be cold, narcissistic, and impenetrable. He let few people inside: a distant father to his four adopted children, and an unfaithful husband to his wife of 69 years, the former nightclub singer Dolores Reade. His enormous fame and acclaim, moreover, made it increasingly hard for him to maintain his comic credibility. A comedian who once spoke for the little guy and razzed the high and mighty now was one of the wealthiest men in Hollywood, golfing with Presidents and hobnobbing with business titans. He had ascended to such rarefied heights that he could not feel the ground shifting beneath his feet.

In the years after Vietnam, Hope tried hard to recapture his former glory. But the rifts were permanent. For much of the nation — members of the "greatest generation" — Hope was as beloved as ever: his TV specials continued to draw some of the highest ratings in television well into the 1980s. For many in the protest generation, however, he was a dated, even hated, symbol of the Establishment. And he wouldn't quit. Addicted to the applause and the limelight, Hope continued to do TV specials into his 90s, even as his frailties — both his hearing and eyesight were going — became too obvious for even casual viewers to ignore. This too damaged his legacy. The only memory that many younger viewers have of Bob Hope is a doddering, cue-card-reading relic who simply couldn't — or wouldn't — exit stage right.

The time is long overdue for a reappraisal of Bob Hope: a full and fair-minded look at his enormous achievements, as well as at the forces — political, cultural, and personal — that eventually made those achievements so difficult to appreciate. *Bob Hope: America's Entertainer* will be the definitive look at this titan of American entertainment.

* 1. *The Comedian as Social Commentator "Senator McCarthy is going*

*to disclose the names of two million Communists. He just got his hands on a Moscow telephone book."*

*-- Bob Hope*

When Bob Hope became host of *The Pepsodent Show* in 1938, most of the top radio comedians had well-developed routines or characters, an outgrowth of their years in vaudeville: Edgar Bergen and his dummy Charlie McCarthy; the husband-wife repartee of Burns and Allen; Jack Benny, with his cheapskate character and his cast of radio sidekicks. Hope, by contrast, had no such ready-made material and had to build a show largely from scratch. So he hired a staff of writers — more than any other show on radio — and told them to read the papers and give him material from the news: what was happening in the world, in politics, in Hollywood, or simply in Hope's own life and career. This was something new for radio: the comedian stepping outside his own self-contained circle and actually engaging the outside world.

Hope was not the first humorist to talk about current events. Will Rogers before him (and Mark Twain before that) gained immense popularity with his folksy and often pointed gibes about politics and the American scene. But Hope was a much different performer, combining Rogers' political orientation with the fast-paced rhythms of the vaudeville quipster. "Hope's comedy was emphatically urban and hip," says Thomas Doherty, professor of American studies at Brandeis University and a project consultant. "His rise marks the shift in gravity from an America that thought of itself as a rural or frontier space, to a nation that located its psychic self in the city."

Hope tackled political subject matter only gingerly in his early radio years. Even his mild political jabs during the 1940 Presidential election drew protests from conservative sponsors and network executives, who worried about offending any portion of their mass audience. ("The Democrats really put on a demonstration last Tuesday night," Hope said after Roosevelt's reelection to a third term. "It's not every day that Roosevelt gets elected. It just seems like it.") By the late '40s and '50s, however, Hope's monologues were a running commentary of the news and newsmakers of the day. Hope was not really a political satirist: his jokes never cut deep or betrayed a political point of view. When he lampooned political leaders, it was usually for superficial things, like Eisenhower's golf game, or Kennedy's Ivy League pedigree. He joked about Joe McCarthy, but only after the anti-Communist senator was losing his clout, and even then with softball jokes that McCarthy himself could laugh at.

But Hope was the irreverent outsider: puncturing pretension, skeptical of authority, tweaking the rich and powerful. "He poked fun at authority and made the common man feel that he had a sympathetic ally in the social, political, and entertainment worlds," says Kristine B. Karnick, associate professor of communications at Indiana University and a program consultant. "Hope’s humor cut through the pretenses that these institutions established and maintained. He continually jabbed at the powerful (as in his relatively mild political humor by today’s standards), and made the relatively powerless (as in the enlisted men he entertained during USO shows) feel powerful and important."

Hope was the founding father for all topical stand-up comedians. But like many innovators, he suffered the fate of seeing his innovations become so accepted — and surpassed — that he eventually looked old-fashioned. The "new wave" comics who emerged in the 1950s, like Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce, brought a much more personal and political edge to stand-up comedy. The comedians who followed in the counterculture years, like George Carlin and Richard Pryor, pushed even further into provocative racial, sexual and political territory. Hope's Olympian detachment and big-tent ambitions have hardly disappeared: they were adopted by Johnny Carson on the *Tonight Show* and can still be seen in the opening monologues of virtually every late-night TV host who followed him. And Hope paved the way for the current crop of far more pointed political satirists — Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher — who today help to drive the national conversation in a way that Hope could never have foreseen.

* 1. *From Patriot to Partisan*

*"As we flew in, they gave us a twenty-one gun salute. Three of them were ours.”*

*-- Bob Hope*

No entertainment star played a more important role in rallying the nation during World War II than Bob Hope. Even before Pearl Harbor, when isolationist sentiment was still strong and many Americans opposed getting involved in a "foreign war," Hope's broadcasts from domestic military camps introduced a civilian nation to the military mindset, helping prepare the nation for the notion of war.

Once the U.S. entered the war, Hope's radio show was a patriotic morale booster. Hope would take his show to a different military camp each week, sharing the GIs' gripes and grievances, while cheerleading for their mission. He often closed the show with a patriotic message to his listeners — urging them to buy war bonds, or conserve rubber, or write a serviceman overseas. "Throughout the war, President Roosevelt had sought to convince the nation that the battles overseas and the war effort back home, from recycling rubber to buying war bonds, were inextricable, all part of the same great national crusade," writes biographer Richard Zoglin. "Hope, with his blunt, no-nonsense wartime prose, brought that message home like no one else."

Hope's overseas tours during the war were widely and justly celebrated. He was far from the only entertainer to travel on these USO-sponsored tours. But no one was more indefatigable, or connected more strongly with the GI's. "When the time for recognition of service to the nation in wartime comes to be considered," wrote the novelist John Steinbeck, reporting on Hope's 1943 tour for the *New York Herald Tribune*, "Bob Hope should be high on the list. In some way he has caught the soldiers' imagination. He gets laughter wherever he goes, from men who need laughter ... The battalion of men who are moving half-tracks from one place to another, doing a job that gets no headlines, no public notice and yet which must be done if there is to be a victory, are forgotten, and they feel forgotten. But Bob Hope is in the country. Will he come to them, or won't he? And then one day they get a notice that he is coming. Then they feel remembered." *Time* Magazine put Hope on its cover in September 1943, with the headline "Hope for Humanity." By the end of the war, he was an American hero.

And yet all the patriotic goodwill that Hope had built up during World War II and afterwards seemed to count for little during the traumatic Vietnam years. Hope had marketed himself as a patriot in the years when patriotism was in fashion. By the Vietnam War, when much of the nation was questioning a war they saw as unjust and immoral, adopting the patriotic, "pro-American" position meant taking sides.

Hope never quite grasped this. Like many members of the World War II generation he simply couldn't imagine that the U.S. would get into a war that wouldn't be supported wholeheartedly — or pursued to victory. "When Hope became a partisan, it was a signal that the old cultural consensus was collapsing," says James Baughman, professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin and a project consultant. "Going back to the 1930s, Hope always played — like Henry Luce and *Time* Magazine — to the conception that there was an American center. But that center was disappearing."

Hope was a conservative Republican, but he had always kept his political views private. Now, however, he couldn't help speaking out: bad-mouthing the antiwar protesters as disloyal, complaining that politicians were hamstringing the military effort. He grew close to President Nixon, who even brought Hope into the White House for private briefings, to explain his reasons for bombing North Vietnam.

Hope's narration in his Vietnam specials, while always careful to sound a neutral, pro-serviceman note, often seemed an agent for the Administration's optimistic projections for the war — touting the "light at the end of the tunnel" that never seemed to come.

Project consultant Kristine Karnick contends that Hope's comedic stance during the war was misunderstood. "As a populist, he identified with the enlisted man," she says. "His jokes were aimed at military hierarchy, oppressive rules and procedures, the frustrating aspects of military life to which that audience would relate. Hope’s rhetoric during the Vietnam War stemmed from this same impulse—to support the troops. Nixon’s policies kept troops overseas, and Hope’s rhetoric, while perceived as pro- war, was more centrally, pro-troop."

But in the heated political climate of the time — and given his openly hawkish statements about the war

— Hope inevitably became a partisan figure. His career never fully recovered. For much of the nation — Nixon's "silent majority" — he remained a beloved national icon. For the counterculture generation, he became a dated and even reactionary figure, a symbol of everything — Cold War dogma, 1950s conformity, the military-industrial complex — that the youth revolution was fighting to upend.

* 1. *Melting the Melting Pot*

*"I simply cannot tell a dialect joke.”*

*-- Bob Hope*

Hope was born in England, and though he left for America before he was five years old, he always felt a strong bond with his native country. He returned there often — visiting his large extended family, entertaining in British music halls, giving command performances for the Queen. But among vaudeville comedians, Hope stood out for his lack of an obvious ethnic identity. "Vaudeville was created largely by people from immigrant and working-class backgrounds who supplied both its talent and audience," Robert W. Snyder, professor of history at Rutgers and a project consultant, writes in his book *The Voice of the City.* "Together they participated in a series of cultural transformations. They helped fashion new ethnic identities formed more from American popular culture than from Old World ways; they gave big- city popular cultural much of its buoyant, egalitarian style; and they challenged and subverted the genteel Victorianism of middle-class, native-born Americans."

Many of the top vaudeville comics, like Eddie Cantor, were openly Jewish. Others played funny Irishmen or adopted comical German or Dutch accents. But Hope, with his brash, all-American moxie, seemed to obliterate all the old ethnic divisions. "He was a bright package of assimilated poise and pragmatism — the all-American average guy," writes critic John Lahr. "In their manic bravado, the older generation of funnymen gave off a whiff of immigrant desperation and sadness at what had been left behind. Hope was all future. The wrinkles had been pressed out of his suits and out of his personality. He was an anxiety-free, up-to-the-minute, fast-talking go-getter on holiday."

Was Hope's forging of this new, all-American persona the marker of an immigrant generation’s eagerness to fit in? Or simply an individual’s calculated judgment about what would appeal most to the emerging mass audience? Probably some of both, but in any event it was a shrewd marketing decision. Hope's fast-talking, all-inclusive persona turned out to be perfect for radio, the enormously popular new medium where so many of the former vaudeville comics found a home — and where Jewish comics like Jack Benny succeeded only by downplaying their ethnic identity.

Later, in the 1950s and '60s, Hope also stood apart from the crowd of mostly Jewish comics — Henny Youngman, Jackie Mason, Red Buttons, Alan King, Don Rickles — who emerged from the Catskills Borscht Belt and became fixtures in night clubs and on TV variety programs like *Ed Sullivan.* Though many of Hope's writers were Jewish, they scrubbed his comedy clean of any ethnic flavoring — or much personality either. Indeed, the sheer machinelike impersonality of Hope's comedy was eventually what made him seem outmoded: not just ethnically neutral, but stubbornly unrevealing of the man, in an era when comics began using the stand-up stage as a therapy couch, pouring out their sexual insecurities, urban angst and idiosyncratic neuroses for all to hear.

* 1. *Hollywood and America "Welcome to the Academy Awards, or as it's known at my house, Passover."*

*-- Bob Hope*

Bob Hope was Hollywood's great ambassador to the rest of the country and the world. He was host or co-host of the Academy Awards a record 19 times — beginning in 1940, when the ceremony was just a private dinner for industry insiders, and ending in the 1970s, when the Oscar show (thanks in part to Hope's smooth job as emcee) was among the most keenly anticipated and massively watched events of the TV year. Hope's opening monologues became a communal rite: a gag-filled recap of the year's big films, stars, controversies and gossip. For outsiders, he provided a satirical peek inside that exotic land called Hollywood, where stars have lavish homes and bad marriages, are gracious and glamorous in public but petty and jealous in private.

On the movie screen, too, Bob Hope helped to demystify Hollywood, poking fun at the artifice of filmmaking and making all of us Hollywood insiders. In his early films, especially the *Road* pictures with Crosby, Hope often talked directly to the camera, or made joking asides that referenced his career, the studio, his life off the screen. ("He's gonna sing, folks," he quips as Crosby heads out of the scene for a musical number. "Now's the time to go out and get popcorn.") "Routinely breaking the fourth wall," notes project consultant Kristine B. Karnick, "Hope speaks directly to his audience, providing comic quips and satiric asides which pull the audience back away from the fiction and the suspension of disbelief on which Hollywood films depend. He let the audience in on the joke, for which the butt was often the Hollywood establishment and filmmaking itself."

Off-screen too, Hope's work for the troops and for charities of all kinds made him Hollywood's favorite image man. He joked constantly about never winning an Oscar — but he actually received no fewer than five honorary awards from the Academy, all recognizing his humanitarian work. In the years when Hollywood was coming under fire for sex and violence or leftwing political influence, the film community could always trot out Hope — the upright (and politically right), public-spirited citizen of the world.

Other stars worked for charity and entertained the troops, of course. And, like everything Hope did, there was a careerist aspect to his devotion to the troops, and his obsessive need to show up at every charity benefit he could jam into his busy schedule. It was great for his image, and it ensured large, enthusiastic audiences, for an entertainer who craved them.

