

In August 1944, a Mr. Bunny (Allan) Wallace was on his fishing boat called "Jo Ellen" setting traps in the Camden Haven River at Laurieton when he saw two Catalina aircraft heading South. One aircraft was flying very low and making a strange noise - one engine had failed. As he watched the aircraft he saw it coming in for a landing. Crew members were throwing out heavy tool boxes and many other heavy items to lighten the aircraft. After landing, the aircraft landed up on a sand bar.

Bunny took "Jo Ellen" to the rescue and soon dragged aboard Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna, Pattie Thomas, Francis Langford and the aircraft crew.

The actors were returning to Sydney after entertaining troops in Queensland. Bunny says that, when he pulled Jerry Colonna aboard, his first remark was "I thought that Sydney would be much larger than this!"

Bunny took Bob Hope to the Post Master (a Mr. Plunkett) so that he could call Sydney and then to the Laurieton Hotel for a few drinks. Accommodation was arranged at the Boarding House of Mr. Billy Wallace's mother. Bob Hope then offered to give a Concert in the School of Arts and everyone had a very funny evening. After two nights, the actors and actresses left for Sydney by road. However, before departing, Bob Hope withdrew some money from the Commonwealth Bank and hired a car and chauffeur and gave Bunny money and several cases of Canadian Whisky and asked him to look after the crew until the aircraft was repaired. This he did by taking the crew on trips to Port Macquarie and to Wauchope.

The aircraft was dragged back into the deep water with the aid of draught horses and the "Jo Ellen" and, after three weeks, was finally repaired when a spare engine arrived from Rathmines.

Bunny Wallace had formed a great friendship with Bob Hope and Jerry Colonna. He received a wallet as a present from Colonna and an invitation to visit with him in Sydney. Bunny went to Sydney to meet Colonna - as he says - "on behalf of all those at Laurieton who enjoyed the visit of these famous people."

Bunny is now retired in a Caravan park at Laurieton. In the Laurieton Hotel, there is a special corner at the end of a bar which has a polished wood sign which says "Bunny's Corner"

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Vol. 15 No. 11

THE *Holiday Coast*
PICTORIAL

FEATURE STORY

Out of the sky the Catalina BOB

Moments in Flight

Moments in Flight is the name of a fantastic new display at Port Macquarie Airport that features some of the more significant events concerning flight in our already historical community. The brainchild of Hastings Council's Heritage Officer Mitch McKay and produced by the Digital de Sign and Poster Studio, the display details some extraordinary tales, the most famous of which concerns the day top US entertainer Bob Hope accidentally crash landed at Laurieton . . .

A few years ago, America's most famous entertainer Bob Hope was interviewed on his varied life and was asked what was the 'strangest thing' that had ever happened to him.

To get this in perspective, it has to be understood that there was nobody bigger than Bob Hope. He was famous throughout the world for entertaining US troops in every theatre of war and in every war.

Well, Bob Hope told the story of how he was being transported in a Catalina Flying Boat in World War II when the plane developed engine trouble and was forced to land on the closest river . . . which just happened to be the Camden Haven River at Laurieton. That incident is one of this area's long-standing claims to fame - the day Bob

Hope landed turned the place on its ear and, fortunately, there are still a few people around who remember the incident well.

Two of them are Merv Walsh who still lives in the family home in Lord Street, Laurieton, and Sylvia Kerslake (nee Longworth) who now lives in Port Macquarie.

Merv Walsh is the son of Bunny Walsh who had a lot to do with the incident, and Sylvia Kerslake was a small child at the time, but was part of a Laurieton delegation in 1955 which went to Sydney Airport to welcome back Bob Hope to Australia. She became singularly famous when the famous funny man planted a kiss of Sylvia's cheek for all the world to see.

Merv Walsh was 13 years of age at the time and remembers the incident well.

The official account in Moments of Flight says: "In August 1944 Bunny (Allan) Wallace was on his fishing boat 'Jo Ellen' setting traps in the Camden Haven River when he saw two Catalina aircraft heading south. One aircraft was flying very low and making a strange noise - one engine had failed. Crew members were throwing out heavy items to lighten the aircraft as it was coming in to land on a sandbar.

"The Jo Ellen went to the rescue and Bunny (Merv was there, too) dragged aboard well-known actors Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna, Pattie Thomas and Francis Langford. They were all returning to Sydney after entertaining troops in Queensland. Bunny said that when he first pulled Jerry Colonna aboard, his first remark was: "I thought that Sydney would be much larger than this!"

"After accommodation was found and a few drinks at the Laurieton Hotel, Bob Hope offered to give a concert at the Laurieton School of Arts and every one had a very funny evening.

Moments in Flight



The Bob Hope Story

In August, 1944 Mr Bunny (Allan) Wallace was on his fishing boat 'Jo Ellen' setting traps in the Camden Haven River when he saw two Catalina aircraft heading south. One aircraft was flying very low and making a strange noise - one engine had failed. Crew members were throwing out heavy items to lighten the aircraft as it was coming in to land on a sandbar. The 'Jo Ellen' went to the rescue and Bunny dragged aboard well-known actors and entertainers Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna, Pattie Thomas and Francis Langford. They were returning to Sydney after entertaining troops in Queensland. Bunny said that when he first pulled Jerry Colonna aboard, his first remark was: "I thought that Sydney would be much larger than this!"

