

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

April 30th, 1951

Description: In the interview segment, ER's guest is the entertainer Bob Hope.

Participants: ER, Bob Hope

[ER:] Last Christmas, I enjoyed myself thoroughly visiting Mr. Bob Hope on his television program, and today I'm delighted that he's taken a few minutes from his short and busiest day in New York to visit me on my program. It's good to see you again, Mr. Hope.

[Bob Hope:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, it's very nice to be here.

[ER:] I heard the other day you were going to Europe soon, and I've just been wondering, is there any connection between your leaving the country and the Cleveland Indians opening their baseball season?

[Bob Hope:] [Laughs] I didn't think you knew anything about the Indians, uh? You're well-informed. No, I-I wouldn't leave them because they look like a hot team this year. They got a lot-lot of young blood, and I think they're going places.

[ER:] Well then in other words you're telling me that the Indians will win their pennant?

[Bob Hope:] No, I'm not making that claim, but they'll be in there fighting for it.

[ER:] Oh, [Bob Hope: Er.] they'll be in there to make a good fight anyhow.

[Bob Hope:] They certainly will.

[ER:] Well, why are you going to Europe at this time?

[Bob Hope:] Well, this is sort of a combination trip I'm taking this time. Uh going over to play a couple of weeks at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London, back to vaudeville, my original stamping grounds, and after that I'm going to uh go over and play for the troops in Germany, and then come back and play golf in the British Amateur in Wales, May the twenty-first. And uh then probably fly back and stop in Ireland, Shannon, remember where we met the last time and I-- [ER: Well, my it would be funny if we met again I'll tell you why.] Is that possible?

[ER:] Well, I go next Friday [Bob Hope laughs: No.] and I go to London only for a night uh, and then go through to Geneva, Switzerland, for the Human Rights Commission. [Bob Hope: Oh yeah.] bBt I come into London twice, two weekends, the two following weekends to do some uh films for television, and [Bob Hope: I see] um on kinescope do you see in London, and then one Paris on film. And then some programs, perhaps, in both places, but I'll only have Saturday and Sunday on those two occasions, but we are told that we will finish in Geneva on the nineteenth of May. Now of course, you can't always be sure that you'll finish [Bob Hope laughs] just when they tell you, but it might just happen we'd meet again in Shannon! (2:10)

[Bob Hope:] Well, I hope when you're in London you'll come and see the show.

[ER:] I certainly will [Bob Hope: Be.] try to.

[Bob Hope:] Be my guest.

[ER:] Oh how wonderful. Well, thank you.

[Bob Hope:] You have this record of uh [Bob Hope laughs] this invitation. (2:21)

[ER:] Well, you and I have uh, crossed very nearly. I know once, I went out to Galapagos when you had been all around that area of the um Caribbean where I'd also been. [Bob Hope: That's true.] When I got to the Galapagos, I found the most discontented men; they didn't want to see me at all. They were just sad because you hadn't come there. [Bob Hope laughs] And it was such a horrible place that you couldn't blame them for being sad. [ER laughs]

[Bob Hope:] Well, I-I don't believe that part of it, that they didn't want to see you, because I followed you in the South Pacific in 1944, and I heard [ER: Oh, did you?] from a lot of the boys down there the thrill they got about seeing you.

[ER:] Well, now that's very nice of you to say. I always [Bob Hope: It's true.] am glad to know that those trips were worthwhile because I-- they were really harder than people thought they were.

[Bob Hope:] Well, they were appreciated believe me.

[ER:] And uh I'm awfully glad if they really had a good time. Well, um despite your many activities in other places Mr. Hope, we always think of you as a person living and working in Hollywood. Do you think it's difficult to bring up a family in Hollywood?

[Bob Hope:] [Laughs] Well, I think you'd have to ask my wife about that. She has that problem, and I just go back to her every once and a while with my laundry, at least she claims that.

[ER:] [Laughs] Oh she can.