Nevertheless, Hope became a role model for public service in Hollywood. His example sent an unspoken message to his fellow film stars: As a celebrity, he seemed to be saying, you have an obligation to do more than just make movies, sign autographs, and buy fancy homes in Malibu. You have an obligation to use your celebrity to give back, to work for causes, to have a role on the public stage. Hope created a climate in which a new generation of activist stars —George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Sean Penn — could speak up and work for a very different set of causes and issues. Hope helped make it safe for Hollywood stars to be taken seriously as public citizens.

* 1. *The Evolution of the Mass Audience "When vaudeville died, television was the box they put it in."*

*-- Bob Hope*

Hope was the complete entertainer. He worked in every major field of popular entertainment, kept moving with the audience, and helped to chart the rise and fall of every mass-audience medium of the 20th century. "Although he worked in many media," says project consultant Robert W. Snyder, "I think a case can be made that his defining home was in not one medium or another, but an age of mass media that began and ended in synch with the decades of his life. It is exactly the gulf between Hope’s media era and ours that makes it difficult for young people to recognize his importance and the importance of the media system that nurtured him as he nurtured it."

He began in vaudeville, in the waning years of America's first mass-entertainment medium. Beginning in the 1880s, these variety shows brought a potpourri of entertainment — singers, dancers, comedians, jugglers, acrobats, magicians, animal acts and more — to towns large and small across America. They helped draw an immigrant nation together and created the first entertainment "stars" — from Lillian Russell, the 1890s chanteuse once called the most beautiful woman in the world, to such pioneering entertainers as George M. Cohan, Al Jolson, Sophie Tucker and Eddie Cantor. Hope caught vaudeville in the nick of time, in its waning days as it was gradually being supplanted by motion pictures and radio.

Commercial radio was barely a decade old in the mid-1930s when Hope broke in, appearing on several short-lived radio programs in New York City. The enormously popular medium was dominated by veteran ex-vaudeville performers like Jack Benny and Burns & Allen and long running serial acts like *Lum and Abner*, *The Goldbergs* and *Amos n’ Andy*, so when Hope finally landed a hit show in 1938, he was a rare newcomer to catch on. "Radio was reaching for a family audience," says project consultant Kathryn Fuller-Seeley. "The old jokes and performers from vaudeville were an attempt to create one mass audience. Hope was one of the few newer comics to break in. Otherwise, the power of a known name was so strong with sponsors and the ad agencies, it was nearly impossible for a young performer to get a break."

Hope was radio's most popular star in the years when radio listening was at its peak. (Hope's broadcast on February 19, 1944, was heard in 40.9% of all the radio homes in America — the highest rating for any half-hour program in radio history.) He was, simultaneously, among the top ten movie box-office stars throughout the '40s, the decade when movie attendance was at its high-water mark. And when movies and radio were both being threatened by the new kid on the block, television, Hope — naturally — was there too.

Hope's move into television was risky and nearly unprecedented. The Hollywood studios hated TV, feared that it would steal away their audience, and insisted that their top stars avoid TV, lest exposure on the home box hurt their value on the big screen. Radio stars too were reluctant to give up their meal ticket and take a chance on the new medium. But Hope knew that television's advent was inevitable, and he was one of the first top radio or movie stars to take the plunge, hosting his first NBC special on Easter Sunday in 1950. "Television," Hope said to start the show. "Well, they finally got me."

Hope's amazing longevity in television was due largely to a shrewd judgment he made early on. Most of TV's top comedy stars of the early '50s — Sid Caesar, Milton Berle, Jackie Gleason — had a few years at the top and either burned up their material or wore out their welcome quickly. Hope carefully rationed

his TV exposure, never agreeing to do a weekly series. As a result, his popularity never flagged. His NBC specials were routinely among the highest-rated shows of the television season well into the 1980s. His 1970 Christmas special from Vietnam was seen in 46.6% of all TV homes in the country, the most watched television show *of all time* up to that point. (It still ranks in the Nielsen top five.)

But Hope was one of the last stars able to draw those kinds of numbers. His departure from the scene, in the early '90s, coincided with the start of a steady erosion in network television's audience, thanks to growing competition from cable TV and later the Internet. The communal mass audience for Hope's comedy had broken down years before. Now — fittingly, as Hope was passing from the scene — the mass audience itself was becoming a thing of the past.

1. **Creative approach:**

In the tradition of such prestigious and highly rated ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** biographies as *Johnny Carson: King of Late Night* and *Bing Crosby Remembered,* this 90-minute program will be an entertaining and layered portrait of one of America's greatest entertainers.

Reflecting the narrative script-writing background of filmmaker John Scheinfeld, the documentary will have a three-act dramatic structure, more reflective of a feature film than a documentary. It opens with a prologue set during a crisis point in Hope's life. One night in September 1942, as Hope and his small band of entertainers are on a tour of U.S. military bases in Alaska, their Air Force plane hits a bank of sleet and fog and loses both its radio and one engine. As the pilots desperately try to find a place to land, the frightened passengers are outfitted with parachutes in preparation for bailing out. At the last minute, the lights of Elmendorf Air Base break through the clouds, and the pilots bring the plane in for a bumpy but safe landing.

From this harrowing near-miss, the film flashes back to tell the story of Hope's life and career in roughly chronological sequence. In Part One, we are taken through Hope's early years: his childhood in England and growing-up years in Cleveland, Ohio; learning the tools of his trade in vaudeville during the 1920s and early '30s; his emergence as a Broadway star, and his move to Hollywood with a movie contract from Paramount in 1937.

Part Two chronicles the years of Hope's greatest successes: his rise to the top in both movies and radio; his celebrated tours to entertain the troops during World War II; his postwar return to show business as usual, his transition to television, and his reengagement with the troops, launching an annual tradition of going somewhere in the world to entertain them every Christmas.

In Part Three, Hope is engulfed by the Vietnam War and the cultural and political upheavals of the 1960s, when his patriotic stance makes him a controversial figure and alienates much of a generation. Then, in the post-Vietnam years, he tries to restore his reputation and recapture a mass audience that has fractured irretrievably. The documentary closes on a note of reconciliation and tribute, as Hope is feted by NBC in a grand 90th birthday special.

The story will be told with a mixture of narration, archival footage, clips from Hope's movies, radio and TV shows, and live stage appearances, along with interviews (both previously recorded and newly conducted for this film) with Hope colleagues, friends, co-stars, family members, critics, scholars and biographers. Hope's own words, drawn from his memoirs, letters and other sources, will be read by a well-known actor or comedian, such as Jay Leno or Billy Crystal. While retaining full editorial control, the filmmakers have secured exclusive and unprecedented access to the Hope family archives, which

includes never-before-seen home movies and footage from his vaudeville and Broadway days; as well as thousands of letters, scrapbooks, scripts and other memorabilia. The documentary will also draw on Richard Zoglin's definitive, critically acclaimed 2014 biography, *Hope: Entertainer of the Century,* which is overflowing with strong new scholarship and research.

1. **Audience and distribution:**

*Bob Hope: America’s Entertainer* will air nationally on PBS as part of WNET’s ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** series. We will work to ensure that the program includes a seamless presentation of broadcast, new media, and education and outreach campaigns. We anticipate that the documentary will air in 98% of the country across the PBS network. In addition to the national broadcast of *Bob Hope: America’s Entertainer*, a DVD for PBS video, a companion soundtrack, and a companion book will offer cross- promotional opportunities.

***AMERICAN MASTERS*** has long-established success in the broadcast arena. Nielsen ratings confirm high audience loyalty. An example of this can be seen in the cumulative audience for six original documentaries which aired across the 2012 and 2013 seasons and averaged [deleted] viewers per program. The most viewed program was Mel Brooks (2013 season), which was viewed by over [deleted] people. We anticipate similar results with *Bob Hope*.

Throughout the production process, including initial television broadcasts and beyond, the ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** team strives to make connections and create relationships that will deepen the impact of our shows and strengthen their viewership, reaching out to new and diverse audiences in creative ways. We have launched a partnership with ITVS and are in discussions with Games for Change and StoryCorps to develop new initiatives to extend our reach.

Through a variety of outreach efforts, the life and impact of each ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** production, including the one for which we are requesting support, is extended far beyond its initial broadcast. Each program is featured on the award-winning PBS website and is accompanied by a package of related resources, such as thematic essays, additional video footage, transcripts, career backgrounds and timelines, and filmmaker interviews to be viewed online or as “podcasts.” Traffic to the ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** website remains high; in the last twelve months, over two million unique visitors have explored the treasure trove of supplemental materials that we have made available. Subject to rights and clearances issues, programs may also be shaped into educational audio/visual projects, streamed online, packaged for home video/DVD distribution, and/or broadcast globally.

Finally, benefiting from the WNET Communications Group and a long, positive history with the media, ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** is one of the most reviewed series on PBS—in print and online, in the blogosphere, on radio and television. To communicate on platforms across the board, ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** is accessible through the website and on various mobile devices and tablets.

**Project evaluation:**

WNET will use several methods to document the impact of this documentary: reviews from the press, audience response, traffic to the program’s website, viewer requests for more information, national

carriage, and requests for DVDs of the program. In addition to these conventional methods to gauge the program’s effectiveness, the project’s community engagement plan will include an evaluation of outreach screenings, discussions, and local tie-in broadcasts. Lastly, the Talk Back section of the PBS website allows us to evaluate public reaction to the program. In terms of the impact of outreach, our Education staff will gather anecdotal stories from school educators and community partners, as well as distributing evaluation surveys periodically throughout the project period and at the close of the grant. We will send all funders periodic updates on the project’s funding and productions status, awards, press reviews, film festival and community outreach screenings, distribution outlets, website and other online activities, and broadcast information. Most importantly, our comprehensive Post-Broadcast Report will detail the full reach and impact of all our efforts.

We project tens of thousands (perhaps many more) of educators, students, and community members will be impacted through outreach efforts related to the series. The online curriculum will be available to

1.5 million registered users of PBS Learning Media, as well as anyone who logs on to the series website for years to come.

1. **Rights and permissions:**

Filmmaker John Scheinfeld brings a fully executed agreement with The Bob Hope Legacy/Hope Enterprises to ***AMERICAN MASTERS***.

The Bob Hope Legacy/Hope Enterprises will not retain any editorial control of this film. The cost of accessing and duplicating audio-visual material from The Bob Hope Legacy/Hope Enterprises will be covered by a small rights fee (a line item in the production budget). Nevertheless, this film will be an expensive production, as licensing rights for many of Hope's motion pictures are held by Universal Studios and other sources, and underlying union costs pertaining to those clips are considerable.

The production budget provides for clearing all rights for a domestic broadcast for ten years, including AV educational, home video, and online streaming. Whenever possible, we will

secure rights to feature additional material on our companion website and in all ancillary materials, including the educational modules.

1. **Humanities advisors:**

The ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** team has attracted an exceptional group of advisers to this project. The panel’s varied perspectives and past experience with humanities projects have already informed our work to date. As we move into production, our advisers will be invaluable as we delve deeply into the ways that Bob Hope’s life and career can illustrate and illuminate a variety of humanities disciplines.

**James L. Baughman** is a Professor in the School of Journalism at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Baughman specializes in the history of American journalism and broadcasting.

Baughman received his BA in history at Harvard University in 1974. He earned his MA, M.Phil and Ph.D. in history at Columbia.

**Thomas Doherty** is a Professor of American Studies and chair of the American Studies Program at Brandeis University. Doherty is a cultural historian with a special interest in Hollywood cinema, and is an associate editor for the film magazine Cineaste and film review editor for the Journal of American History. He received his BA at Gonzaga University, and his MA and Ph.D. at the University of Iowa.

**Michael Frisch** is a Professor and Senior Research Scholar in the American Studies department at University of Buffalo. He earned his BA from Tufts University and his MA & Ph.D. from Princeton. He has served as adviser on a number of projects awarded grants by the NEH, and has been on the board of directors for the New York Council for the Humanities since 2007.

**Kristine Brunovska Karnick** is the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Dept. of Communication Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University. She has an academic focus in mass media and society, comedy, and film and television history. Karnick co-edited *Classical Film Comedy* in 1994. She received her BA from the University of Illinois, as well as her MA and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin (Madison).

**Clayton Koppes** is a Professor of History at Oberlin College. He is a historian of the United States from the Civil War to the present, with a particular interest in political history, along with social and cultural history. Koppes received his BA from Bethel College in Kansas, and his MA and D.Phil from Emory University and the University of Kansas, respectively.

**Laurence F. Maslon** is an arts professor at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, as well as associate chair of the Graduate Acting Program, with an affiliation in the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. He is the host and producer of the weekly radio series, *Broadway to Main Street*, broadcast on the NPR-affiliate station WPPB-FM. Among other credits, he co-wrote the Emmy-nominated PBS series *Make ‘Em Laugh*, which explores the past century of American comedy, including figures like Bob Hope.

**Dr. Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley** is a Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research specialization focuses on American film and media history and audience reception studies. She received a BA in History from Agnes Scott College, and an MA and Ph.D. in American History from the Johns Hopkins University.

**Robert W. Snyder** is the Director of the Graduate Program in American Studies at Rutgers- Newark. Dr. Robert Snyder has worked since the 1980s with journalists, museum curators, and documentarians to share history with a broad public. He is the author of *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*, and is considered an expert in the study of Vaudeville history. Snyder earned his Ph.D. in American History at New York University.