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The aircraft was eventually dragged back into deep water with the aid of draught horses. After three weeks it was repaired when a spare engine arrived from Richmond. In 1955, Bob Hope returned to Australia and upon arrival at Mascot Airport was met by a welcoming committee of Laurieton citizens. During his appearance at Sydney Stadium he fondly told the story of his crash landing in the Camden Haven inlet many years earlier and the friendly reception he had received.

Reprinted by: Camden Haven Shire Council. Photo courtesy: The Camden Haven Shire Council. Photo courtesy: The Camden Haven Shire Council.

landed and out popped HOPE

* From page 40

"After two nights, the unexpected visitors left for Sydney by road. However, before departing, Bob Hope withdrew some money from the bank and hired a car and chauffeur. he gave Bunny money and several cases of Canadian Whiskey and asked him to look after the crew until the aircraft was repaired.

"The aircraft was eventually dragged back into deep water with the aid of draught horses. After three weeks it was repaired when a spare engine arrived from Rathmines. In 1955, Bob Hope returned to Australia and upon arrival at Mascot Airport was met by a welcoming committee of Laurieton citizens. During his appearance at Sydney Stadium he fondly told the story of his crash landing in the Camden Haven inlet many years earlier and the friendly reception he had received."

Merv Walsh's recollection remembers the incident well. "It was bigger than Christmas," he said.

"I was with dad as we were catching poddy mullet for Jewfish bait and we heard the plane coming over. In those days seeing a plane was real treat, and to see this Catalina Flying Boat was a dream come true.

"I know I was happy it landed and pandemonium broke out when everyone realised that the famous Bob Hope was on board.

"They wanted to get to shore and we got them to the Laurieton Hotel.

"They didn't take much notice of me, but after they had gone, I got the job of pumping out the Catalina while it was in the river. The plane's engineer stayed at our place for two weeks waiting to replace the new engine," Merv recalls.

Sylvia Kerslake was little Sylvia Longworth at the time of the incident. She remembers going to the concert at the Laurieton School of Arts Hall and seeing the men dressed in 'sunny clothes'. "I also remember them teaching everyone the Hokey-Pokey," she said.

Sylvia's big moment came a few years later when the delegation from Laurieton went to Sydney Airport to meet Bob Hope on his return to Australia.

"My dad, Alfred Longworth, was part of the planning and he took me along.

"I was stunned when at the airport Bob Hope planted the kiss on the cheek that is now in the photo.

"I remember him being very kind and along with band leader Artie Shaw and drummer Buddy Rich, they invited us to dinner that evening at their Sydney Hotel

"It was a wonderful thing for them to do and is one of my

Macquarie Airport.

The others in the series include:

- Pioneer Aviatrix Nancy Bird-Walton who was born at Kew in 1915 and was taught to fly by the famous Charles Kingsford Smith. She is regarded as the 'mother' of women's aviation in this country. She founded the Australian Women Pilots' Association in 1950 and was its president until 1990.

- De Luca's Glider made aviation history on July 21 1910 when Dr Paul De Luca treated the residents of the town to an exhibition of his flying machine. He launched an unmanned glider from a street in Westport. The glider was designed and built with the help of Henry Wilkins, a local undertaker and carpenter. After climbing to 70 feet on its third attempt, it crashed to the ground, causing much hilarity.

- Dulhunty Bros Port Macquarie Clipper. In 1949 Roger and Philip Dulhunty returned from war service and recognised the need for Port Macquarie to enjoy an air link with Sydney. They chartered the flying boat 'Pacific Star' from Tans Oceanic Airways to operate once a week from Sydney - our first air service to Port Macquarie.

- The Avro 504K became the first aeroplane to land in Port Macquarie on February 5, 1921 when it landed for 'joy flights' on the then golf links now in the vicinity of Oxley Oval.

- Qantas City of Port Macquarie was the name given to a Qantas 767 aircraft in 1992 following efforts by John and Helen Ross. This was the start of successful Charity Flights and Captain's Choice air holidays



ABOVE: John and Helen Ross with Heritage officer Mitch McKay. BELOW: Mr and Mrs Roger Dulhunty in front of the Moments in Flight display



BOB - EVERYBODY'S HOPE

Through the window of the Catalina flying boat, Bob Hope was taking his first look at Australia, laid out like a relief map below. It was August, 1944. Hope and a party of entertainers were flying south to Sydney for a rest break after entertaining troops in Guam.

Suddenly, above the northern New South Wales coast the plane struck trouble. The pilot ordered his passengers to jettison their baggage to lighten the craft while he searched for a landing spot. Out through the hatches went the entertainers' wardrobes and several crates of hard won wartime whisky.

The plane skimmed safely down on the Camden Haven River, near the small town of Laurieton, and fisherman Allan Wallace rowed out to bring the passengers and crew ashore. "Say, buddy, is this Sydney?" the pilot asked.

"You're about 300 miles out," Wallace replied, chuckling that Laurieton, population 600, should be mistaken for Australia's largest city. But if navigation wasn't the pilot's strong point, then Wallace equally was not too well acquainted with Hollywood. He showed little emotion when he was introduced to Hope, Jerry Collona, Frances Langford and dancer Patty Thomas. "I saw the fellow with the big moustache and thought I recognised Collona," Wallace recalls now, "But I was doubtful about Hope and the others."