[Bob Hope: [Laughs] But uh we do pretty well, and uh we have four kiddies now. They're all living in Palm Springs because we've had to break up our house in North Hollywood where we live and make a larger place, because our family is uh growing and uh they all demand their own little studies and everything. [ER: You have four uh?] We have four kiddies, yes sir. [ER: Four children] That's true.

[ER:] Well, isn't that interesting. And um uh do they like uh sports as much as you do?

(4:05)

[Bob Hope:] They sure do. They like to ride and uh they-they're starting to play golf. We want 'em to play golf so maybe they can win the money back that I've lost on the links.

[ER:] [Laughs] Well, I think that sounds wonderful. How old are they?

[Bob Hope:] Well, the oldest [ER coughs], Linda, is eleven and my boy is ten, and I have two that are four.

[ER:] Two that are four? [Bob Hope: Four years old.]

[Bob Hope:] Mhm.

[ER:] My, I think four, of course, is uh-- eleven and ten, um they're beginning to get more difficult, but four is a fascinating age.

[Bob Hope:] [Laughs] Oh we find it the other way. [ER: You do?] We find that two and four are the most trouble.

[ER:] Two and four are the most trouble. [ER and Bob Hope laugh] Well, I didn't say they weren't the most trouble, I think they probably are, but I think they're the most fascinating.

[Bob Hope:] Well, I shouldn't tell you because you should tell me [ER: Well, I don't know.] After all you should be the technical director [ER coughs] in that particular problem.

[ER:] I don't know about that, but I think that um uh it's fun anyway you never--it's always a gamble because whatever you do you always wonder whether you're doing the right thing. [ER laughs] But nevertheless, it's um it's one of the most worthwhile things I think to bring up because--

[Bob Hope:] I think uh-- yeah, Bing [Crosby] has found that to be true, because uh after all his kids are supporting him now.

[ER:] I see. Well, that's a good idea. [ER and Bob Hope laugh] Well, now I'd like to ask you something more about Hollywood. Um does Hollywood inspire the same kind of civic interest that other cities of its size inspire?

[Bob Hope:] Well, I do think uh I do think we-- it does in a lot of ways, and I think we-we have to fight for our civic pride being in Hollywood because we're-we're sort of a glamorous city, and I think we're-we're sort of a target out there for the whole world at times, and there's a lot of nice people that really have to get up and slug back from Hollywood. We have a lot of civic pride about that country, because it's not only a beautiful country but its-it supplies a lot of worthwhile things like entertainment, a lot of wonderful people.

[ER:] Well, I um I think that Hollywood um has many of the loveliest uh-uh houses that uh one can find um in this country and-and the um the views in the canyons [Bob Hope: Oh it's a beautiful country.] around there are perfectly beautiful I think. I'm-I'm not so sold on Los Angeles because it takes so long to get from one part of Los Angeles to the other. [ER laughs] [Bob Hope: It sure does] I don't know of any place that is so widely sort of scattered over the landscape, [Bob Hope: Oh.] so that if you want to go from downtown uh out anywhere why it takes you all day practically.

[Bob Hope:] Well, I have uh real estate out there and I want you to come out and ride our new Hollywood Freeway which will take you [ER: Oh is that] from downtown right out to the uh the valley now in about ten minutes.

[ER:] Really?

[Bob Hope:] Oh it's wonderful, it really is wonderful.

[ER:] That is really wonderful.

[Bob Hope:] They've needed it for years.

[ER:] Of course, I shouldn't uh-shouldn't talk much because getting round New York at times is uh slightly difficult.