1. **Media team:**

**Michael Kantor, Executive Producer for *AMERICAN MASTERS***

Since 2001, Michael Kantor has produced 21 hours of television for national broadcast. In addition to winning the Peabody Award and the Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Nonfiction Series, Mr. Kantor’s productions have been recognized with six Primetime Emmy Award nominations and one Writers Guild of America Award nomination. His six-part series, *Broadway: The American Musical*, was honored with a special screening in Washington on the occasion of the National Endowment for the Humanities’ 40th anniversary. Along with the films that he has created under the Ghost Light Films banner, Mr. Kantor directed *Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle* (funded in part by the NEH), served as Producer of *The Thomashefskys: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theater* (written and hosted by Michael Tilson Thomas), was Executive Producer on *Give Me the Banjo* (narrated by Steve Martin, directed by Marc Fields), and wrote, directed, and produced the award-winning profile, *Quincy Jones: In the Pocket*, for the ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** series. With Laurence Maslon, he co-authored the companion books to his popular series, including *Superheroes! Capes, Cowls and the Creation of Comic Book Culture* (Crown Archetype), *Make ‘Em Laugh* (Twelve) and *Broadway: The American Musical* (Bulfinch). His most recent documentary was *Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy*, which won the Peabody Award in 2014. He is also President of Almo Inc., a company which distributes the American Film Theatre series, which includes Edward Albee’s *A Delicate Balance* (starring Katharine Hepburn), Eugene O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh* (Lee Marvin), and Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* (Laurence Olivier) among its titles. Mr. Kantor has served as a nominator for the Tony Awards, and holds a B.A. in Theater Studies from Cornell University, and a M.F.A. in Directing from the University of California, San Diego. Mr. Kantor became Executive Producer of the ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** series in April, 2014.

**John Scheinfeld, Writer/Producer/Director**

From pop culture to politics, sports to world religions, Venice and Toronto film festivals to PBS, Emmy®, Grammy® and Writers Guild Award nominee John Scheinfeld is a critically-acclaimed documentary filmmaker with a broad range of subjects and productions to his credit. Scheinfeld is currently in production on the first authorized feature documentary about jazz legend John Coltrane. Most recently, he directed, wrote and produced two high-profile documentaries for PBS: *Dick Cavett’s Watergate* and *Dick Cavett’s Vietnam*, intensely personal, intimate and entertaining explorations of critical events that helped shape American history in the 20th Century, each framed by guest interviews from the period and commentary by legendary talk show host Dick Cavett. Scheinfeld is best known for two widely acclaimed feature documentaries: *The U.S. vs. John Lennon*, which tells the true story of the US government’s attempt to silence the beloved musician and iconic advocate for peace and *Who Is Harry Nilsson (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)?*, a compelling yet wildly entertaining documentary about one of the most talented and uncompromising singer-songwriters in pop music history. *For Who Is Harry Nilsson…?*, Scheinfeld was nominated for the prestigious Writers Guild Award and USA Today named him one of the Top 100 People of 2010 in their pop culture poll. During his career Scheinfeld has written, produced and/or directed numerous documentaries about show business legends such as the Bee Gees, Nat ‘King’ Cole, Bing Crosby, Norman Lear, Dean Martin, the Marx Brothers, Ricky Nelson,

Peter Sellers, Frank Sinatra and Jonathan Winters. Scheinfeld has a double major B.A. in Communications and Sociology from Oberlin College and an M.F.A. in Radio-TV-Film from Northwestern University.

**Richard Zoglin, Producer**

Richard Zoglin has spent more than 30 years as an editor and writer at *TIME Magazine*. After joining as a staff writer in 1983, he served as the magazine's television critic for more than a decade — reviewing hundreds of TV shows, examining media coverage of such news events as the first Gulf War, and writing cover stories on David Letterman, Bill Cosby, Diane Sawyer, Arsenio Hall and *Star Trek*, among others. He later became a senior editor and assistant managing editor for both the magazine and its website, Time.com, and is currently *TIME*'s theater critic. He is the author of *Hope: Entertainer of the Century* (Simon & Schuster, 2014), acclaimed as the definitive biography of one of the century's most important entertainers. His first book, *Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America* (Bloomsbury, 2008), is considered the definitive history of that seminal era in stand-up comedy. Zoglin began his journalism career in San Francisco as a copy editor for Saturday Review magazine, before moving to New York, where he worked as a magazine editor and freelance writer, contributing articles to the *New York Times*, *Village Voice*, *New Republic* and other publications. In 1978 he moved to Atlanta to become television critic for the Atlanta Constitution. He left in 1982 to help launch *Time Inc*.’s new television magazine, *TV-Cable Week*, before joining *TIME*. Zoglin graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of California at Berkeley with a B. A. in English, and also earned a master of journalism degree at Berkeley.

1. **Progress:**

This documentary originated in conversations between filmmaker John Scheinfeld and Richard Zoglin, author of the recent Bob Hope biography, *Hope: Entertainer of the Century.*

Mr. Scheinfeld, the director-writer-producer behind many critically acclaimed feature documentaries, such as *The U.S. vs. John Lennon*, and *Who Is Harry Nilsson (And Why Is Everybody Talkin’ About Him),* and two recent documentaries made for WNET/PBS, *Dick Cavett’s Watergate* and *Dick Cavett’s Vietnam*, then discussed the project with Stephen Segaller, vice president of programming at WNET, and Michael Kantor, executive producer of ***AMERICAN MASTERS***. He conveyed his passion to make a first-class film that examines Hope’s body of work even as it presents a rich and textured portrait of a gifted but all-too human man, set against the social, political and cultural landscape of the eras in which he worked.

Mr. Segaller and Mr. Kantor expressed interest in airing the film as part of the ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** series. Scheinfeld then reached an agreement with the Bob Hope Legacy/Hope Enterprises. The agreement stipulates that all editorial control will be maintained by Mr. Scheinfeld and his long-time creative team. Mr. Scheinfeld, who has over 40 documentaries on a wide range of subjects to his credit, will serve as director, writer and producer of the film. Experienced line producer David Harding, who has worked with Scheinfeld on three feature documentaries including the currently in-production documentary film about jazz legend John Coltrane, will produce. (Harding also served in this capacity on recent documentaries by noted filmmaker Werner Herzog.) Editor and co-producer will be Peter S. Lynch II, who has worked on nearly every documentary Scheinfeld has made in the past 15 years.

Richard Zoglin, author of the definitive new biography of Bob Hope, will also be a producer on the project.

1. **Work plan:**

**August 2015 - January 2016: Fundraising, Research, and Development**

* Begin preliminary research
* Assemble consulting team
* Fundraising begins
* Prepare production budget and schedule
* Research potential interviewees

**February 2016 - May 2016: Pre-Production**

* Principal production funds are secured
* Production team, including experienced freelance researchers, put on payroll
* Material from the Bob Hope archive collected, logged, and data-based
* Contact archives worldwide in search of the most unusual, rare and never-before-seen Hope audio/visual material
* Reach out to prospective interviewees
* Discuss potential celebrity voices to read the words of Bob Hope
* Insurance is secured

**June 2016 – September 2016: Production**

* Conduct interviews
* Send out interviews for transcription
* Continue to collect, scan and data-base audio-visual materials, and negotiate rights
* Select and negotiate deal with celebrity voice
* Develop educational outreach with consultants

**September 2016 - December 2016: Post-Production, Phase 1 —Rough Cut**

* First-draft script delivered
* Consultants and ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** give notes on script
* Editing room opens
* Titles and credits are designed
* Rough cut is delivered
* Consultants convene for screening and discussion

**January - February 2017: Post Production, Phase 2 — Fine Cut**

* Continue to rewrite and polish script
* Consultants and ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** give notes on script
* Finalize deals for all selected audio-visual material
* Fine cut is delivered and picture locked
* Consultants offer final comments

**March 2017: Post Production, Phase 3 — Final Cut**

* All selected archival photographs, motion picture footage, and music are ordered at highest resolution and licensed
* Prepare all deliverables
* Composer scores the soundtrack
* Online edit, color correction, sound design and final sound mix
* Closed captioning and packaging
* Deliver final cut
* Website materials are prepped and website becomes active
* Educational outreach modules are finalized with the consultants’ advice and input
* Promotion and Station Relations timed to broadcast
1. **Organizational profile:**

One of the United States’ major cultural and educational institutions, WNET was the first station of the Public Broadcasting Service, and currently supplies a significant percentage of all prime-time programs aired on PBS. For over fifty years, the station has addressed the varied interests of the U.S. public television audience with acclaimed and long-running series such as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, and ***AMERICAN MASTERS***. Our specials and short series such as *The Ascent of Money*, *The Supreme Court*, *African American Lives*, *Looking for Lincoln, The Story of the Jews, The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross,* and *Shakespeare Uncovered* routinely incorporate educational and humanities programming into their distribution, including web-based and in-school components. Hundreds of honors – Emmy Awards, Peabody Awards, CINE Golden Eagles, DuPont-Columbia Awards, Academy Awards and more – testify to the consistently high quality of the station’s programs. Off the air, the station’s Education Department is a leader in creating multimedia learning materials that extend the educational value of public television.

1. **List of collections of materials in the project:**

Among the many materials we are considering are:

**BOB HOPE RADIO PROGRAMS:**

*The Intimate Revue* (1935), *Atlantic Family Show* (1935-36), *Rippling Rhythm Revue* (1936), *Your Hollywood Parade* (1937-38), *The Pepsodent Show* (1938-48), *The Swan Show* (1948-50), *The Bob Hope Show* (1950-55).

**BOB HOPE TELEVISION SHOWS:**

Variously titled specials on NBC from 1950-96. Among those to be highlighted: *Star-Spangled Revue* (first special, 1950), *Colgate Comedy Hour* (1952-53), *Hope in Greenland* (first televised military tour, 1955), *Bob Hope in Moscow* (1958), Vietnam specials (1964-72), *Bob Hope on the Road to China* (1979*), Bob Hope's 90th Birthday Special* (1993) and Academy Award ceremonies (1953-78).

**BOB HOPE FILMS:**

*Going Spanish* (short, 1934), *Soup for Nuts* (short, 1934), *Paree Paree* (short, 1934), *Calling All Tars*

(short, 1935), *Watch the Birdie* (short, 1935), *Double Exposure* (short, 1935), *The Old Grey Mayor* (short,

1935), *Shop Talk* (short, 1936), *The Big Broadcast of 1938 (*1938), *College Swing* (1938), *Give Me a Sailor* (1938), *Thanks for the Memory* (1938), *Never Say Die* (1939), *Some Like It Hot* (1939),*The Cat and the Canary* (1939), *Road to Singapore* (1940), *The Ghost Breakers* (1940), *Road to Zanzibar* (1941), *Caught in the Draft* (1941), *Nothing But the Truth* (1941), *Louisiana Purchase* (1941), *My Favorite Blonde* (1942), *Road to Morocco* (1942), *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942), *They Got Me Covered* (1943), *Let’s Face It* (1943), *The Princess and the Pirate* (1944), *Road to Utopia* (1946), *Monsieur Beaucaire* (1946), *My Favorite Brunette* (1947), *Variety Girl* (1947), *Where There’s Life* (1947), *Road to Rio* (1947), *The Paleface* (1948), *Sorrowful Jones* (1949), *The Great Lover* (1949), *Fancy Pants* (1950), *The Lemon Drop Kid* (1951), My *Favorite Spy* (1951), *The Greatest Show on Earth* (cameo, 1951), *Son of Paleface* (1952), *Road to Bali* (1952), *Off Limits* (1953), *Scared Stiff* (cameo, 1953), *Casanova’s Big Night* (1954), *The Seven Little Foys* (1955), *That Certain Feeling* (1956), *The Iron Petticoat* (1956), *Beau James* (1957), *Paris Holiday* (1958). *Alias Jesse James* (1959), *The Facts of Life* (1960), *Bachelor in Paradise* (1961), *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962), *Critic’s Choice* (1963), *Call Me Bwana* (1963), *A Global Affair* (1964), *I’ll Take Sweden* (1965), *Boy, Did I Get a Wrong Number!* (1966), *Eight on the Lam* (1967), *The Private Navy of Sgt. O’Farrell* (1968), *How to Commit Marriage* (1969), *Cancel My Reservation* (1972), *The Muppet Movie* (cameo, 1979), *Spies Like Us* (cameo, 1985).

**BOB HOPE INTERVIEWS:**

TV interviews with Bob Hope on *The Dick Cavett Show* (1972), Alan King's *Inside the Comedy Mind of Bob Hope* (1992), *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* (multiple appearances) and others.

In addition, the documentary will draw on archived video interviews (with key people now deceased) at the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. Much of the supplemental photo and film material will be drawn from the Hope Archives, as well as from a variety of other archives that hold important historical and contextual material pertaining to the project, including:

ABCNEWS VideoSource, AP Archive/AP Video Library, Critical Past, Corbis Images/Corbis Motion, NBC Universal Archives, F.I.L.M. Archive, Fremantle Media, Getty Images, Global ImageWorks, Historic Films, ITN Source (Fox Movietone News, ITV, Reuters and others), John E. Allen, LA Public Library (LA Herald Examiner Photograph Collection), Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, New York Times Photo Archive, Producers Library, Streamline Media, T3 Media, Time/Life Photo Archive, UCLA Film and Television Archive, WPA Film Library, and others.

