

Hopalong Cassidy

"HOPALONG CASSIDY was the hero of twenty-eight western novels written by Clarence E. Mulford in the twenties, thirties, and forties. Giving testimony to the lasting popularity of this fictional cowboy hero is the very real fact that a dozen of the novels are still in print.

WILLIAM (BILL) BOYD, a star of the silent movies under contract to Cecil B. DeMille, brought HOPALONG to the screen in a feature produced by Paramount Pictures. Paramount made 34 more pictures with Bill Boyd as Hoppy and United Artists produced 31 others, also with Bill Boyd. Never in Hollywood history has one man played the same character in as many features. When audiences the world over saw the films, Bill Boyd and Hopalong Cassidy became synonymous.

Time Magazine in 1950 said, "Boyd made Hoppy a veritable Galahad of the range, a soft spoken paragon who did not smoke, drink or kiss girls, who tried to capture the rustlers instead of shooting them, and who always let the villain draw first if gunplay was inevitable." Boyd himself said, "I played down the violence, tried to make Hoppy an admirable character and I insisted on grammatical Sixty-six motion picture features starring the same actor. An incredible feat! No wonder, then, that this large body of work led Bill Boyd to television in 1950. Boyd, with remarkable foresight, had purchased the television rights to all the Hoppy motion pictures and licensed 52 of them to the NBC Television Network to be telecast as one hour episodes.

From the moment that HOPALONG CASSIDY premiered on NBC, Bill Boyd became an international hero, for the films were telecast not only in America but all over the world as well. Twelve of the remaining motion picture features that Boyd retained under the Company name, "North Vines," were edited by him into half hour episodes. Following this move, he formed a new television production company to shoot a series of 40 new half hour episodes. The company ended up creating a total of 52 half hours for the NBC network.

The public had clamored for more HOPALONG CASSIDY and Boyd complied with their demands. His popularity was astounding. He received 15 thousand fan letters a week. He received endless and persistent requests from individuals and international organizations to make public appearances. He made two worldwide tours while NBC pressed him to continue production. The stress was tremendous. He was in his sixties by this time, and he personally felt that the Hoppy character could not be properly portrayed at this age. He was also feeling the pressure of being before the cameras month after month. The year before he retired, he made 40 Hoppy episodes in as many weeks and made one more tour around the world for the Newsboys' Association.

Completing that tour, he put his horse Topper out to pasture, hung up his guns, took off his boots, and said adios to HOPALONG CASSIDY, his alter ego. Boyd was reluctant to retire because of his loyal fans and the knowledge that his large production crew would be put out of work. Fortunately, CBS was about to start shooting the series, GUNSMOKE, and Boyd was able to turn over his company to that network, assuring employment for his entire crew. Bill Boyd's television success has never been rivaled. During public appearances, as many as a million fans turned out to see him. These fans, believe it or not, included presidents, senators, congressmen, governors, mayors, admirals, generals, ambassadors, prime ministers and of course John Q. Public. Boyd didn't sing, dance, play football, baseball or basketball, nor did he box or play tennis or race cars. Boyd was merely HOPALONG CASSIDY. He smiled, waved, and shook hands. He was simply...Mr. Goodguy...everybody's favorite cowboy...everybody's FRIEND, BUDDY, PAL and IMMORTAL HERO." [<http://www.hopalong.com/legend.htm#About%20Hopalong%20Cassidy>]