[Bob Hope:] [Laughs] Well, you don't have any trouble getting around. You certainly have been a--

[ER:] Well, I get around but uh (Bob Hope laughs) but it certainly-- traffic can be bad. Well now, what I want to say next won't be anything new to my listeners, they've already heard I know, that you concluded a year of chairmanship of the Cerebral Palsy League and have been made honorary life chairman. What do you feel was accomplished by the League all over the country last year? (7:38)

[Bob Hope:] Well, I-I do think that uh we made uh a lot of citizens conscious-conscious of the uh the victims of cerebral palsy, and it's ah it's a particular ah thing that uh needs a lot of education as far as the public is concerned. I know I played--I left here a year ago February after playing two weeks at the Paramount where I accepted the chairmanship of this Cerebral Palsy Foundation. I went to Syracuse and did a concert, uh and you know I do comedy, that's my intent. And uh at the finish of this show, I said I want to congratulate the committee on cerebral palsy and uh five or six people laughed when they heard cerebral palsy. They thought there was something humorous about that. [ER: They thought there was something humorous about that?] Yeah, yeah just the palsy angle you know? And, of course, after I talked a little while and explained and uh they got the idea, but that's what uh -- and when we were kids we would see a kid, a spastic kid or a kid with palsy we use to kinda laugh at him and [ER: Well, uh--.] we thought that you know he's sort of an idiot which is wrong these kids are--

[ER and Bob Hope overlap]

[ER:] Of course, because very often their IQs are uh higher than uh- than uh perfectly normal children.

[Bob Hope:] That's right. That's right. True.

[ER:] It doesn't always affect the brain at all.

[Bob Hope:] No, that's right, that's right.

[ER:] Uh but I-I do think it's one of the saddest things that happens to children, and I'm so glad that um you've begun, uh through the Cerebral Palsy League, to educate the public, because when we were in Washington, one of the girls in our office had uh-uh a baby affected that way, and the only place for -- there was- there was no public place--there was no public place to send that child for education and care, proper care and finally she took it to the one doctor from Johns Hopkins who did have um uh a sort of combination hospital school and so forth. And it took all of her salary to pay for the child, and then she and her husband had to live on his government salary, and government salaries aren't big, and they were paying for a little house outside of Washington. And I will never forget uh what a real problem, and how terrible it seemed to me that the public had so little knowledge that absolutely no provision had been made for public care.

[Bob Hope:] Yeah, that's true in a lot of places in the country, and uh a lot of clinics [ER coughs] have been erected in the past year, and I think they're gonna bring a lot of happiness to parents of kids like that. (10:26)

[ER:] Well now, you've done a lot of education on it, which is the important thing, and people don't try and hide a child.

[Bob Hope:] That's right, that's very, very important.

[ER:] Well, that I think is when the most uh important things that can happen to bring a child [Bob Hope: A lot of wonderful workers on cerebral palsy.] all the care and all the alleviation uh of the um uh harm that's been done so that they can have as happy a life as possible. Now I'm sorry we have to stop just a minute and let our announcer have a word, and then we'll come right back to this talk.

[Break 11:03-11:09]

[ER:] Now we're coming back to the talk with Mr. Bob Hope whom we're so glad to have with us today, and since I was talking of one chairmanship I'm going to ask you immediately about another one. You've assumed the responsibility of chairman of National Defense Week, Mr. Hope. What is National Defense Week and what are its goals?

[Bob Hope:] Well, I uh really think it's to uh remove the complacency of a lot of American citizens and keep-keep the entire country alert and to point up our-our--the dangers of uh any kind of enemy, and uh although I don't need any work [Bob Hope laughs] with uh with my particular activities um I--

[ER:] Seems to me you're about the most busy person I know [Bob Hope laughs] How do you do all these things?

[Bob Hope:] Well I uh eh most of the things I do [ER coughs] I enjoy and uh--

[ER:] Well, I can understand that it would be enormously useful to everybody to have you acquainting people with the needs for being alert to National Defense Week, and I do think it's necessary for us to be made to think that we are constantly getting ready not to bring on war, but in the hope of keeping war away and of being able to win at peace.

[Bob Hope:] Yes, indeed. And there's a lot of fellows over in Korea. I had the pleasure of uh visiting a lot of boys over in Korea in October, and there's a lot of boys over there trying [ER: They're-- who are in a real war.] Yeah, they're in a quite of uh rugged police action over there.