1. **Preliminary interviews:**

Filmmaker John Scheinfeld and executive producer Michael Kantor have previously conducted a number of interviews with colleagues of Bob Hope. In addition, several interviews are available in the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences archives. Among these sources:

* Mort Lachman *(Hope writer-director)*
* Larry Gelbart *(writer)*
* Sherwood Schwartz *(writer)*
* Mel Shavelson *(writer-director)*
* Hal Kanter *(writer)*
* Phyllis Diller *(comedian)*
* Jack Shea *(director)*
* Barney McNulty *(Hope cue-card man)*
* Art Schneider *(film editor)*
* Frank Liberman *(Hope publicist)*

The filmmakers have had extensive discussions with Linda Hope, Bob's daughter, who now runs The Hope Legacy/Hope Enterprises, and she has assured us of her full cooperation. In addition, the documentary will be able to draw on the dozens of interviews conducted by biographer Richard Zoglin, some of whom will be re-interviewed for the film. They include:

Linda Hope *(daughter)*

Kelly Hope *(son)*

Miranda Hope *(granddaughter)*

Zach Hope *(grandson)*

**FAMILY MEMBERS:**

Nathaniel Lande *(son-in-law)*

Sam McCullagh *(son-in-law)*

Judith Richards Hope *(daughter-in-law)*

Ton Malatesta *(nephew)*

**HOPE WRITERS, CO-STARS, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES:**

Rhonda Fleming *(actress)* Eva Marie Saint *(actress)* Brooke Shields *(actress)* Jack Jones *(singer)* Connie Stevens *(singer)* Jill St. John *(actress)* Arlene Dahl *(actress)*

Patty Thomas *(USO performer)*

Jane Russell *(actress)*

Arthur Marx *(writer, biographer)* Elliot Kozak *(agent/manager)* Fred Silverman *(NBC executive)* Tom Sarnoff *(NBC executive)* Kathryn Crosby *(wife of Bing)* Tony Bennett *(singer)*

Marty Pasetta *(director)*

John Guare *(playwright, family friend)*

Jan Morrill *(assistant)* Jan Daley *(singer)* James Lipton *(producer)* Arnold Palmer *(golfer)* Don Mischer *(producer)*

Janis Paige *(singer-actress)*

Ray Siller *(writer)*

James Symington *(U.S. senator)*

Gloria Loring *(singer)* Marcia Lewis *(producer)* Cathy Lee Crosby *(actress)* Kathy Green *(writer)* Gene Perret *(writer)*

Bob Mills *(writer)*

Rick Ludwin *(NBC executive)*

Martha Bolton *(writer)*

Tony Coelho *(congressman, family friend)*

**COMEDIANS, PERFORMERS AND ADMIRERS OF HOPE:**

Woody Allen *(writer-director)*

Dick Cavett *(TV host)*

Michael Feinstein *(singer)*

Robert Klein *(comedian)*

David Steinberg *(director-comedian)*

Dave Thomas *(comedian)*

***Bob Hope: America’s Entertainer***

Script treatment by Richard Zoglin and John Scheinfeld

**To the Reader:**

In the script that follows, Bob Hope's own words are taken from his writings, memoirs, letters and interviews, and will be read by a well-known actor or comedian, such as Jay Leno or Billy Crystal. Other quotes in the script are taken from existing print, audio and video interviews, including interviews previously shot by filmmaker John Scheinfeld and executive producer Michael Kantor, as well as archival interviews from the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. Once in production, of course, additional research will be done and we will supplement and/or replace these selections with new interviews.

**Bob Hope: America’s Entertainer**

ACT ONE – HIGH HOPES

*FOOTAGE: World War II newsreel footage.*

NARRATION: September 1942. America is at war. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the country has to draft, train and outfit a formidable military force. The Japanese war machine rolls on, capturing Hong Kong, Burma, Thailand and the Philippines. On the home front monumental contributions and sacrifices from all Americans — young and old, male and female, corporations and mom-and-pop stores — are necessary. Factories now make weapons of war instead of consumer goods; women find a new place in the workforce; families endure shortages and economize through rationing of food, tires, gasoline and more. Hollywood is also galvanized. Some stars enlist. Others stay home and sell war bonds or entertain the troops.

*FOOTAGE: Stage Door Canteen footage, Bob Hope meeting troops at a military base.*

NARRATION: Bob Hope is on the front lines of Hollywood's war effort.

*FOOTAGE: Montage of clips of Hope in his early Hollywood years: movie roles, radio show, personal appearances, etc.*

NARRATION: He is one the most popular entertainers in the country: a movie star with a string of box-office hits, host of the top-rated comedy program in radio. His topical jokes and his wisecracking, cowardly “everyman” character are both a tonic and an escape for a stressed-out nation under the constant threat of war.

*FOOTAGE: Scene from* Caught in the Draft *(1941): Hope plays an egotistical movie star who is scared to death of the gunshots in a battle scene he is shooting.*

NARRATION: He begins broadcasting his radio show from military camps and loves the wild reception he gets.

BOB HOPE (V.O. from 1942 radio show): A lot of these sailors sleep in hammocks. You know what a hammock is. That's government-issued curvature of the spine. [LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE]

MEL SHAVELSON (writer for Bob Hope): We learned what the soldiers were laughing at and we put it into the show. And the people at home then learned what the soldiers were laughing at. So they felt part of our Army overseas and that was an important contribution.

*FOOTAGE: Rare newsreel shots of Bob Hope and his cast on board a transport plane.*

NARRATION: In September of 1942, Bob Hope travels to Alaska to entertain U.S. troops guarding against a possible Japanese attack on the Aleutian Islands. One night, the man who plays cowards on screen is suddenly facing real danger. Flying from Cordova to Anchorage on a

threatening night, the Air Force plane carrying Hope and his three fellow entertainers is suddenly enveloped in fog and sleet. One engine conks out, and so does the radio.

BOB HOPE (TV interview): We said we were never gonna fly at night up there. But there was a general having a big street party for us, and we had to get back. And we got up into this storm. They lost the radio. And they put the parachutes and the Mae Wests on us. We're 13,000 feet over Anchorage, and the guy says when you jump, pull these things.

ROBERT GATES (co-pilot; audio interview): It was a pretty scary night. Bob came up to the cockpit, tapped me on the shoulder and said, “They’re all on their knees praying back there.” I said, “Tell ‘em to keep going ‘cause we’re going to need all the help we can get.”

*FOOTAGE: An airplane disappears into the fog.*

SHERWOOD SCHWARTZ (writer for Bob Hope): Bob Hope was embedded with the soldiers. And the Marines. And the Navy. And America loved him for that. He brought America to every foxhole. He did things that were very dangerous. I mean, he could have been killed a number of times.

*FOOTAGE: An airplane caught in a horrendous storm.*

NARRATION: To help guide the plane in, all the searchlights at Elmendorf Air Force Base near Anchorage are turned on, in violation of security rules. Finally the pilots catch sight of them.

BOB HOPE: The general put up the anti-aircraft lights, and one of them pierced through the clouds, and the pilot followed it down. We got out, and I tell you, I turned into a little girl. They had to carry me away.

MORT LACHMAN (writer for Bob Hope): When that happened he wasn't a guy working for money any more. He was like a guy on a mission. He found something that was bigger than money, bigger than anything, which was filling the need of those GIs, the desperate need they had to laugh. And he did it better than anybody that I ever saw work an audience.

*FOOTAGE: Hope entertaining the troops, golfing with Presidents, receiving awards, etc.*

NARRATION: Hope would go on to make three more overseas tours to entertain U.S. troops during World War II. And he doesn’t stop after victory in Europe and the Pacific. He keeps a special relationship with the troops, launching an annual tradition of traveling somewhere in the world to entertain them every Christmas. He becomes a friend to Presidents, a role model for public service in Hollywood, and a one-man symbol of the optimistic, can-do American spirit.

*FOOTAGE: Scenes of Hope in Vietnam.*

NARRATION: And then, during a much different kind of war, he becomes a controversial figure: an outspoken supporter and symbol of a war that many people hated. His experience during the traumatic 1960s divides Hope's audience, and damages his legacy.

RICHARD ZOGLIN (Hope biographer): I think Bob Hope was the most important entertainer of the 20th century. He reached the top — or close to it — in every major field of popular entertainment: vaudeville, Broadway, radio, movies, television and live concerts. He was an innovator as comedian, as a businessman, and as a star who found a unique role for himself on the public stage. He really helped define what we think of as the modern show-business celebrity.

KATHRYN FULLER-SEELEY (media historian): Hope was one of the first cross-media or trans-media stars. This was a lot harder to do then than it is today. Each of the major media was owned and operated separately, and they put up barriers. Hope was able to break them down. You needed different skills to succeed in various media — you needed a big personality and big voice to make it on Broadway. Yet radio prized intimacy and closeness. Bob Hope was one of the few who could do it all.

WOODY ALLEN (filmmaker): He was a wonderful comic actor. I grew up loving him, emulating him and borrowing from him.

JAY LENO (former *Tonight Show* host): Bob Hope was America's comedian. He really worked hard at making everybody laugh.

*FOOTAGE: Vintage photographs of young Leslie Towns Hope and family, family shots in England, a ship's manifest for the Hope family's crossing, etc.*

WORDS OF BOB HOPE (read by well-known actor): I was born in 1903 in London, England. It was so foggy, I could hardly see the doctor before my face. My mother’s name was Avis Towns Hope. She really had a fine voice and did a lot of singing. My father’s name was William Henry Hope. He didn’t have such a good voice and he just did whatever my mother told him. They decided to name me Leslie Towns Hope and at the time I didn’t care one way or another. But when I grew up and began to care, and it wasn't one way — it was the other. So I changed it.

*FOOTAGE: Moving images shot by Thomas Edison of immigrants landing at Ellis Island in 1903.*

WORDS OF BOB HOPE (cont’d): Our family left England shortly after I was born and sailed to America. What a glorious sight as all the little Hopes clambered up on deck as the ship steamed into New York Harbor. We were yelling so loud you could hardly hear the cattle. It was the first time the Statue of Liberty ever thumbed its nose at anyone.

*FOOTAGE: Archival shots of Cleveland at the turn of the century; Hope family photos.*

NARRATION: Between 1882 and 1914, when the Statue of Liberty beckons the world's "huddled masses yearning to breathe free," twenty million immigrants come to the United States, bringing pieces of their old culture and beginning to make contributions to their new one. Hope,

the fifth of seven sons, is four and a half when the family settles in Cleveland, moving into a bustling immigrant neighborhood on the city's east side. Hope's father, a stonemason, has trouble finding work and takes to the bottle. All of the Hopes must work to help make ends meet. Young Leslie takes on various odd jobs starting at age 12: newspaper vender, taffy puller, delivery boy for the local market. He hustles people at the local pool hall. For a brief time he even becomes a boxer.

BOB HOPE (TV interview): I had a friend who was competing in a state tournament under the name Packy West. So as a gag, I decided to call myself Packy East. I used to joke that I was the only boxer who was carried both ways — in and out of the ring.

NARRATION: He is not a good student. The only class he enjoys is music. At age 15 he is arrested

— probably for shoplifting — judged a delinquent, and sent to reform school.

*FOOTAGE: Intake papers for the Boys Industrial School.*

NARRATION: He serves two stints at the Boys Industrial School in Lancaster, Ohio — released once, then readmitted after he breaks parole. Hope never talks about it, but this marks the end of his formal education.

*FOOTAGE: Photographs of young Leslie Hope as a dancer, with various dance partners, and appearing in small-time vaudeville revues.*

NARRATION: Instead, he goes into show business as…a dancer. He teams up with various partners, playing amateur shows in Cleveland and, later, touring the Midwest in small-time vaudeville revues. Although he works hard, success does not come easily. He splits from his partner, changes his first name to Bob — and decides to try a comedy act on his own.

*FOOTAGE: Archival film of bizarre vaudeville acts.*

NARRATION: From the 1880s to the 1920s, vaudeville is the most popular form of entertainment in America. Singers, dancers, plate-spinners, ventriloquists, musicians, acrobats, animal trainers and comedians…anyone capable of keeping an audience’s interest for more than three minutes…can work in vaudeville. Hope begins to work as an emcee, introducing the acts and making jokes to keep the show moving.

*FOOTAGE: Never-before-seen Hope home movies of Bob during his vaudeville days.*

NARRATION: Most of the comedians in vaudeville go from town to town repeating the same packaged routines, often playing ethnic characters. There are tipsy Irishmen and skinflint Scotsmen; baggy-pants clowns; comedians in blackface. But Hope brings something new. He presents himself as an all-American wiseguy, accessible to everyone, a comedian who melts the melting pot. He learns how to ad-lib and develops a more spontaneous, conversational style of comedy — the first really modern stand-up comedian.

LAURENCE MASLON (theater scholar): Many of the successful ethnic comedians who came out of vaudeville are promoting their idiosyncrasies and personas to make themselves stand out. Sometimes these idiosyncrasies were quite garish — think of the

fake moustache of Groucho Marx or the funny glasses of Eddie Cantor. And blackface was still a distancing mask used by singers and comedians. Bob Hope does something, in its way, quite courageous; he doesn’t hide behind a mask. He goes out there and says, “Hey, folks, it’s just me." Luckily he was charming enough to pull that off.

JOHN LAHR (critic): He was a bright package of assimilated poise and pragmatism — the all-American average guy. The older generation of funnymen gave off a whiff of immigrant desperation and sadness at what had been left behind. Hope was an all future. He was an up-to-the-minute, fast-talking go-getter on holiday.

NARRATION: Hope spends almost 10 years in vaudeville, and it is his show-business training ground. It makes him a versatile and adaptable performer, gives him a solid work ethic, teaches him the *business* of show, and makes him forever careful with his money.

