



Illness was blessing to comic's family: sons Tony and Kelly, wife Dolores, daughters Nora and Linda.

## What I've Learned from My Illness

by Bob Hope

With frankness and humor, one of the

busiest performers in show business tells how he's adjusted to a new life.

**T**HE DOCTOR SAID, "Just cool it." At least, that's how my son, Kelly, interpreted it. And there I was, on my patio, looking out over the carpet-soft green lawn, the one-hole golf course, the swimming pool—doing nothing. Even looking at my scrap-books was forbidden, so I'm taking it easy, and I'm getting better at it every day.

It's no laughing matter—not when I remember how I walked out of the Columbia Medical Center in New York last January with two choices: keep up my pace of the past twenty years and find myself doing monologues from a wheel chair, or slow down and live with my illness, until I had it licked.

The diagnosis had been some fancy Latin word. Translated into plain English, it meant a blood clot behind my left eye, with my vision cut to 30 percent. It was caused by high blood pressure which, in turn, was due to overwork. Should it spread to the main artery, I was told—well, it just couldn't.

I had the first hint of trouble last Christmas during my trip abroad to entertain troops.

I had started out tired. Three nights on the plane didn't improve my condition, nor did performing in a driving rain on the aircraft carrier *Forrestal*, or the grueling schedule that took us to 18 Army and Navy posts in 12 days.

I was plagued by nausea and dizziness, headaches

and recurrent pains in both eyes. One night at a party for our troupe in Frankfurt, Germany, I nearly fell flat on my face. In Keflavik, Iceland, I did collapse and was pumped full of penicillin by an Army doctor who ordered me to take it easy. Unfortunately, I was sure there was nothing wrong with me that a few days rest after I got home wouldn't cure. I simply didn't know what it meant to be sick. I'd lived 54 years and had never missed a day's work, never been idle.

Nevertheless, when I got home December 29, at my wife's urging I consulted our family physician, Dr. Thomas Hearn. He agreed that I should take it easy, and gave me codeine pills to relax, ease the pain, and help dilate the blood vessels.

I took the pills and ignored the rest of his advice. Three weeks later I was playing golf in Palm Springs when suddenly I couldn't focus my eyes.

Two hours later Dr. Hearn told me the blood clot was spreading. Next day I was on my way to Columbia Medical Center.

The seriousness of my condition didn't hit me until I told some newsmen who met my plane that I was going to see Dr. Algernon Reese.

One of the reporters said, "I understand he's a cancer specialist."

I thought my heart had stopped beating. I tried to

think of an appropriate joke—but I couldn't even think of an answer. Suddenly I was scared.

An hour later Dr. Reese assured me there was no evidence of cancer. But he wouldn't minimize the danger to my health.

For three days I went through extensive tests at that penicillin pentagon, which has so many subterranean passages that I ran into John L. Lewis three times before I saw daylight again.

I also passed through periods of despair and depression. I kept on feeling sorry for myself until I took a good look at the other patients—with one or both eyes missing, with heavily bandaged faces, immobile in bed or being helplessly led around by nurses. If they could live in their conditions, I could certainly learn to make the best of mine!

"At least when I meet my friends on the golf course now," I told the head physician, "they can talk about my eye instead of my nose."

He didn't even smile. "For the next two weeks," he replied soberly, "I don't even want you near the putting green."

By then I was sufficiently worried to follow his instructions to the letter. Had I had any doubts, the attitude of my family, my friends, and complete strangers would have convinced me.

A close friend in Philadelphia wrote that he and his wife went to church daily to pray for me.

I got so many letters and phone calls from all over the world that I couldn't help feeling humble. How lucky can a guy get—having friends like that. And keeping up my hectic pace just because I enjoyed it was plain selfishness!

The doctors didn't tell me to quit work entirely or indefinitely. After two weeks, I was told I could work and exercise in moderation but must conserve my strength and stop the moment I grew tired.

The first two weeks of relaxation weren't too hard. The trouble began when I started to feel better.

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### Cover:

Besides being Britain's most beautiful monarch, Queen Elizabeth II is also the busiest, as today's cover painting by Fred Steffen suggests. For the story of "How the Queen Stands the Pace," see page 6.

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