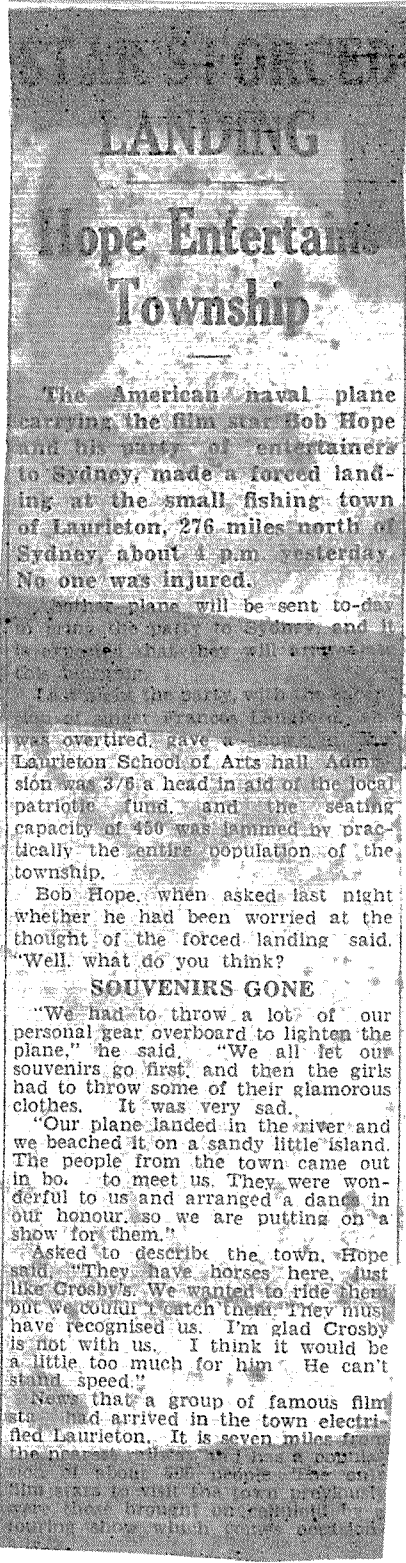
In Laurieton, the entertainers headed at once for the post office to cable reassuring messages to relatives and friends. "I'm Bob Hope — I want to send a telegram," the star announced. Postmaster Fred Plunkett glanced up, and said: "Young man it's

Monday. I'm much too busy for your jokes." He later atoned for his abruptness by lending Hope £11 to pay hotel bills.

Once Laurieton was convinced that it indeed had famous visitors on hand, Hope and company were persuaded to join in a night of festivities that townsfolk still remember. Hope and Collona danced the Hokey Pokey until dawn with local girls at Laurieton's hastily-booked School of Arts building. The town's Patriotic Fund reaped a surprise bonanza.

Cars arrived next morning to take the stars south to Sydney. Long before then the local fishing fleet was out, dragging the estuary for Bob Hope's whisky. Not even a slick was found, but wistful fishermen still dream of crates bobbing to the surface or catching in their nets.

Hope made a second trip to Australia in 1955. At Sydney's rain-swept airport, he jested: "I always make novelty landings in Australia . . . I've wet my feet both times I've hit the place." On stage at Sydney Stadium some Laurieton people gave Hope a painting of their town. The actor comedian hasn't forgotten them. He still sends cards to Laurieton each Christmas. And he did remember to repay £11 to the postmaster.



Hope Entertains Township

The American naval plane carrying the film star Bob Hope and his party of entertainers to Sydney, made a forced landing at the small fishing town of Laurieton, 276 miles north of Sydney, about 4 p.m. yesterday. No one was injured.

Another plane will be sent to-day to take the party to Sydney, and it is expected that they will arrive by 10 p.m.

Last night the party, with Hope, Frances Langford, and dancer Patty Thomas, was overtired, gave a short performance at the Laurieton School of Arts hall. Admission was 3/6 a head in aid of the local patriotic fund, and the seating capacity of 450 was jammed by practically the entire population of the township.

Bob Hope, when asked last night whether he had been worried at the thought of the forced landing said, "Well, what do you think?"

SOUVENIRS GONE

"We had to throw a lot of our personal gear overboard to lighten the plane," he said. "We all let our souvenirs go first, and then the girls had to throw some of their glamorous clothes. It was very sad."

"Our plane landed in the river and we beached it on a sandy little island. The people from the town came out in boats to meet us. They were wonderful to us and arranged a dance in our honour, so we are putting on a show for them."

Asked to describe the town, Hope said, "They have horses here, just like Crosby's. We wanted to ride them, but we couldn't catch them. They must have recognised us. I'm glad Crosby is not with us. I think it would be a little too much for him. He can't stand speed."

News that a group of famous film stars had arrived in the town electrified Laurieton. It is seven miles from the nearest railway. It has a population of about 600 people. The stars were there to visit the town and to give a show which would benefit the local patriotic fund.

