



**Leslie Townes (Bob) Hope.**

**....Entertaining the Troops**

### **THE IDLE AMERICAN**

**Hope, Highways and Byways....**

**Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury**

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Bob Hope, beloved humanitarian, comedian and patriot, may have been America's best ambassador of international goodwill--ever. He was able to "localize" his jokes and stories no matter where he appeared.

Always on the road, this British-born icon became a naturalized American at age four. He spent some 80 of his 100 years starring in vaudeville, on Broadway, in movies with Bing Crosby, and on both radio and TV. Little wonder that he received more than 2,000 significant awards, including 54 honorary doctoral degrees from universities, but--sadly--never an Oscar.

He spent most Christmases on the road entertaining military personnel, often in war-torn places. Remembrances of this masterful entertainer make us smile. We are thankful for the memories....

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**Hope was** a frequent visitor to Texas, where he always had jokes--new, clean, clever and localized. He once said of West Texas: "Miles and miles of nothing but miles and miles."

He joked that if the snow ever melted in Alaska, Texas would again be the biggest state.

My guess is that he (and his writers) keenly watched for joke ideas. They probably even took notes from the many Burma-Shave sign ditties once nailed to fenceposts across the nation. Maybe they also found material on iconic Route 66, America's "main street."....

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We so need Hope in these strife-pocked times.

We could use some Burma-Shave signs, too. And, how about some clean TV ads, like the late Clara Peller taking Wendy's to task about the beef location?

Instead, we get smutty innuendo ads, some by national companies that should know better....

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**What little** humor remains often is found on bumper stickers. Some have religious overtones, including one spotted on a rear bumper in heavy traffic. In small lettering, it asked, "Are You This Close to Jesus?" Another on a "five o'clock freeway" said: "Jesus Would Let Me Merge."

Admittedly, some are at the other end of the propriety spectrum. A couple appeared on trucks hauling sewage.

One identified its company, "Duty Calls." The other warned: "Back Off. We Ain't Haulin' Whipped Cream."....

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**Then, there** are real life situations involving churches AND, uh, sewage, in want of a better word.

I learned about one recently while addressing a senior adult luncheon in Bono, a tiny Johnson County community few people pass through on the way to town.

Parishioners defused a recent "duck problem," and are at the ready to take on a nearby buffalo should it decide to storm a fence, looking for greener grass on the other side....

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**A while** back, ducks owned by a grandmotherly lady nearby took to meandering on the church yard.

Some days, uh, “duty” called, leaving church grounds untidy, fouled by the fowls. Bono folks practiced The Golden Rule concerning the issue. The duck owner was immediately sympathetic, positively responding in a manner akin to Granny on The Beverly Hillbillies.

She cut to the chase, issuing terse instructions in a note on the front door of the church should the annoyance continue: “Shoot ‘em.” This little church, serving a picturesque rural area since 1876, is now “duckless,” and no shots have been fired. Spotting the buffalo on my drive home, I sang, “Oh give me a home, where the buffalo roam, and the deer and the antelope play.”....

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**Now, with** the election at hand, let’s all exhale. Look for reasons to smile, even if we have to watch old Bob Hope re-runs, chuckle at dozens of old Burma-Shave ditties on its website or simply think of “what ifs,” such as ducks learning hard lessons about trespassing.

Still another “what if” concerns Valley Ranch, home of the Dallas Cowboys, where there is said to be a buck that moves about aimlessly, but never stops.

It was Dallas columnist/author/speaker Dave Lieber’s line: “God absolutely does NOT answer every prayer. Jerry Jones still owns the Dallas Cowboys.”...

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**Dr. Newbury, longtime university president, continues to speak and write. The Idle American, begun in 2003, is one of the nation's longest-running syndicated humor columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com. Website: www.speakerdoc.com.**