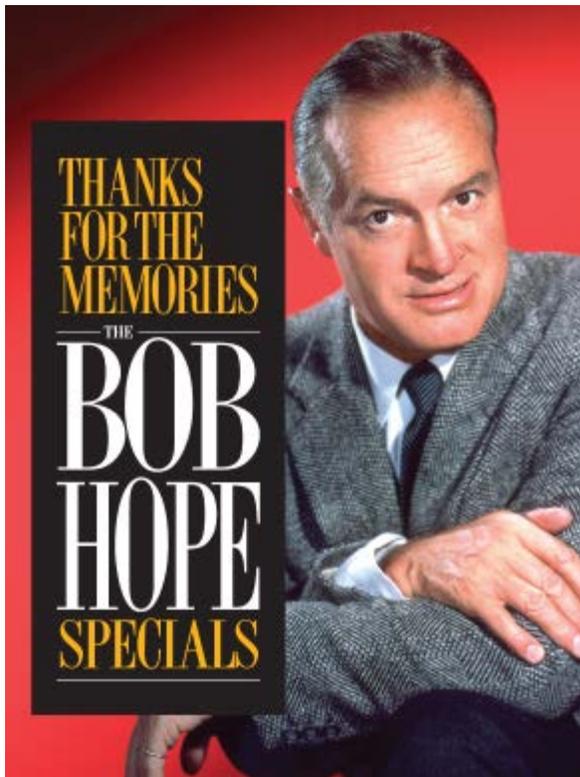


Winsome Wisdom – Thanks for the Memories

December always brings back the memory of a special event for me; a 48 hour ribbon of time which I shall remember to the end of my days. The year was 1970. I was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force, and OIC of security for the 48th Security Police Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, England.

The base at Lakenheath had been selected as the first stop on the Bob Hope USO Christmas Tour, and you could cut the anticipation with a dull butter knife. Your humble correspondent attended scores of meetings prior to the troupe arrival. Schedules were prepared and distributed by the base information officer, Capt. Grant Hill, while yours truly drafted, revised, and finalized a plan to insure the safety of Mr. Hope, cast, and crew.



Then the big day was upon us. The Hope entourage arrived as scheduled, and the preparations commenced. Since the stage (a flatbed trailer) and equipment shack were moved into place, the first order of business was to get everyone settled into the VIP quarters, have lunch, then get to rehearsals.

While Les Brown and the orchestra were doing run-thrus of the numbers to be performed by Gloria Loring, Lola Falana, and Hope, I was with writers Mort Lachman and Bill Larkin as they rifled through copies of the *Stars and Stripes*, *Time*, *Look*, and *Sports Illustrated* looking for gags to use in the opening monologue, as well as the bit featuring Cincinnati Reds catcher (and future Hall of Famer) Johnny Bench.

That evening, the entertainers and base staff met at the officers' club for an informal dinner and the obligatory welcome speeches. I sat next to Les Brown and Mort Lachman, and right across from the man himself, Bob Hope. And while the base commander bored us all with some monotonous soliloquy, the table conversation was as entertaining as any of the stage shows.

Next day, we hit the ground running with cue cards to be prepared, stage set up, sound and lights check, and wardrobe layout. Then it was ShowTime, and what a show it was! Songs, dancing, and skits were as plentiful and the laughter and applause that accompanied them.

And then the grand finale... the traditional Bob Hope Christmas Show singalong of *Silent Night*.

Then they packed up and headed off for Germany for the next show.

It was a very special Christmas that year, and not just because Bob Hope and his show stopped by. For forty-eight hours, a little slice of America came to visit a group of GI's a thousand miles from home... and we were nestled in the safety of merry old England.

Imagine how the troops in Vietnam felt when the Bob Hope Show arrived at their camps!