NO WOMEN
The women of the town were all one knocked off work while the men who were out at sea returned join in the excitement.
Before dinner last night the party went for a walk around the town. A resident who was asked last night what there was in the town for party to see said, "Well, there is a monument from the last war."
The two girls in the party, Frances Langford and dancer F. Thomas, were wearing slacks when they arrived. Others in the party included film comedian Jerry Cole and guitarist Tony Romano.
Residents of Laurieton last night were determined that the famous stars should enjoy their stay.
"This is one of the finest fish spots in Australia," said one, "and lots of people should have seen it. But Bob Hope has been here before and he knows the town."
The town's only police constable, Constable O'Brien, said he had had no difficulty in keeping the stars in order although every was naturally very excited.

WELCOME PLANS

Everything was ready at the aerodrome yesterday to welcome the party—even down to flowers for senior U.S. Army officer in Sydney Brigadier-General Rilea, to give the girls.

From early in the afternoon a crowd waited to catch a glimpse of the party.

The reception room in the administrative building was turned into a film studio, with newsreel cameras, microphones, and arc lights. Photographers and reporters stood around in droves.

An American public relations officer was so impressed with the size of the Press delegation that he determined to photograph it.

(Picture page 4)

TIMES' CAMDEN HAVEN FEATURE

WHEN CAMDEN HAVEN HIT THE HEADLINES

Long before Sir Henry Kendall put into prose and verse the beauties of the area, Camden Haven had a definite place on the map; but it was not until 1944 that it took on special notoriety.

It was in August of that year that villagers around the estuary were agog with excitement when a large plane, with one of its engines ablaze, crashed into shallow water opposite North Haven.

It was the personnel of the plane's complement of passengers that brought The Haven into the spotlight with an international bearing.

Travelling on it were such talented American entertainers as Bob Hope, Jerry Colona, Buddy Thomas, Tony Martin and Frances Langford. Under the circumstances

the pilot had made a good landing, and while the machine suffered ma-



BOB HOPE

for damage his "pre-

his second engine, which they confronted did not leave them in doubt for long as a crawler was soon heading their way.

Manned by "Bunny" and his crew, the plane was soon engulfed in flames. Bob Hope and Jerry Colona were returning from the Far East, after a tour of the American troops in the battle area, when their plane got on fire.

This was between Port Macquarie and Mt. Perpendicular, and in a quick survey the pilot selected Camden Haven as the most suitable spot to bring the machine down.

Bob Hope and Jerry Colona have not forgotten the debt owed their rescuers, or the hospitality extended them by the people of Laurieton.

When they returned to Australia in 1954, several Laurieton residents were their guests at a Sydney show staged by them, and also at a party that followed.

At the social function several souvenirs between hosts and guests were exchanged some

Nov 15th

LAURIETON GIRLS TAUGHT BOB HOPE THE HOP-SCOTCH And Then The Dogs Saw Him

Famous American comedian Bob Hope learned four new dances at Laurieton last night. He spent the night there (mostly at the local dance) when an amphibian plane bringing him to Sydney made a forced landing.



Occasion: A kiss from Frances Langford, singing with Bob Hope's show, for Staff-Sergeant James S. Ham, of Massachusetts, veteran of Guadalcanal and againville, holder of the Silver Star award for gallantry.

—USA Signal Corps photo.

This morning Bob could remember the name of one dance only—he thinks it was "the hop scotch."

"Like this," he said, singing over the phone: "You put your right foot in, you put your right foot out . . ."

The song was interrupted by the barking of a mob of dogs which had followed him to the post office.

"Lie down there, shut up . . . excuse me I'm talking to the dogs," said Bob.

"It was a novel dance—the whole show was, we hadn't seen anything like it before.

"I did the 'hop scotch' for half an hour.

The dogs set up another yelp.

"They're following me round," he said.

"I'll tell you about those other three dances I learned when we can hear each other."

Nice Forced Rest

He said the party which included film stars Frances Langford, Jerry Colonna, and Patty Thomas, and guitarist Tony Romano, was "a bit concerned when the landing was imminent," but all were glad of the forced rest.

"We're all old timers and had shared in a few close calls," he said.

"But we've been all over the Pacific with the boys on our plane, so we have plenty of confidence in him."

The local pianist tried to play some jitterbug music for the party, but "didn't seem to be able to get the time just right."

"We had a lot of old-time dances in the program," he said.

Bob danced with all the young girls and they had a wonderful time."

Gamor Went West

Mrs. Illingworth added that women residents of Laurieton were disappointed that they didn't see "some American glamor frocks."

"The girls had to throw them overboard," she said.

"So Patty Thomas came to the dance in slacks."

Followed by residents of the town, still begging autographs, the party went for a walk this morning.

They expect to reach Sydney later today.

Lucky Partners

And this is what girls who danced with Bob Hope had to say about it:

Mollie Proemey, 18-year-old assistant: "I had fun dancing with Bob. We did the hop scotch and the Coney Island waltz."

She talked a bit and then she went home.

His first experience was when his plane ran into a storm in Alaska.

All members of the party had their parachutes on and were prepared for the worst. "But the pilot brought us through," he said.

Just Couldn't Keep

His Spirits Up

Mr. Hope said he couldn't see anything funny about his having to make wisecracks to get the Laurieton postmaster (Mr. E. C. Plunkett) to recognise him.

He was feeling the loss of the three cases of Scotch whisky (his own, too), which had been thrown overboard.

Bob danced with six or seven Laurieton girls last night, but most of his time was taken up signing autographs.

His party also put on a turn.

It took the form of a tap dance by Patty Thomas, a sketch entitled "A Walk in the Park" by Bob Hope and Jerry Colonna, and guitar items by Tony Romano.