LINDA HOPE (daughter): He loved a live audience. He loved the activity, the moving from place to place, the strange hotels, the food that often was not so good. There was something that obviously called out to him, and I think it dates from his experiences in Vaudeville.

*FOOTAGE: Archival film of Broadway in the 1930s: Rare photos and film of Hope’s Broadway performances.*

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: It is rumored that my act killed vaudeville. I emphatically deny that I had anything to do with the death of vaudeville…but I must admit that I was one of the pallbearers. From vaudeville it was only a short step to musical comedies. But I tripped anyway and fell right into a Broadway show called “Ballyhoo of 1932.”

*FOOTAGE: Rarely seen Bob Hope screen test.*

NARRATION: Vaudeville in the early '30s is on its last legs, losing its audience to newer media innovations such as radio and talking pictures. With the advent of sound, the movies are searching for new comedy talent who can speak. Many vaudeville stars, like Eddie Cantor and Jack Benny, are transitioning into pictures. But Hope has trouble. In 1930 he fails a Hollywood screen test. In 1933 he tries again.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: The first thing to appear on the screen was my nose. This was followed by more nose. Then my chin came on the screen, and between the two of them there was hardly any room for me. After the test I asked the director what he thought of my acting. He said, “Anything you do after this will be a comeback.”

NARRATION: Hope settles on Broadway instead. But he doesn't give up on the movies. In New York, he gets an offer to appear in a short comedy film, to be shot during the day while he appears on Broadway at night.

*FOOTAGE: Hope’s first short, “Going Spanish.”*

NARRATION: In the 1930s a comedy short or two would precede the feature film. These are cheaply made vehicles intended to showcase up-and-coming talent.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from other Hope shorts — "Paree, Paree," "Calling All Tars," "Watch the Birdie.”*

NARRATION: Over the next two years, Hope will appear in several of these movie shorts, but they make little impact. He has more success on Broadway where his breakthrough role comes in *Roberta*, the Jerome Kern musical that introduced the song "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." One night, after a performance in December 1933, Hope goes to a night club with one of his fellow cast-members, George Murphy, and meets someone who will have a profound impact on him for the rest of his life.

DOLORES HOPE (video interview): I was singing at the Vogue Club, and one evening George Murphy, an old friend of mine, came in to see the show, and he brought this young man. We found that we had a lot in common. We loved dogs. We loved golf. I think it was instant love. I went home and told my mother, 'I think I've met my husband.' She was in shock and she said who is he? I said he's a chorus boy in *Roberta.* When I saw him perform at a matinee, I was too embarrassed to go backstage. I thought he was just a chorus boy, but he was actually one of the stars.

*FOOTAGE: Early shots of Bob and Dolores; marriage license papers, headline from the New York* Herald-Tribune *announcing their engagement, etc.*

NARRATION: They marry soon after — ignoring one slightly inconvenient fact. Bob is already married. He had tied the knot, secretly, with his former vaudeville partner, Louise Troxell, in early 1933.

RICHARD ZOGLIN (biographer): Bob and Dolores always said they were married in February 1934 — in Erie, Pennsylvania. Actually, that's where Bob got married to Louise, a year earlier. And their divorce didn't come through until November 1934. So Bob and Dolores must have fudged the date of their marriage. It's not entirely clear when they *did* get married. But they stayed together for 69 years.

*AUDIO: Clip from Hope’s first radio appearance in 1933 on* The Fleischman Hour, *starring Rudy Vallee.*

NARRATION: Commercial radio is barely a decade old, but it is quickly reaching critical mass. By 1932 60% of American homes own a radio, and two national networks, CBS and NBC, have sprung up to supply the audience with free in-home entertainment.

*AUDIO: More early Hope on the radio: emcee of "The Intimate Revue" and "Atlantic Family Hour."*

NARRATION: Seeing work dry up in vaudeville, Comedians jump into radio as a lifeboat. In 1932 alone, Ed Wynn, Fred Allen, Jack Benny and Burns & Allen make their radio debuts. Hope is a step behind these better-established stars, and it takes him a while to get used to the new medium.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: It all seemed so strange, talking into a microphone in a studio instead of playing in front of a real audience. I got nervous on those first radio shows and the engineers couldn’t figure out why they heard a thumping noise when I did my routines, until they found out I was kicking the mike after each joke.

NARRATION: Hope is a regular on three different radio shows in the mid-1930s — all short-lived. Broadway still seems like Hope's best bet.

*FOOTAGE: Color home movies of Hope, Merman and Durante on stage in* Red, Hot & Blue.

NARRATION: In October of 1936 he opens in a new Broadway musical by Cole Porter, *Red, Hot & Blue*. Ethel Merman and Jimmy Durante are the show's biggest stars, but Hope makes good use of his third-fiddle role, teaming with Merman on a song that will become a standard, “It’s De- Lovely.”

*HOPE AND MERMAN (audio recording):*

*“The night is young, the skies are clear So if you want to go walking dear,*

*It's delightful, it's delicious, it's de-lovely...”*

NARRATION: But when the curtain comes down in April of 1937, so does Hope’s Broadway career. It’s been a great run, lifting him out of the vaudeville trenches and turning him into a marquee name. He resists Hollywood, saying he's too sophisticated for the movies.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: I had a gigantic chip on my shoulder about Hollywood. Hollywood was for peasants, I decided. New York was my town. The New Yorkers were sophisticated enough to understand and enjoy my suave, sterling style. Hollywood was hicksville.

NARRATION: But in 1937, lured by a contract from Paramount Pictures, he and Dolores board the Super Chief and head for Hollywood, and an uncertain future.

*FOOTAGE: The Super Chief disappears into a tunnel.*

ACT TWO – LAND OF HOPE AND DREAMS

*FOOTAGE: Hope arriving in Hollywood, posters for* The Big Broadcast of 1938.

NARRATION: Hope's first feature film is an all-star musical-comedy called *The Big Broadcast of 1938*. W.C. Fields is the top-lined star, and Martha Raye and Dorothy Lamour are also in the cast.

*FOOTAGE: Scene from* The Big Broadcast of 1938*: Hope acting as emcee of the shipboard entertainment.*

NARRATION: The movie gets only mixed reviews. But Hope is suave and appealing, and in one scene he wins raves.

*FOOTAGE: Hope and Shirley Ross singing the opening verse of "Thanks for the Memory": “Thanks for the memory*

*Of rainy afternoons, swingy Harlem tunes*

*Motor trips and burning lips and burning toast and prunes How lovely it was.”*

MICHAEL FEINSTEIN (singer and musical archivist): The director of the film, Mitchell Leisen, wanted a song for Hope that was somewhat comedic. He assigned it to two Paramount songwriters, Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger. The song they came up with wasn't quite what Leisen had in mind — it was more sentimental than comedic. But he took it. He asked them to write some new verses. Finally he was satisfied.

BOB HOPE (TV interview): Mitchell Leisen, took me across the street from the studio and gave me some advice. “In pictures you work with your eyes,” he said. So I threw them all over the set. Some of the grips were catchin' 'em upstairs. If you ever see *Big Broadcast of 1938* — my eyeballs, man, they change sockets once in a while.

*FOOTAGE: More from the song, with Hope gazing moonily upward at the sky. And then, at the song's conclusion, Ross collapses in Hope’s arms, in tears.*

LARRY GELBART (writer for Bob Hope): In that film he showed something to the audience that he never, ever showed again, to my knowledge, in any medium. And that was a kind of vulnerability and a sweetness. It’s incredible how wistful he is. How appealing he is. I wish he had done more of, of that kind of thing.

NARRATION: *The Big Broadcast,* and especially "Thanks for the Memory," launches Hope's film career.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: What a thrill — my name on a dressing room at Paramount Studios. It didn't even bother me that they wrote my name on the door in chalk. “Thanks for the Memory” really started me off. And at last I was climbing the ladder of success. I had stood in front of the ladder so long I was beginning to feel like a paper hanger’s assistant.

*AUDIO: Opening of Hope’s first radio show for Pepsodent.*

*FOOTAGE: Hope at the radio microphone with cast, crew and guest stars.*

NARRATION: Paramount lines up three more films for Hope in 1938, to cash in on his *Big Broadcast* success. He also gets his own radio show, sponsored by Pepsodent toothpaste. Hope is one of the few younger stars to challenge the big radio personalities of the decade, like Jack Benny and Burns and Allen.

KATHRYN FULLER-SEELEY (media historian): Radio was reaching for a family audience. These shows drew heavily on vaudeville. The old vaudeville jokes were a way to create

one mass audience. Hope was one of the few newer comics to break in. He brought a younger-generational perspective, of rat-a-tat-tat, more like a modern-day stand-up.

NARRATION: Unlike most of the established radio stars, Hope does not have any familiar routines or an established character to build on — like Jack Benny’s cheapskate, or Edgar Bergen’s monocled dummy, Charlie McCarthy, or Jim and Marian Jordan’s small town married couple, Fibber McGee and Molly. Hope has to build his show from the ground up. He hires a staff of young writers to help him.

SHERWOOD SCHWARTZ (writer for Bob Hope): Most of the comedians on radio were doing the same jokes they had done in vaudeville for years. But Bob realized he couldn't do that.

MEL SHAVELSON (writer for Bob Hope): One of the secrets of his success is that he realized that every week the same people would be listening and therefore he had to have new material. So he decided to hire enough writers to write a brand new show every week. Not only that, he wanted us to write timely jokes. Nobody had ever done that in vaudeville because you used the same act for a year. We got to write jokes about what was in the news. He was the only one doing that at the time.

*AUDIO: Sampling of Hope’s radio jokes of the era.*

NARRATION: Hope is not the first comedian to do topical jokes. He often pays tribute to the late Will Rogers, the homespun satirist who achieved great popularity in the '20s and early '30s with his pointed comments on politics and the American scene. But Hope is younger, hipper, and he brings a fresh, fast-paced gag style. He provides the model for nearly every late-night TV host, from Johnny Carson to Jimmy Fallon. And the seeds for almost all of modern American stand-up comedy.

LARRY GELBART (writer): He just he sort of matched the electricity that was bringing the medium to you. He was kind of a Jimmy Cagney of comedy, you know, he just rattled stuff off. All the comedy was squeaky clean except Hope was known, known for slipping in some naughty bits. Something about the skirts are so short you know, I kissed the wrong cheeks or something. Kind of a famous joke of his which I just mangled. Almost every young comedian now has some Bob Hope DNA in him. Or if he hasn't got Hope directly, he got it from a comic in between.

SHERWOOD SCHWARTZ (writer for Bob Hope): Here's a secret of his. He would finish a joke and then he'd say, “And I wanna tell you…” But he didn't wanna tell you anything. He just wanted the audience to know the joke was over. It was his own personal timing. It was extraordinary.

LARRY GELBART (writer for Bob Hope): The shorter the joke, the greater the volume. That was his style. Bingbadabangbang and then maybe, maybe a topper, you know, so you would get a joke and a half. That's what was responsible for that machine gun like delivery. He just kept pumping them out at an audience. Brevity was the essence of his wit.

*AUDIO: Clips from Hope monologues.*

NARRATION: *The Pepsodent Show* explodes on the scene. Within three years it has surpassed the kings of radio, Jack Benny and Edgar Bergen, and become the top-rated show on radio.

Although helped by sidekicks like the zany Jerry Colonna, Bob Hope is at the center of everything. And he begins to develop a character, carefully crafted by his writers.

LARRY GELBART (writer): The character the writers created for him was a kind of everyman. He represented a lot of the audience in wanting to get the girl, wanting to be brave, wanting to come up with the answer, the solution, be the hero, and he just wasn't quite up to it. And if ever he did get any of the above, it was lucky, or something he did that he didn't even realize he was doing.

*FOOTAGE: Scenes from* The Cat and the Canary*, with Hope wisecracking his way through a scary haunted house.*

NARRATION: In movies, too, Hope begins to develop a distinctive character: the brash coward, wisecracking his way through a haunted house in *The Cat and the Canary* — the 1939 film that really establishes him as a top movie star.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* Ghost Breakers *(1940),* My Favorite Blonde *(1942) and other Hope films of the early '40s.*

NARRATION: Hope plays variations on this cowardly character in a string of early '40s movies — almost all of them hits.

HAL KANTER (writer): The reason that Hope played a coward so well is that deep down heart – inside of his heart he was a coward. (laughs). I think.

LARRY GELBART: No, that was an act, and nothing -- he put it on the way you put on make-up. Hope was a very confident, man in his own life. He was a brilliant businessman. His manager once said to me that Hope could have been the president of General Motors. He was very, very smart. And, I don’t think he, he never failed to attract women and he several brilliant careers going on all at once.

*FOOTAGE: Bob Hope and Bing Crosby clowning around onstage — at the Capitol Theater in New York, at Hollywood benefits, on the golf course*.

NARRATION: Bob Hope and Bing Crosby meet for the first time in 1932 when they appear on stage together at the Capitol Theater in New York. Crosby is already a big singing star, Hope still a fledgling Broadway performer. But they find an instant rapport onstage, ad-libbing comedy bits between Crosby's songs. They reconnect in Hollywood five years later, and Paramount executives get the bright idea to put them in a movie together.

*FOOTAGE: Scenes from* Road to Singapore*: Hope and Crosby bantering with each other, playing a game of patty-cake to escape from thugs, etc.*

LEONARD MALTIN (film critic and historian): It’s an overused word, but I think chemistry is the right word to describe what they had. I think the toughest thing to create is that feeling of spontaneity, and that’s what they got. It seemed that if Bob and Bing were actually playing with each other, bantering with each other trying to top each other with, with gags, and with lines, that seemed to be pulled out of the air, not memorized from a script.