[ER:] Very rugged police action. [ER laughs]

[Bob Hope:] They sure are. (12:45)

[ER:] Well, um now I'd like to turn to something rather pleasant other than such serious subjects, and I know you've always loved sports, so tell me what your favorites are?

[Bob Hope:] Well, I think uh golf is my favorite sport.

[ER:] Golf is your favorite? [Bob Hope: Oh yeah.] That was my husband's favorite!

[Bob Hope:] That's right, that's right.

[ER:] He never spoke-- that was the only thing he never spoke of after he was ill, and that's why I knew he minded so not [Bob Hope: Yeah.] being able to play again. He never mentioned it, but uh when he was young of course up to the time when he was ill, that was really his favorite game. (13:22)

[Bob Hope:] Yeah it's a wonderful game when you get out with a bunch of your friends and beat around in the open, you know, I don't think there's anything better than that.

[ER:] Keeps you out.

[Bob Hope:] It sure does.

[ER:] What other sports do you like?

[Bob Hope:] Well, I like to boat, I like to fish, and uh that's about it.

[ER:] That's about it. [Bob Hope laughs] Those are the things you like to do.

[Bob Hope:] That's about all I have time for.

[ER:] Well, now when you play golf with Bing Crosby, who keeps the scores when you have a match?

[Bob Hope:] Well, we usually bring our own attorneys with us.

[ER:] Oh, you do?

[Bob Hope:] Right to the golf course, [Bob Hope laughs] and uh even though he won't admit it he's one of my best pupils.

[ER:] Oh that's wonderful. [ER and Bob Hope laugh]

[Bob Hope:] No, we- [ER coughs] we enjoy playing ah together, and we've played a lot of matches together for different benefits you know and it's been a lot of fun. It really has.

[ER:] I know you have. Well, to be serious for a moment, have you formed any opinions about the number and activity of communists in the theatrical world?

[Bob Hope:] Yes, I have, and it's quite a serious thing at this time because there-there's a lot of people that are accused of being communist and uh probably with uh a lot of foundation. But I think in our town of Hollywood, I think people were tricked into uh getting into uh committees without knowing that they had any communistic affiliation. I know a couple of writers that I had working for me years ago uh were accused of being communists, and I know these boys had nothing--no idea of supporting a red regime. They just happened to be in a Progressive Citizenship committee, and uh in that committee they happened to have a communist that was trying to slide the whole committee over and, of course, they were accused of being that. I think all-all people in our business [ER coughs] should have the chance to clear themselves once and for all, and then get a fresh start because it's mighty mixed up.

[ER:] Well, you know that is something which I feel I've felt very strongly that there are two things that have happened in the entertainment world. First of all, it's usual for you all to be asked to do benefits. You can't look into every organization that asks you to do a benefit or to appear for a brief few moments or so forth, but now if you appeared on a number of those, you're classed as a communist if they happen to have been communist front or-or near communist organizations. Now, it seems to me that that's a very bad criterion for a lot of entertainers who don't have any more idea about politics than the man in the moon, and then I think there was another group, and I wonder if you'll agree with me on this, some of them were writers, some of them were um actors, who um ha--were very easy for people to appeal to on idealistic grounds. They dealt in oh high-sounding phrases like um the um brotherhood of man and the wanting to have um the underdog have a better chance [Bob Hope: Independent rights.] and all that sort

of thing. And I think they were used by the communists very often without having any idea that they were being used.

[Bob Hope:] That's right.

[ER:] And I-I am sure that um given a really good opportunity to explain how they did certain things, we would find that even some of the people who became party members really didn't realize that they were doing more than joining something that they looked upon as a great new experiment and an ideal. And later they became disillusioned, and some of them may have had sense enough to formally drop it, others thought oh well it doesn't matter I just don't do anything for it anyway. But I honestly believe that hard though it would be, those people should try and get themselves cleared and explain why they did some of the things they did and show the public that they're perfectly good and loyal citizens. They're not people that should walk the rest of their lives under a cloud of fear and suspicion. Um they perhaps should be a little more careful, and I think most of them will be don't you? [ER laughs]

[Bob Hope:] I certainly do. You know in 1939 I did a benefit for the Russians at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre and-- (18:15)

[ER:] Well but that was normal in '39, [Bob Hope: That's true.] but you see most people have forgotten it because [Bob Hope: That's right.] then they were our allies, and we were very grateful for the divisions that they were keeping busy.