Where's There's Hope

There's Life

Laurieton and district has a population of 800 and 450 arrived at the dance many traveling 30 miles to get there.

Proceeds for the local patriotic fund were £10.

Asked if any of the girls had dared to cut in on her dances with Bob, Miss Twomey said: "No, but a member of the plane crew tried to cut in on Bob."

Patty Beecher, 17-year-old girl, assistant: "Bob Hope was very cute. He's nice—dances very well. He's very friendly and knew the same old songs."

Sydney's Prettiest Girl, Says Bob Hope



Beauty: "I took out the prettiest girl in Sydney," said Bob Hope, referring to Betty Dawes, of Point Piper. Here are two studies. Above: Special photograph taken today by "The Sun." Below: At supper with Bob Hope, at Prince's last night.

Hope Does The Laurieton "Hop" at 4 a.m.

Betty Dawes, of Point Piper, 20 years of age blonde and beautiful, should feel very pleased with herself today, because Bob Hope says she's the prettiest girl in Sydney.

She was his partner last night, first to the Tivoli, then to Romano's, Prince's, and the Roosevelt Restaurant.

"I was told in New Guinea she was the prettiest girl in Sydney," said Bob.

"So I rang her yesterday morning and invited her out."

"I wanted to take out the prettiest girl in Sydney and I certainly did."

Betty would not believe it was the real Bob Hope on the phone.

"I've got a boy friend and he's always playing jokes—I thought his was another," she said.

"I told Bob I'd ring back to check up. I did, and it was true—and I had a wonderful time."

Also in the party last night were two other pretty Sydney girls—red-headed Enid Tibbett with Jerry Colonna, and brunette Sylvia Barker partnered by Lieut. J. Hayes.

All three girls were mobbed by

autograph hunters at Prince's and Romano's.

Betty, who could certainly make a strong claim to be Sydney's prettiest girl, has no screen ambitions, but has been a Bob Hope fan for years.

She is probably the only woman to call Hope "unmasculine."

"Bob said to someone, 'Thanks a lot—that's sweet of you,'" said Betty. "I told him it wasn't masculine, and he should have said 'Swell.'"

Betty invited Enid Tibbett, who works at a Castlereagh-street fancy goods store, to join Hope's party, when she was told that Jerry Colonna wanted to take out an "Australian redhead, who's like Rita Hayworth."

At 4 a.m. today Bob Hope was teaching the "Hokey Pokey" (the dance he learnt at the Laurieton hop), to a crowd of dancers at the "Roosevelt Restaurant."

Sings 'Hokey Pokey'

At Prince's at 1 a.m. he learned that he had been expected at the Roosevelt earlier in the evening and a crowd of servicemen and others was waiting for him.

Good-naturedly he agreed to go along so they would not be disappointed.

As he drove off in a "Sun" car with nine other people Bob cracked: "Can't we pick up a few passengers?—I can still breathe."

Before he started his favorite dance, the Hokey Pokey, Bob sang the tune to the band, and he and Jerry Colonna gave a demonstration. "Come on, get going," he called to a willing audience.

"Faster, faster," to the band. Jerry Colonna slipped back to his old profession as trombonist, and spent an hour with the band.

It was a reunion night for

Jerry and three merchant navy men in Sydney for a few days' leave.

They were Ed Daly, Kim Perry and Don Brebms, all of whom were members of Aussie Nelson's band in Chicago when Jerry used to come to hear them in the radio room.

"He was a swell trombonist then and he still is," said Kim Perry. "And a swell guy, too," he added. "Swell guys" was the tribute of many who saw Hope and Colonna good temperedly coping with mobs of autograph hunters.

Three-quarters of their time was taken up signing anything from bank notes to menu cards.

"Say, I'm a literary guy," said Bob Hope. "I'm doing an awful lot of writing to-night."

Gift To Boy's Town

Bob Hope drew a £10 note from his pocket at Romano's last night and wrote across it, "To Boys' Town; Bob Hope."

He handed it to Miss Sybil Budd and Mr. Morris Jacobs to



STAR'S FORCED LANDING

Hope Entertains Township

The American naval plane carrying the film star Bob Hope and his party of entertainers to Sydney, made a forced landing at the small fishing town of Laurieton, 276 miles north of Sydney, about 4 p.m. yesterday. No one was injured.

Another plane will be sent to-day to bring the party to Sydney, and it is expected that they will arrive late this morning.

Last night the party, with the exception of singer Frances Langford, who was overtired, gave a show in the Laurieton School of Arts hall. Admission was 3/6 a head in aid of the local patriotic fund, and the seating capacity of 450 was jammed by practically the entire population of the township.

Bob Hope, when asked last night whether he had been worried at the thought of the forced landing, said, "Well, what do you think?"

SOUVENIRS GONE

"We had to throw a lot of our personal gear overboard to lighten the plane," he said. "We all let our souvenirs go first, and then the girls had to throw some of their glamorous clothes. It was very sad."

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Asked to describe the town, Hope said, "They have horses here, just like Crosby's. We wanted to ride them but we couldn't catch them. They must have recognised us. I'm glad Crosby is not with us. I think it would be a little too much for him. He can't stand speed."

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No. 36

Letter to Laurieton Paper

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 195

LAURIETON PICTURES IN CALIFORNIA...