*FOOTAGE: Another clip from* Road to Singapore.

NARRATION: *Road to Singapore* is the top-grossing movie of 1940. Hope and Crosby bring a new kind of spontaneity and improvisational quality to screen comedy. They are always cutting up, throwing in offhand jokes, and speaking directly to the camera.

LEONARD MALTIN: The beauty of the *Road* movies is that the audience felt as if they were being let in on something. That they were privileged to be sort of eavesdropping on, on some funny stuff or being let in on an inside joke that otherwise they would never have gotten.

*FOOTAGE: Collage of the gags from* Road to Zanzibar, Road to Morocco, Road to Utopia.

WOODY ALLEN (filmmaker): When my mother took me to see *Road to Morocco,* I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life. He had the best comedy delivery I've ever seen.

NARRATION: Hope and Crosby go on to make seven *Road* pictures together. As performers, they are forever linked, one of the great comedy teams in show-business history.

HAL KANTER (co-writer, *Road to Bali*): A lot of good comedy comes out of conflict – you can’t have two guys who both agree. They had to have one guy playing the straight man and the other one playing the fool, the comic. And that’s the way they divided it up.

Except they kept switching. You could never – you could never quite tell who’s gonna do the punch line. Because they were both very amusing guys. They were wonderful together! I think that Bing was more educated than Bob was. You know, first Bing had gone to college. Bing could read. Bob didn’t go to college, and he had trouble reading but he finally learned how to read. Especially – especially numbers. (laughs)

*FOOTAGE: Hope and Crosby clowning around together on one of Bob's TV specials from the 1950s.*

NARRATION: They have an uncanny rapport onstage, and they loved working together. Even at the end, when Crosby dies of a heart attack in 1977, they are in the middle of planning another *Road* picture. But, surprisingly, they are not close friends offstage. They are very different people: Hope is a workaholic who enjoys fame and loves being part of the Hollywood scene.

Crosby is more aloof and laid back, ambivalent about his fame. When he starts a new family with second wife Kathryn, Crosby moves away to northern California.

MARCIA LEWIS (TV producer): After Crosby died, I was in the editing room late one night with Bob, as we were putting together a tribute show to Bing. We were looking over

some clips and suddenly Bob turns to me and says, "You know, I never liked Bing. He was a son of a bitch. In all the years we knew each other, he never had Dolores and me over for dinner."

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* Louisiana Purchase *(1941) and* Nothing But The Truth *(1942).*

NARRATION: By 1941 Hope is one of the Top 10 box-office stars in America. He has the number- one show on radio*,* and his personal appearance tours — often with his radio sidekicks, like Jerry Colonna, and sometimes Dolores as a singer— are drawing overflow crowds. It is clear that Bob and Dolores are in Hollywood to stay.

*FOOTAGE: Archival footage of the buildup to World War II: Hitler, German troops, American factories tooling up for war, the draft lottery.*

NARRATION: But war clouds are gathering. In May 1941, Hope begins broadcasting his radio show from military camps around the state of California. Isolationist sentiment in the country remains strong, but Hope's serviceman jokes forge a bond to the men who will soon be defending the country, and help acclimate the nation to the military mindset, and idea of war.

*FOOTAGE: Archival of Pearl Harbor and FDR’s "Day of Infamy” speech.*

NARRATION: After Pearl Harbor, Hope is at the front lines of Hollywood's war effort, helping to rally spirits, peppering his monologues with jokes about gas shortages and rubber rationing, and closing his shows with direct appeals to Americans to sacrifice for the war effort.

*AUDIO: Hope radio broadcast:*

*“This is Bob Rubber-Drive Hope, telling you guys out there that we're all gonna keep turning in our rubber suspenders until we've caught the Axis with their Panzers down.”*

*FOOTAGE: Shots of Hope on war-bond tours in the U.S., entertaining at military camps, playing in charity golf tournaments, etc.*

NARRATION: Hope goes on war-bond tours and makes his near-disastrous trip to Alaska in 1942. Then, in the summer of 1943, when the tide of war begins to turn in the Allies' favor, he goes on a two-month tour of U.S. bases in the British Isles, North Africa and Sicily. Hope is hardly the only Hollywood star to travel overseas on these USO-sponsored tours. But no one is more indefatigable or connects more strongly with the troops. It is a mission that Hope eagerly grabs, and it means a lot to him.

*FOOTAGE: Newsreel of Hope entertaining the troops overseas*.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: Playing the European Theater, or any theater of war, is a good thing for actors. It's a way of showing us that there's something more important than billing; or how high your radio ratings are; or breaking the house record in Denver.

NARRATION: The USO tours also give Hope something he craves — wildly enthusiastic audiences, the best he's ever seen.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: We soon discovered you had to be pretty lousy to flop in front of those guys. They were so glad to see somebody from home that they yelled and screamed and whistled at everything. And for a little while, they were able to forget completely their own problems and what they'd been through, or what they might be expecting to go through.

*FOOTAGE: Selection of Hope's GI jokes during the war.*

THOMAS DOHERTY (historian): One thing that's often forgotten is how transgressive Hope's GI jokes could be. He gave voice to the soldiers' gripes and frustrations— voicing sentiments, via humor, that might get a GI court-martialed if he made the wisecracks in front of an officer.

NARRATION: Everywhere he goes, Hope visits hospitals, trying to cheer up men who are often seriously injured. Hope tells his troupe of entertainers to be upbeat, never to show their emotions.

FRANCES LANGFORD (singer on Hope's tours): We went to a burn unit, and it was pretty bad. Hope walked up to this bed, trying to make this fella smile, but nothing seemed to be happening. I could see it was getting the best of Bob. And so turned to me and said, I think this fella would like to hear you sing. And Bob walked out. It wasn't easy, I sang, and after eight bars the boy began to cry. I finished in a whisper.

NARRATION: Novelist John Steinbeck, covering the war for the *New York Herald-Tribune,* sees Hope in action and sends back this dispatch.

WORDS OF JOHN STEINBECK: When the time for recognition of service to the nation in wartime comes to be considered, Bob Hope should be high on the list. In some way he has caught the soldiers' imagination. He gets laughter wherever he goes, from men who need laughter ... The battalion of men who are moving half-tracks from one place to another, doing a job that gets no headlines, no public notice and yet which must be done if there is to be a victory, are forgotten, and they feel forgotten. But Bob Hope is in the country. Will he come to them, or won't he? And then one day they get a notice that he is coming. Then they feel remembered.

NARRATION: After his widely publicized tour of the European theater in 1943, Hope goes to the South Pacific in 1944 — hopscotching to islands that have only recently been recaptured from the Japanese. For GIs just days away from battle, the experience is unforgettable.

*FOOTAGE: Clips of Hope and company entertaining in the South Pacific - e.g., Langford closing a show with new lyrics to "Thanks for the Memory."*

PATTY THOMAS (USO entertainer, audio interview): It was way too much for me at 21. I couldn’t believe it. It was a heartbreaker. Guys watching us with guns, going to the front lines the next day to protect me. I still can see them, smiling, happy, singing happy birthday to me. That’s a thing you don’t forget.

SHERWOOD SCHWARTZ (writer): And of course when he went into the Army shows that solidified him with everybody in America. Every woman, every man, every kid loved him for different reasons. He did things that were very dangerous. He took a lot of chances and I think part of that is what made the audience love him even more because he just wasn't telling jokes. He was out there.

NARRATION: Hope also puts his talents to work in films, features and shorts, designed to boost morale and provide the country with a few rays of sunshine during this stormy time.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* Hollywood Victory Caravan *and* Star Spangled Rhythm.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from a film of a Command Performance radio show Hope does for the troops guest starring Judy Garland and Lana Turner.*

*FOOTAGE: Archival shots of the war, the D-Day invasion, etc.*

NARRATION: On the home front, Hope becomes the voice of the war, lifting up the nation's spirits on the radio as surely as President Roosevelt does in his speeches. On the morning of the successful D-Day invasion, Hope throws out his regular Tuesday night show and instead broadcasts a moving tribute to the triumphal day.

*FOOTAGE: Bob Hope at the radio microphone.*

BOB HOPE (V.O. radio broadcast): What's happened during these last few hours not one of us will ever forget. How could you forget? You sat up all night by the radio and heard the bulletins, the flashes, the voices coming across from England, the commentators, the pilots returning from their greatest of all missions, newsboys yelling in the street.

And it seemed that one world was ending and a new world beginning, that history was closing one book and opening a new one. And somehow we knew it had to be a better one....

NARRATION: The acclaim pours in. TIME Magazine puts him on the cover, with the headline "Hope for Humanity." He gathers his wartime experiences in a book, *I Never Left Home*, which shoots to the top of the bestseller lists. By the end of the war Bob Hope is a national hero. To many Americans, and certainly the troops, he *is* America.

*FOOTAGE: VE Day, VJ Day, soldiers coming home, America resuming normal life, Hope at home with Dolores and a family that now includes four adopted children.*

NARRATION: After the war, Hope assumes that his wartime mission is over, and he returns to the business of show. In movies he branches out into new genres: costume pictures, private-eye spoofs, Westerns.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* Monsieur Beaucaire.

WOODY ALLEN (filmmaker): In pictures like *Monsieur Beaucaire* he’s wonderfully funny. Both of us have the exact same wellspring of humor. There are certain moments in his older movies where I think he’s the best thing I’ve ever seen.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* My Favorite Brunette.

NARRATION: The Hopes adopt two more children, Kelly and Nora, and acquire a second home, in Palm Springs. Dad isn't around a lot, constantly on the road — not a bad father, just a distant one. But it's clear that his career always has priority.

LINDA HOPE: I wish I had got to know him better. He was not somebody you'd sit and tell your troubles to. Dad didn't deal well with illness and other bad things. Not that he wasn't caring. He'd just say, “You'll work it out”.

HAL KANTER (writer): He used his radio show to slough off his movie work. He used his movie work to slough off his radio show. He used the both of them to slough off the golf game, and he used his golf game to slough off his family, and he would travel anywhere to get laughs. And to pick up a few bucks too, incidentally.

*FOOTAGE: Moments from never-before-seen Hope home movies.*

NARRATION: The absences often involve women. Hope is not a faithful husband — though the stories of his womanizing are carefully kept out of the press by his diligent entourage. One long- term girlfriend, Marilyn Maxwell, appears with him often on stage, on TV and in movies. Dolores never speaks about it, ever the devoted and discreet wife.

BOB MILLS (Hope writer): Everybody knew about the womanizing. I remember once talking to Dolores about it late in life. She told me that she knew Bob was a rover from the start, and she told him, "You can do anything you want — as long as you don't bring any of it home.”

LINDA HOPE: I'm sure that my mother knew what was going on, and she just decided that he was worth going through whatever she had to go through, to have the life and be Mrs. Bob Hope. But I don't think any of the other women had the significance to him that she did and that the family did.

*FOOTAGE: Hope playing golf, hobnobbing with Crosby and other Hollywood friends.*

NARRATION: In 1945 Hope is a pioneer once again. He persuades Paramount to let him set up his own production company to share in the profits for all his movies. In doing so he creates a business model that will be followed by countless stars to come. A shrewd businessman, Hope becomes one of the richest stars in Hollywood — investing in oil with his friend Bing Crosby, purchasing a stake in his hometown Cleveland Indians baseball team, and accumulating real estate on a large scale, at one time reportedly owning more than any other private landowner in California.

*FOOTAGE: Rare 1947 sign-on for KTLA TV.*

NARRATION: January 22, 1947. Paramount Pictures prevails upon its biggest star to emcee the inaugural broadcast of its TV station, KTLA. Hope has no experience in television, but he realizes its enormous potential and is game to try.

*FOOTAGE: Rare newsreel of Hope’s TV debut.*

NARRATION: In all of Los Angeles there are only 322 television sets*. Variety’s* review declares, “KTLA’s debut rates low as entertainment.”

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* The Paleface*.*

NARRATION: Hope is in no hurry to embrace television. His movie career is going great guns. *The Paleface*, a Western spoof with buxom co-star Jane Russell, is one of his biggest hits yet. A year later, in *Sorrowful Jones*, he appears for the first time onscreen with Lucille Ball — his favorite

co-star, who would join him in three more films. *Sorrowful Jones* is another breakthrough for Hope, the first in which he plays a semi-dramatic role.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from* Sorrowful Jones*, with Hope and Lucille Ball and child actor Mary Jane Saunders.*

LEONARD MALTIN (film critic and historian): *Sorrowful Jones* is the first attempt that he made and that the studio made to actually have him play a character. Not to play that Bob Hope guy that we all knew, but to play a Damon Runyon character. You don't think of Bob Hope’s screen character having any tenderness. But for this one, they wanted to give him some humanity.

NARRATION: In 1949 Bob Hope is the No. 1 box-office star in America, idolized by a new generation of fans.

WOODY ALLEN (filmmaker): Bob Hope? I’m practically a plagiarist. It's shameless how I can steal, you know, from him. I don't mean steal the content of jokes. But I do him. I lean on him. He's the genuine article.

*FOOTAGE: Scene from Bananas, with Allen doing his Hope-influenced nervous-schlemiel routine.*

DICK CAVETT (talk show host, author): I saw him in person when I was in junior high school in Lincoln, Nebraska. He came through town to do a show. I went with a friend and afterwards we went to the stage door to try to meet him. I shook his hand and said, "Fine show, Bob.”