[Bob Hope:] And a lot of people got caught in the switchover. Now that-that-that's a lot of people in our business. It's unfortunate.

[ER:] It's very unfortunate. And uh I-I don't think the average person understands what happened, and I'd like to see a real organized effort made to clear all the people who are not really communist. [Bob Hope: I think it can be done.] I would like to see it done, because the entertainer uh and the writer for entertainment have such an influence and to see it spoiled -- I mean such an influence for good, and to see it spoiled is very bad, really very bad in this country. Well, I know that many of my listeners have heard your story before, but I know too that they'd like to hear it again from you, and I wonder if you'd tell us a little about your boyhood and some [Bob Hope laughs] of the turning points in your career because when we talk about this thing of communism, uh some of that is tied up with what happened to people in their youth.

[Bob Hope:] I imagine so. But uh going back to my boyhood, I really hate to go back that far. It's rather gruesome in fact. [ER and Bob Hope laugh] But uh I was very lucky though in uh the way things happened to me, especially in this business I think I got a lot of breaks, a lot of fine breaks. Because I uh started in Cleveland and I did all kinds of jobs from paper boy, selling papers to John D. Rockefeller Senior, at uh a Hundred and Fifth and Euclid in Cleveland. And going to school, and uh finally working in my brother's butcher shop, and selling shoes, and working in the Chandler Motor Car Company, and finally taking--going into boxing, amateur boxing, and after my third fight how I'd ride into the dancing studio still bouncing. [ER laughs] And uh then into uh amateur theatricals and right on up, and I uh got many a break. And I think one of the high points of my career was the uh night I played in the White House Correspondents dinner for our wonderful president, late President Roosevelt [ER: Oh] and uh really a great, great night. That's really one of the highest spots of my career.

[ER:] Well, I-I remember because he had such a good time, he really did enjoy things like that.

[Bob Hope:] Oh he was a wonderful audience, I'll never forget that. Because uh the President was sitting at uh head table naturally, and uh the entire audience would laugh and then look to the President, [Bob

Hope laughs] and the President wouldn't disappoint 'em, he just [ER: No, he'd just have a wonderful time too.]-he'd just scream, just-just. And, of course, we had a nice visit with you [ER coughs] during the uh caravan, the victory caravan, when we had tea at the uh--[ER: I remember.] with you when you invited us for tea at the White house [ER: I remember that very well.] That's pretty nice for a butcher boy from Cleveland, you know. [Bob Hope and ER Laugh]

[ER:] Well, but that's the American story. That's why [Bob Hope: That's true, that's true] um that--I think that's why the American story is a wonderful story. Uh are you allowing yourself the luxury of deciding what type of entertainment you prefer, radio, TV, or impromptu in-person shows?

[Bob Hope:] Well, uh the way things are going now I don't have the chance to decide, they're-they're deciding for me. So far I'm hooked into three mediums which is TV, radio, and-and uh in-person shows, but I enjoy all of them I will tell you that.

[ER:] You enjoy them all?

[Bob Hope:] I certainly do.

[ER:] You have no preferences?

[Bob Hope:] No, it's a lot of work, but I enjoy them all. I know-I know [ER: I think that] we can't just do radio from now on I know we have to do TV.

[ER:] Well, I-I think it's just uh wonderful to be able to work in all three mediums and like them all and enjoy them all. I want to congratulate you and thank you so much for coming to talk with me today because now our time's come to a close and we have to leave our audience, but I know they've enjoyed it as much as I have.

[Bob Hope:] Uh thank you it's been a pleasure. (22:24)

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