Bob Hope's Letter Recalls Australian Visit



Hollywood,
CALIFORNIA.

Mr. Hermann Flynn,
Paramount Film Services,
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA.

like this will keep me busy for quite some time, but, who knows that there might be a chance to be on the Road to Aussie yet.

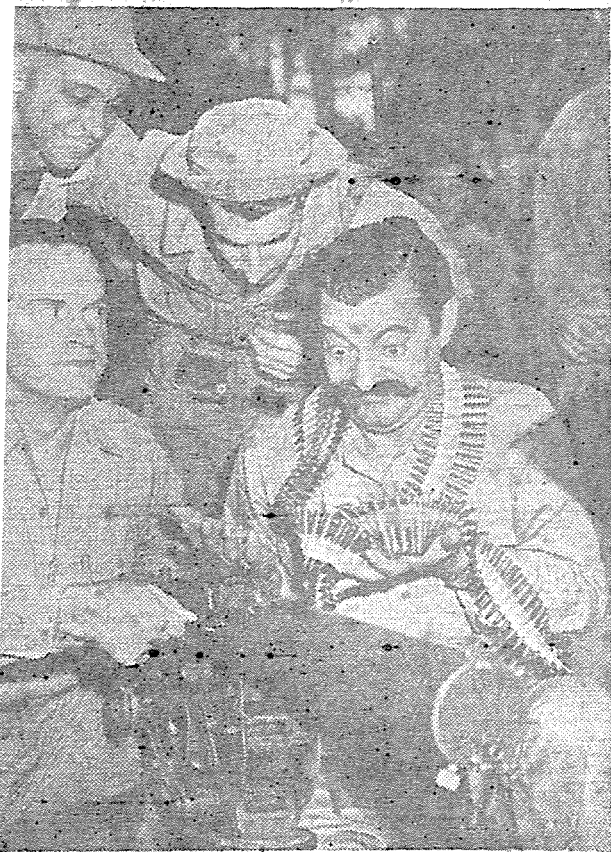
—Bob Hope

"Dear Mr. Flynn—When Jerry Colonna returned from Australia with a wonderful picture of Laurieton, it called to mind the time I was forced to land in the little town and my only trip to Australia. It calls to mind the dancing of the 'Hokey Pokey' in the Town Hall and the very rough road down to Newcastle. But the memory of the visit is still vivid.

Patrons of the Laurieton Theatre have at various times noticed how soon "big" pictures reach our town, films for which others have to wait for months before they have a chance of getting in the hiring queue. This time it is the "Road To Bali," and we can anticipate a most entertaining evening.

When I was making 'Road To Bali' with Bing Crosby and Dotie, I recalled the Aussie welcome and thoughts of my brief visit. You see, this was brought to mind by the fact that the opening scenes are supposed to be in Melbourne, a far cry from Laurieton, but it brought back

COMEDIANS AT BOUGAINVILLE



American soldiers appear amused at film comedians, Bob Hope and Jerry Colonna, as they become entangled in machine-gun "instruction" at Bougainville. After being rescued by their plane's forced landing at Tananarive, Bob Hope and Jerry Colonna will leave for Sydney to-day. (U.S. Signal Corps photograph.)

Affectionate Mr. Hope

In the accompanying picture, Bob Hope is shown in an affectionate scene with Miss Sylvia Longworth after the American comedian's arrival at Mascot Airport. Sylvia was one of the Welcoming Committee of Laurieton Citizens who went to Sydney to greet Bob.

—Reproduction by permission of the "Newcastle Morning Herald".

Bob Was Pleased With Laurieton Picture

Hollywood film comedian Bob Hope mentioned Laurieton several times during his appearance at Sydney Stadium and the story of his crash-landing in the Camden Haven Inlet and the friendly reception in Laurieton was repeated in many Sydney newspapers.

There was, however, no publicity move behind his genuine interest to see the place again, at least from the air, where he and his party nearly lost their lives in 1944. When the Quantas Constellation 'Southern Breeze' approached the North Coast on the 30-hour flight from San Francisco, Bob climbed into the pilot's cabin and asked whether the course could be altered so that he could fly over Laurieton.

When permission had been obtained via Sydney to take the deviation, the plane made the detour, but visibility was so poor due to rain clouds that the Camden Haven Inlet could not be seen.

LAURIETON PARTY AT MASCOT

Mr. Bruce Longworth, who was with the party awaiting Bob Hope at Mascot, secured as "exhibit" for the Laurieton Pictures a welcome pennant with the words "Welcome Bob Hope on the Road to Australia" which featured not Bob's but Crosby's portrait. As soon as Bob saw this he climbed a chair and drew with pencil a moustache on Crosby's face. Mr. and Mrs. Alf Longworth, Miss Sylvia Longworth, Mrs. and Miss Long, Mr. Keith Kennedy and Mr. and Mrs. J. Willcocks (Molly Southwell) were the other members of the Laurieton welcome party. Mr. Wallace ("Bunny") and Mr. Ron McLennan had not been able to go to Sydney as intended.