NARRATION: Hope's operation continues to grow. He adds more writers — as many as a dozen on staff at any one time — to supply him with everything he needs: radio scripts, jokes to punch up his movies, monologues for his personal appearances, commencement speeches, eulogies. The writers get used to phone calls at any time of the day or night from their demanding boss.

MORT LACHMAN (writer): He loved writers. That's the one thing about Bob that was different. He enjoyed his writers and they were sacred to him. We worked every day of the week. Hope always needed jokes. And we didn't call them jokes, you that? We called them “Crumbs for the Bear.” He was insatiable. He always needed more. Crumbs for the bear, you could never fill the bear.

HAL KANTER (writer): He’s a glutton about jokes. And probably about money too. Except Bob appreciated what his writers gave to him and he paid them handsomely for their contribution. If he was a glutton he wasn’t a selfish glutton. He was – he was able to spread his gluttony around among – among his writers.

NARRATION: And then, in the spring of 1950, Hope makes a bold gamble.

*FOOTAGE: Opening from Bob Hope’s “official” TV debut, his first NBC special, in April 1950: “Television…well, they finally got me."*

NARRATION: On Easter Sunday he hosts is first television special for NBC. It is a risky move, because the movie studios are petrified of television, fearing the new medium will gobble up their audience. They discourage their top stars from doing television.

*FOOTAGE: Milton Berle in his* Texaco Star Theater.

NARRATION: The big stars of radio are also holding back, wary of jeopardizing their meal ticket by taking a chance on the new medium. The first big star of television is a comic who never made much of a mark in radio or motion pictures, Milton Berle.

KATHRYN FULLER-SEELEY (media historian): Television was entirely based in New York. And most of the radio stars were out in Los Angeles. TV was going to be live and quick. That's why Milton Berle comes on like gangbusters, with his quick New York patter and fast gags and the burlesquing and all that. But that's not the pace of a radio star like Jack Benny.

NARRATION: TV is clamoring for Hope. But he plays hard to get. In 1949, after an NBC executive writes a letter urging him to get into TV, Hope sends a hesitant reply.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: Berle can have that medium all to himself for the next year. Then I shall have my head blocked and we'll all go back into vaudeville. Without a doubt television will really be going in a couple of years and we will have to put on our very best manners and do a nice half-hour show every week. I don't think any less than that will do, as television will have to become a habit ... maybe one of the nastier habits, but nevertheless an interesting one.

NARRATION: But when Frigidaire offers to pay him more than anyone has yet received for a TV special, Hope relents. He brings his radio writers to New York to put together the show.

*FOOTAGE: Another clip from Hope’s first TV special – a corny western sketch.*

LARRY GELBART: It was caveman television. We didn't know what we were doing. We figured if a ten-gallon hat was funny, a forty-gallon hat would be funnier. Six-shooters became twenty-six shooters. We didn't know what to do. We did stuff from, that was theater based, sketches, mimes, monologues, stuff that had been done, mostly within the four walls of a theater, or a music hall or a burlesque show. And, we did radio

material. Television was just there to take the picture of the performers doing stuff from other media.

NARRATION: Yet the show draws the highest ratings for any special yet aired in television’s short history, and it launches Hope's TV career. He does four more specials for NBC that year, and continues as NBC's top-rated prime-time star for nearly 40 years — longer than any other comedy star of the era.

RICHARD ZOGLIN (biographer): Almost all the other comedy stars from TV's golden era

— Sid Caesar, Milton Berle, Jackie Gleason — had their heyday for a few years and then faded. Hope was the only one who lasted, and remained a top-rated star, into his 80s. A big reason was that he made a very smart decision at the outset — to never do a weekly series. He knew how quickly TV could burn up material. So he rationed his TV appearances, and made his specials really special.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from TV sketches from Hope's 1950s TV shows: with guest stars like Jack Benny, Frank Sinatra, Jane Russell, Rosemary Clooney, Pearl Bailey, etc.*

NARRATION: Hope transfers his variety-show format from radio to TV, and sprinkles his show with big guest stars: old pals from Hollywood like Jack Benny and Fred MacMurray, Hollywood glamour girls like Jane Russell and Lana Turner. In 1950, he gives Frank Sinatra an important TV guest shot, when Sinatra's career is at its lowest ebb. He gives a break to minority performers like Pearl Bailey, one of his favorites. Best of all are his opening monologues. They are fast and topical — a barometer of the issues, newsmakers, fads and fears of Cold War America.

*FOOTAGE: Hope monologue jokes from the '50s — about McCarthy and Eisenhower, the Soviets, etc.*

LARRY GELBART: There were usually four or five different subjects. Usually politicians, elections, campaigns, or somebody important got married that week, or had a baby. It was kind of a bulletin board of current events.

JAY LENO (comedian): I used to love Bob Hope's opening monologue. I mean, I wasn't a big one for his dancing with Brooke Shields or (doing his Hope impression) "Hey, let's take a look at the all-American football team — C'mon out here, fellas!" But to me, the opening monologue... I mean, I'm a joke guy. Give me the jokes.

PHYLLIS DILLER: He was the greatest stand-up comic ever. With him it was an art. And it was mathematics. Everything was set-up, payoff. He went for six laughs a minute. I learned so much from Bob Hope. I learned the timing thing, and where the accent ought to be. It was like music.

NARRATION: Hope depends on his writers, of course. But Hope is no absentee star: he's a hands-on editor and manager of his career. He is involved in every detail.

MORT LACHMAN (writer): He was number one in radio. Was number one in television. He was number one in movies. And in the course of those years Bob Hope picked every joke, he picked every subject for jokes, he picked every guest star that appeared. He

picked every sketch idea, he picked the plot for every movie, and he approved the script for every movie that he ever did in his whole life. He always knew what would work for him and what wouldn't.

NARRATION: Hope's unique crossover success, as a star of both movies and television, is ratified in March 1953 when he is chosen to host the first televised Academy Awards show. After fighting television for years, the motion picture studios finally decide it’s time to join forces — and Hope is the perfect matchmaker.

*FOOTAGE: Clip from Hope's monologue in the Oscar telecast.*

*“This is indeed a wedding of two great entertainment mediums, motion pictures and television. And with Oscar 25 years old, it's high time he got married. While it's true he has a child bride, it's a comfort to note the kid is loaded."*

NARRATION: Hope had already hosted the Oscar ceremony six times before — starting in the early '40s, before the show was even broadcast on radio.

*FOOTAGE: Newsreel footage of Hope hosting the Oscars in the '40s.*

NARRATION: He would continue to be the Oscars' most popular emcee — the host or co-host for the awards show a record 19 times. His monologues help create our popular image of Hollywood, giving us an inside peek at its glamorous stars, gossiping about their divorces, poking fun at their petty jealousies.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from Hope’s Oscar monologues, e.g.:*

*“Keep your eyes on the losers tonight as they applaud the winners. You'll see great understanding. Great sportsmanship. Great acting."*

NARRATION: Hope develops a favorite running gag: getting overlooked each year for his own Academy Award.

*FOOTAGE: Clip of Hope's in 1968 broadcast:*

*“Welcome to the Academy Awards. Or as it's known at my house, Passover.”*

NARRATION: Hope never does get an Oscar nomination — but not for lack of trying. Though not all his films are hits in the 1950s, he is taking on more ambitious roles.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from Hope films of the 1950s —* That Certain Feeling, Beau James, The Facts of Life.

NARRATION: In 1955 he plays vaudeville star Eddie Foy in *The Seven Little Foys*. It is the first film in which Hope plays a real-life character.

MEL SHAVELSON (director and co-writer, *The Seven Little Foys*): The two films that I made with Bob, one was *The Seven Little Foys*. These were pictures where he was playing a biography. He could not be Bob Hope. And in both of them, he did very well because it's my opinion that a comedian has to be an actor in order to be a comedian. Unlike an actor who can't be a comedian unless he's funny.

*FOOTAGE: Clip from Hope in the dramatic courtroom scene from* The Seven Little Foys.

MEL SHAVELSON: If we did a serious scene, the first thing he'd do when the cameras stopped, he'd make a joke to break up the crew so he could get a laugh and go on. 'Cause if he didn't get a laugh he felt he wasn't getting across.

*FOOTAGE: Hope and Cagney dancing atop a banquet table in* The Seven Little Foys.

*FOOTAGE: Never-before-seen home movies of Hope traveling the world in the late '40s and '50s — Berlin, Korea, London, etc.*

NARRATION: Amid his busy work schedule — movies, television, constant traveling — Hope also finds a new role for himself on the world stage. In 1948, at the request of President Harry Truman, he organizes a troupe of performers to do a Christmas show for American flyers taking part in the Berlin Airlift. He goes to Korea in 1950 during the early days of the Korean War. His tours become an annual tradition in 1954, when Hope flies to Greenland for a New Year's Eve show at an isolated Strategic Air Command base above the Arctic Circle.

*FOOTAGE: Clip of Hope’s monologue in Greenland:*

*“I can't tell you how happy I am to be up here on the moon with you."*

NARRATION: For the first time, NBC films Hope's military show and airs it as a TV special a few weeks later. It receives the highest ratings of any Hope special that season. And every Christmas for the next 18 years, Hope will travel to a different far-flung location to entertain American troops. The resulting TV specials are nearly always among NBC's highest-rated shows of the year.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from Hope’s annual Christmas shows from Alaska, the Mediterranean, the Far East, etc.*

LARRY GELBART (writer): Ambrose Bierce said, “War is God's way of teaching Americans geography.” And it was pretty much the same with Hope. You went to places that you never knew existed. And there was Bob going into the wards. Bob talking to people heavily bandaged, heavily hurt, smiling, laughing, really making, maybe not just their day, but making more than a little bit of change in their recovery or their convalescence.

*FOOTAGE: Hope in the 1950s — golfing with Eisenhower, hobnobbing with other celebrities, looking glamorous, confident, powerful.*

NARRATION: Hope is redefining the notion of stardom. He's not just an actor in movies or on television, but a public-spirited star with a role on the public stage. In 1958 he does a TV special from Moscow — the first American TV show to be filmed behind the Iron Curtain. Hope has always been a political conservative, and Cold War suspicions are at their peak. But Hope wants to build bridges with entertainment.

WORDS OF BOB HOPE: Here was an entirely new facet of entertainment, new faces, new music, new acts. Here were people we were vitally involved with and yet knew little

about. I had no master plan, no lofty concepts. I did not intend to solve any great problems. All I knew was that there was a tremendous, stimulating, different television show to be made in Moscow. If there was a dent in the Iron Curtain, I was going to find it.

*FOOTAGE: Scenes from* Bob Hope in Moscow*: Hope narrating as he tours Red Square, introducing Soviet entertainers, delivering a monologue at the American embassy. He closes the show with an impassioned plea for understanding between the two superpowers, over shots of children on the streets of Moscow.*

BOB HOPE (V.O.): I found out that the little kids with the fur hats and the sticky faces have no politics, and that their party line is confined to "please pass the ice cream." You know, it would be wonderful if these children would someday grow up in a world that spoke the same language and respected the same things.

NARRATION: At the height of Cold War tensions, Hope's landmark special surely helps to melt some of the ice.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from several Hope TV specials in which he and his guest stars ad-lib and crack up.*

MORT LACHMAN (writer for Bob Hope): Bob Hope, ad lib? Could Bob Hope ad lib?

SHERWOOD SCHWARTZ (writer for Bob Hope): He was a brilliant ad libber. But, uh, he was also a smart enough man to know that nobody can ad-lib an entire show.

NARRATION: Hope's shows are all completely scripted. But Hope is the best in the business at tossing out an ad-lib when things go wrong — sometimes to the chagrin of his co-stars, but to the delight of the home audience.

*FOOTAGE: Clips of Hope and Janice Paige, cracking up when Fred MacMurray blows a line. Hope breaking up in laughter at a "This Is Your Life" parody with Lassie.*

*FOOTAGE: Shots of President Kennedy and the New Frontier era.*

NARRATION: The arrival of a young new President marks a generational change for the country

— and for Hope as well. JFK and his glamorous family provide a rich new reservoir of jokes.

*FOOTAGE: Clips of Bob Hope making Kennedy jokes.*

NARRATION: But the passage of time is starting to weigh on Hope. He is nearing 60 now and his style of comedy is starting to appear old-fashioned. A new breed of stand-up comics have arrived — doing comedy that is more personal, more political, less joke-driven.

*FOOTAGE: Clips of Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce, Nichols and May.*

NARRATION: What's more, very soon some major ruptures will appear in the country and the culture — and in the mass audience that, for so many years, Bob Hope had ruled.

ACT THREE – HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

*FOOTAGE: Scenes from the Vietnam War.*

NARRATION: Hope makes his first Christmas trip to Vietnam in December 1964. The war is still under the radar for most Americans, and Hope assumes it’s just another trouble spot on the globe where he can parachute in and help lift spirits.

*FOOTAGE: Clips of Bob Hope monologues from 1964 Vietnam TV special: i.e., “As we flew in, they gave us a twenty-one gun salute. Three of them were ours."*

NARRATION: The trip has harrowing moments. After stopping in Korea and Thailand, Hope and his troupe arrive in Saigon, in a motorcade from Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Just before they get to their hotel, they find a scene of chaos, glass littering the streets, crowds running.

JANIS PAIGE: (USO entertainer): They picked us up at the airport. Each one of us had a car with an officer in it. Guarded and going in this train of car. And I heard the general say, “What the hell is that?” You could see the smoke coming out, glass all over the place, everything. I’d never seen anything like it.

