

BOB HOPE

In May, 1937, Bob Hope signed to do a comedy spot on the Woodbury Soap Program in New York. It was his first real break in radio, although he had appeared on a number of shows since 1933.

His comedy style was well received by New Yorkers and his radio career was beginning to take off.

In the midst of the 26-week series, he signed with Paramount Pictures to appear in "The Big Broadcast of 1938" and had to go to Hollywood.

Not wanting to lose their young comedian, the Woodbury people arranged for Bob to do his portion of the show from NBC's Hollywood studios.

Shortly before his first West Coast broadcast, Hope discovered that NBC had not arranged for a studio audience, not thinking he wanted one.

"I've got to have an audience to bounce my comedy off or I'm dead," he said.

But it was too late to print and distribute tickets and no one had any idea of how to round up an audience.

Hope had to think fast. He knew that Edgar Bergen broadcast from an adjacent studio and he asked Bergen if he could "kidnap" his audience. Bergen agreed and, at the end of his own show and with the help of an NBC usher using strategically placed guide ropes, Bergen's audience quickly filed into Hope's studio just in time to hear the New York announcer say, "And now we take you to Hollywood for Bob Hope . . ."

So he stole his first California radio audience! But it worked. "Without the laughter and the feeling that comes from a live audience, I'd have been stone cold dead in the market," Hope said. "By the time I got around to my second show from Hollywood, NBC had tickets printed and distributed and I was okay."

Bob Hope celebrates his 80th birthday on May 29, 1983.