Bob Hope said that he was disappointed that the many performances which he had to give during his ten days in Australia in three states made it impossible to revisit Laurieton. He asked how the Plunkets were, the former Laurieton postmaster and his wife who have, however, passed away. Bob Hope remembered the show in the Laurieton Hall and was most interested to see the photos of the crashed plane in the water and the ten dollar bill which is kept by Mrs. A. Longworth as a memento, a present given to Mr. Wallace whose schnapper boat took the stranded party ashore. "I've been in Australia twice, and got my feet wet both times when I hit the place," cracked Bob, referring to the watery welcome in Sydney.

GIFT FROM LAURIETON

During the evening show last Saturday Bob Hope received the beautiful photograph of Laurieton which had been supplied from Mr. Bryant's gift shop. Mr.

Alf Longworth presented it to Bob on the Stadium stage and said that Laurieton had developed in recent years. Mr. Longworth regretted that the "rescuer," Mr. Wallace, could not be present and that it was not possible for Bob to see Laurieton this time. Bob Hope thanked for the gift and perhaps the only three earnest minutes in the show were when he recalled the friendliness he experienced during his unscheduled stay in Laurieton. He kept the audience merry with allusions to Mr. Longworth's appearance which were taken in good grace, the more as "Alf" is not a friend of Toohey's as Bob suggested. Bob adjusted Mr. Longworth's tie

and brought the house down with the gag: "You can't steal the show, I'm the funny man here!"

Bob Hope saw that his manager took good care of the Laurieton picture which will be air freighted by Paramount Films to his Hollywood home.



Bob Hope may drop in again

Master comedian, Bob Hope, may make a return visit to Laurieton this week — the town where he crash landed in a US Air Force plane during the second world war.

The public relations officer for the theatrical agents for Hope's current Australian tour, Patti Marsden, told the News yesterday she would try to arrange for him to visit Laurieton on Friday or Saturday.

Miss Marsden said Hope would be in Tweed Heads today. Brisbane tomorrow and there was a

chance he could call at Laurieton on his way to Sydney at the weekend.

Camden Haven Promotions Association initiated moves for a visit by the celebrity after reading an interview in yesterday's Daily Telegraph.

In the article, Hope revealed that returning to Laurieton was one of his unfilled ambitions.

Although in Australia for only a few days, he said he would like to have the chance to visit Laurieton.

He has been in Australia five times in the past, but has never been able to find the time to drop in to Laurieton again.

He described his visit to Laurieton as "one of those untold stories".

"We were in big trouble and landed on only one engine in a lake near the town," he said.

"There was a fellow there, the local postmaster, a fellow called Plunkett, whom I stopped with.

"I used to write to him and he used to write back, and then he died.

"I'll never see him again, but I'd love to see Laurieton again."

Hope added: "You could say I crashed it the first time here, but since then I've tried to make up for it."

COURIER

6.7.83

PORT NEWS

By BARRY JENNINGS

Bob Hope flew in

World famous comedian Bob Hope is to be invited to make a sentimental journey back to Laurieton should he visit Australian again.

The Lions club of Camden Haven is currently issuing the invitation.

Bob Hope and a party of American entertainers were on board a Catalina flying boat which force landed on the Camden Haven River about August 1944.

The entertainers were returning to Sydney after performing for American troops in northern Queensland when one engine of the two-engined Catalina failed to the north of Port Macquarie.

The captain and crew surveyed the Hastings River as a possible landing place but rejected this because of its winding nature.

The Camden Haven River was chosen as it provides a lengthy straight area immediately inside the river entrance.

Hope was accompanied by fellow comedian Jerry Collona, dancer Patti Thomas and singer-dancer Frances Langford.

They had been forced to eject many items to keep the aircraft as light as possible.

After landing in the shallow water the group was entertained at the Laurieton Hotel and later gave a concert at the School of Arts Hall.

31-1-86

It is understood that Hope was taught how to do the hokey-pokey during his stay.

The entertainers are believed to have stayed at Laurieton for about two days before returning to Sydney by road transport.

The aircraft engine was repaired and later flown out from Laurieton.

Some Laurieton residents believe that souvenirs from the plane are retained within the Camden Haven area.

Even the aircraft's fuel was 'milked' during its stay on the sand spit.

Newcastle resident, Mr Alan Walker, earlier this week wrote to the News advising that Bob Hope had mentioned on a recent television program that he was in an American plane that force landed on a sand spit at Laurieton during World War II.

He also sought information about the landing.

A search of the Port Macquarie News files held by the Hastings District Historical Society failed to find reference to the forced landing during August or September.

Records and research officials of the museum believe the absence of a published report at the time may have been attributed to wartime censorship.

The News would welcome documented reports of Hope's landing at Laurieton.

BIOGRAPHY - HOPE - 11

PORT NEWS

7.2.86

1986

Bob Hope's visit — one to remember

By BARRY JENNINGS

One of the many residents who will not forget meeting Bob Hope at Laurieton in August 1944 is Mrs Heather Webb, of Bonny Hills.

As a 16-year-old Heather was taken by her father Mac Smith of Kendall in a horse and sulky to Laurieton when news had spread that Bob Hope and his party of entertainers had force landed on a sand spit in the Camden Haven River while returning to Sydney following an entertainment tour of American and allied troops.

"I will never forget meeting him," Mrs Webb said this week.

She was responding to a News report last Friday relating to the forced landing on August 14, 1944, and seeking details from those with personal knowledge of the brief visit.

Mrs Webb said she met Bob Hope at the plane and was able to inspect the plane, both inside and out.