NARRATION: An explosion has gone off minutes before, in a hotel just down the street from where they are staying. A couple of years later, U.S. troops discover a cache of Viet Cong documents. They reveal that the bomb was actually directed at Hope and his troupe. It detonated 10 minutes too early.

*FOOTAGE: Scenes of Hope in Vietnam, entertaining masses of troops, showing off glamour girls like Ann-Margaret, Carroll Baker, Raquel Welch.*

NARRATION: Hope keeps going back Vietnam, as the U.S. commitment grows to more than half a million men. For nine straight Christmases he brings sexy Hollywood stars and jokes about a war that is sowing seeds of dissent back home.

BOB HOPE (in front of Vietnam crowd): If you don't get better ratings, this whole war may be cancelled. ... But I have real good news for you: the country is behind you, fifty percent.

JACK SHEA (director): The soldiers would sometimes sit on the ground all night to save a spot in front so they could see the show. They so desperately wanted this piece of home. It brought tears to your eyes to see their attitudes. When Bob would come on and do his show, they didn’t want to let him off. He felt it too. We really knew we were doing something that was very, very important to these people. You really knew you were doing something good, something really worthwhile.

RAQUEL WELCH (co-star of Hope tours): He'd give me advice: "When you come onstage, take the long walk, because the guys want to see you." I didn't mind. I had nothing but admiration for the man. Everything was geared for the guys. It was not blocked or

geared for the cameras. He didn’t just pass by and wave. He went and talked to them, every single guy in the ward got a handshake and photo. He was absolutely tireless.

*FOOTAGE: Scenes of anti-Vietnam protesters, President Johnson, Hope being interviews by reporters, etc.*

NARRATION: Bob Hope is not prepared for the virulence of the antiwar sentiment back home. His view of the war is similar to that of many members of the World War II generation: He simply cannot conceive that the U.S. would get into a war that it couldn't, or shouldn't, pursue to victory.

BOB HOPE (TV interview): When you say I was a hawk — I wanted to win. Just like every kid over there, they wanted to win and get home.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI (historian): The Vietnam War forced a lot of Americans to, to look inside and ask themselves, “What does it mean to be patriotic?” And, and they didn’t have the same answer. Parents and kids disagreed with each other. Grandparents and parents disagreed with each other. Kitchen table conversations around the country became heated, and there was a national divide.

JAMES BAUGHMAN (media historian): When Hope became a partisan over the Vietnam War, it was a signal that the old cultural consensus was collapsing, including the consensus on the Cold War. Like a journalist, Hope had always played to the conception that there was an American center. But that center was disappearing.

NARRATION: Hope, in the narration for his high-rated Vietnam specials, always takes care to strike a neutral, nonpartisan note, praising the soldiers and urging the nation to let them do their job.

BOB HOPE (V.O. closing words on his 1967 special): Nobody wanted this war, but we can't wish it away. The boys fighting in Vietnam want peace as much as we do. And they're fighting to get it.

*FOOTAGE: More antiwar protests, Hope at "Honor America Day," etc.*

NARRATION: Still, Hope speaks out, and he becomes a lightning rod for the protests. He hosts patriotic rallies organized by the Nixon Administration to counter the rising antiwar protests. Some colleges cancel Hope appearances because they are afraid of the demonstrations he will spark. On his Vietnam tour in 1969, it is widely reported, Hope is booed off the stage when he mentions President Nixon's plan to bring the troops home.

CONNIE STEVENS (USO entertainer): They weren't booing Bob. They were booing the idea that there wasn’t any help coming. The war had gone on too long. They were frustrated at what he was saying. They didn't want to hear it. But it threw Bob because he had never experienced anything like that. It was a rude awakening for him.

TONY COELHO (former congressman and family friend): I don’t think he thought of questioning the war. It’s what we were doing, and the government was right. That

generation – you don’t question the authority of the government. And don’t forget he knew what his homeland went through in World War II. And he was probably impacted by that to a great extent. So he didn’t question. I don’t think it’s so much naïve as much as it is patriotic. And that he became part of the system.

SAM McCULLAGH (former son-in-law): Once at a family dinner, I mentioned how much I enjoyed the movie *MASH.* He snapped back, “That's not the way it was. I've been in those hospitals. It's the best medical care.” I don't think he liked *MASH* tarnishing the military. I don't think he was used to anybody challenging his ideas. People deferred to Bob. The way you don't challenge the President of the United States. He was used to deference and adulation.

NARRATION: Hope seems out of touch with many other aspects of the '60s revolution. He makes disparaging jokes about hippies and war protesters, and those moptops from London, the Beatles. In the midst of the feminist movement, Hope still makes corny jokes about the buxom starlets he brings on his shows.

*FOOTAGE: sample clips from Hope's Vietnam shows.*

*RAQUEL WELCH: I'm most happy to be here and see all these boys. HOPE: They were boys before you came out. Now they're old men.*

CLAYTON KOPPES (cultural historian): Hope became increasingly out of step with the baby-boom generation. Vietnam is part of the story. But there are also big changes in American entertainment, as movies become more explicitly sexual, graphic and blunt. Comedy changes, especially for the young and self-avowedly hip. Hope measured himself earlier against Berle and Benny. By the '60s audiences are tuning into Mort Sahl and the Smothers Brothers.

NARRATION: More than ever, Hope is an insider in the corridors of power. He develops a friendship with Richard Nixon, who brings Hope into the White House for personal briefings on the war. In April 1972 he explains to Hope why he has just launched a bombing campaign against North Vietnam.

*AUDIO: From the White House tapes:*

*NIXON: If, after such a massive invasion, we just did tit for tat, it would be no message. What we are saying is, “Look here, if you're gonna play this kind of a game, we are going to hit you and more is to come.”*

BOB HOPE: This is five years too late, this bombing! How can you not? It's like letting a guy who has a gun, let the fellow keep bringing ammunition to fire on your house. It's stupid.

NARRATION: Hope campaigns openly for President Nixon in the 1972 election. And he rides out the war to the bitter end. He makes his last trip to Vietnam at Christmas in 1972, just a few weeks before the Paris peace accords ending America's involvement in the war. But the damage has been done.

RICHARD ZOGLIN: I think the war permanently soured much of a generation on Bob Hope. For the protest generation, Hope symbolized the war, the old conformist values of the '50s, the military-industrial complex. I think it damaged his legacy — particularly among younger comedians. They thought of themselves as rebels, thumbing their nose at the establishment. Bob Hope *was* the establishment.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from Hope TV shows showing some of Hope's old-generation jokes. In a 1970 sketch on the feminist movement, Nanette Fabray plays a female network chief who dusts the chairs before a meeting, etc.*

ROBERT KLEIN (comedian): I admired what Bob Hope accomplished. But he was not relevant to me anymore. He represented everything that we younger comedians were rebelling against. You had to cringe when you watched some of those routines.

NARRATION: The Vietnam War ends, and Nixon leaves office because of the Watergate scandal

— but the fissures in America remain. Hope continues to be hugely popular with much of the "greatest generation," and his TV specials still draw top ratings all the way through the '70s and into the '80s.

*FOOTAGE: The 1970s: Nixon resigning, Ford taking office, the Bicentennial, Jimmy Carter, Hope with an array of younger glamour girls, like Loni Anderson and Ann Jillian.*

NARRATION: The awards and honors pour in. Hope is given a gala tribute at the Kennedy Center in 1978, to celebrate his 75th birthday. Streets are named for him, hospitals, schools, theaters. He is still NBC's biggest star, the only one who can rival the king of late-night, Johnny Carson.

*FOOTAGE: Tonight Show clip, with Johnny Carson making a gushy introduction of Hope.*

NARRATION: Despite his advancing age, Hope continues to travel constantly — more than 150 personal appearances a year, even in his 80s. He hosts an annual celebrity golf tournament in Palm Springs, where he and Dolores build a lavish new home. He still keeps a close eye on every aspect of his far-flung career.

RICK LUDWIN (NBC executive): The thing that impressed me about him, here was a man who had already been a superstar in every form of entertainment there ever was, and yet he always made the phone calls himself. For every show, he would personally approve the print ad. The promo people would go over to his house, show him the mock-up of the ad and the rough-cuts of the promos, and he would make suggestions. And then the morning after a show aired he would call himself to get the overnight ratings. At that age, with that level of success, he was still out there hustling.

NARRATION: Gradually, as the ugly memories of Vietnam begin to fade, there is a rediscovery of the older, “funnier” Bob Hope. In 1979 the Film Society of Lincoln Center pays tribute to his movie work. That same year he does a three-hour special from the People's Republic of China — the first American TV special from the Communist country since President Nixon restored diplomatic relations.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from the China special -- Hope at the Great Wall, singing, "We're off on the road to China"; gabbing with Big Bird on the streets of Beijing; introducing Chinese performers.*

NARRATION: Although he has not made a Christmas tour for the troops since the end of the Vietnam War, in 1983 he is called back into service. Following a terrorist bomb that kills 241 U.S. Marines at the Beirut Airport, President Reagan asks him to entertain U.S. troops off the coast of Lebanon at Christmas.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from the Lebanon special.*

CATHY LEE CROSBY (USO entertainer): I had worked with Bob on a TV special, and I said yes to his last-minute invitation. I was in the hospital still recovering from knee surgery, and I had to start rehearsals while I was still on crutches. But I really wanted to go. He was bigger than life. For me he was an inspiration.

NARRATION: Three years later he goes to the Persian Gulf when tensions with Iran are on the rise.

*FOOTAGE: Clips from the Persian Gulf special.*

NARRATION: He makes one last overseas tour in 1990, at the age of 87, as U.S. troops are preparing for the first Gulf War. He is noticeably frail, but weathers the trip well.

BOB HOPE (monologue aboard the U.S.S. Midway in 1990): I think this is appropriate. The oldest aircraft carrier meets the oldest operational comedian.

GENE PERRET (writer for Bob Hope): He was stronger than most of us. He worked hard, did the monologues. He would do dance numbers with the women — which is not easy on a ship.

*FOOTAGE: Hope in the 1980s: in TV sketches, playing golf, accepting awards from Ronald Reagan, etc.*

NARRATION: But his TV specials are growing more stale and old-fashioned, the jokes cornier, his female co-stars looking younger and younger next to the grandfatherly Hope. He has become an elder statesman, a veritable American institution.

BROOKE SHIELDS: (actress): I was very close to him. Almost a father-daughter relationship. I knew when he wanted his ice cream, would bring him his ice cream. I’d come over to his house and he’d make me grilled cheese sandwiches. I was kind of like a pet. I always took the lead from him. I would do special things for him. I became just like a member of family in a way.

NARRATION: Younger comics make fun of him — but there is affection there too. Dave Thomas portrays Hope in a memorable sketch on SCTV, poking fun at Hope and his most famous fan:

*FOOTAGE: Dave Thomas of SCTV doing a killer impression of Hope in a sketch parodying Woody Allen's* Play It Again Sam.

DAVE THOMAS (comedian): People thought my impression of him was mean, but I was a huge fan. We got friendly in the later years. One time I got a call from Ward Grant, his publicist; ‘Bob wants you to come over to his house’. I said sure and went right over.

Bob’s upstairs in his office. He showed me his pictures on the wall. There was one of General Patton pissing in the Rhine. It was like walking through the 20th century.

DICK CAVETT: Once I wrote an introduction for him: "Here, like the Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore and the Statue of Liberty, is one of America's landmarks." He told me, "Hey, I love that introduction."

NARRATION: Age is catching up with him. His hearing is failing and his eyesight is so bad that the cue cards have to be blown up to a giant size so he can see them. But Hope, addicted to the applause and reluctant to give up the limelight, refuses to retire.

LINDA HOPE: I said, "Dad, you don't really keep on with this. This is not you. You don't want people to remember you at less than your best." And he'd say, "Yeah, but I've got a deal with NBC." He was just so habituated to doing this kind of thing that it was very difficult for him to let go of it.

RICHARD ZOGLIN (biographer): It was sad, because I think too many younger people only remember Hope from those declining last years. What they forget is what a dynamic performer he once was, how innovative and how influential.

NARRATION: In 1992 Bill Clinton is elected President. He is the 11th Commander-in-Chief to be put under a comedic microscope by Hope, who has always been an equal opportunity jokester.

*FOOTAGE: Montage of political zingers at the expense of politicians and Presidents of both parties.*

NARRATION: In 1993 Bob Hope turns 90, and NBC mounts an elaborate three-hour special in his honor. Hope is too frail to do a monologue any more … and too deaf to hear much of what is going on. But he sits and watches and laughs and occasionally mists up.

*FOOTAGE: Montage of clips from the 90th birthday special: Johnny Carson’s touching tribute, kind words from old friends and co-stars, testimonials from all six living Presidents, and Hope saying a few shaky words of thanks.*

NARRATION: Hope will headline a few more specials before he finally leaves the stage for good, and he will live to the ripe age of 100. It is only fitting — an exact century for the man whose career so neatly defined 20th century entertainment.

*FOOTAGE: From the 90th Tribute…Lucie Arnaz, daughter of Lucille Ball, says a few words about her mother and Hope and then… through the magic of TV technology… she steps into the original scene from* The Big Broadcast of 1938*, assumes the Shirley Ross part in a duet with Bob on “Thanks for the Memory.” As they continue to sing, we DISSOLVE TO*

*a montage of clips recapping Hope's life and career — his boyhood, the vaudeville years, clips from his Hollywood films, entertaining the troops in World War II, television, Vietnam, etc.*

*FOOTAGE: As the song reaches the final "thank you," we…*

FADE TO BLACK THE END

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