She recalls that the plane was not large and that it was somewhat difficult to board.

"At the time we lived on a dairy farm near Kendall and had it not been a Saturday my father would not have been able to leave the property, nor would I have been able to go with him to Laurieton," she said.

A horse and sulky drive from Kendall to Laurieton was then quite an ordeal and it was rare for people to travel too far outside their own area because of the limiting transportation factors and the time involved in travel.

Mrs Webb recalls that the plane had landed in the river adjacent to the sharp bend in the road where the picnic area remains today, and because of the low tide she had been able to walk to the plane.

"Bob Hope really enjoyed himself while at Laurieton," she said.

She recalls the 'impromptu' concert that night at the School of Arts.

May 31, 1968

Mr. Bob Marchmont
R. W. MARCHMONT & CO.
P. O. Box 39
Wauchope, N.S.W.
AUSTRALIA

Dear Bob Marchmont:

I've just finished writing Mark Meck in New York State telling him that it was the truth - that Bunny Wallace did fish me out of the drink at Laurieton in 1944. So if you have any bets, you can collect.

I certainly hope to visit Laurieton again sometime. In fact, I had an offer to go and play some dates from the Williamson & Tate Circuit down there. So I might do it. I'd just like to say hello again because that was a happy day when I landed in that lake - altogether! We've talked about it many, many times.

Anyway, I hope you're all enjoying yourselves and are healthy and happy and that I have a chance to see you soon.

Regards,

Bob Hope

BH:ah
encl

*The letter from Bob Hope telling
Mr Marchmont to collect his bet.*

News as well as a letter from Bob Hope to Rotarian Mark Meck of Canistota, New York. The latter letter advised Mr Meck that Mr Hope "was pulled out of the lake" at Laurieton in 1944.

Mr Meck had earlier visited Wauchope (a sister city link) and had been sceptical about reports that Bob Hope had force-landed at Laurieton.

In the letter to Mr Meck, Mr Hope said: "We had a great time in that beautiful little seaside resort. It was one of the nicest places I've ever visited; especially in that way, and I'm very grateful to Bunny Wallace for helping me to get on dry land."

At the time Laurieton's population was about 600.

Mr Hope's party was taken to the Laurieton post-office from where they cabled reassurance messages of their well-being to relatives and friends.

The hastily-arranged entertainment that night included dancing until about 4am.

Newspaper clippings from the Camden Haven Courier and Sydney papers made available to the News this week by Mrs Pat Longworth of Laurieton tell of the night's fun and dancing.

It appears the entertainers were taken by road to Newcastle the next day and then flown to Sydney.

Among the Sydney press clippings is one bearing the heading — Laurieton girls taught Bob Hope the hop-scotch.

The hop-scotch actually refers to the hokey-pokey.

A Kempsey reader of the News, Mrs Joyce Secombe, has advised that although only a child at the time of Bob Hope's landing, she recalls the plane being stuck on a sandbank in the middle of the river.

Mrs Secombe's two uncles were responsible for freeing the plane from the sand by using a draught horse.

I remember . . .

Jerry Colonna and the 'jerries'

An item in the local press last week told us that American comedian Jerry Colonna died recently in Los Angeles at the age of 82.

Jerry accompanied Bob Hope and singer Frances Langford on an island hopping tour of the South Pacific during the war years.

Highlight of the tour, at least for the citizens of Laurieton, was an unscheduled visit to that town when the entertainers were winging their way to Sydney for a break of a few days before continuing their tour.

The aircraft in which they were travelling, a US PBV flying boat, was brought down on the Camden Haven River after developing engine trouble, coming to rest ignominiously on a sand spit.

As reported far and wide, it was a great day and night for the locals who made their famous visitor and his entourage most welcome, in the shape of a dance at the Laurieton School of Arts.

Bob Hope was in fine style.

There was one little incident — among several little incidents that occurred during the stop over — not recorded by local historians.

It was perpetrated by mine host of the Laurieton Hotel, Bunny Wallace.

The party stayed overnight at his pub.

It was a nice, homely little pub, considered very modern by country standards. But like most pubs at the time, the dunny was still an outside job.

An hour after his ever so weary guests climbed into their cots at about 3 o'clock in the morning, he grabbed a half a dozen chamber pots, threaded them through a broom handle and went knocking loudly on doors offering personal service for those not wishing to venture outdoors.

From what I gather all the guests preferred to hold their breath — at least until sun-up. And that's the truth! If you don't believe me, ask Manny Gibson of Kendall.

TIMBER! When Hope came to Laurieton

(By "Sassafras")

When Canisteo (U.S.) Rotarian Mark Meck was Wauchope's guest for the opening of the Easter City Park in 1966, at Laurieton he was introduced to "Bunny" Wallace. During the drift of conversation, Bunny casually suggested that when Mark returned he seek out one of America's most famous sons, Bob Hope, and give Bunny's regards.

Bob is guarded almost as jealously as is the U.S. President, so Mark got the impression that Bunny was nuts. It took a lot of persuading before he would even be partly convinced that Bob was literally "fished out of the drink" by Bunny.

After returning home, Mark cogitated for a considerable time before eventually writing to Bob and did not get a reply. Recently he chided Bob Marchmont for too much Australian kidding.

"Mr. Football" took the bit in his teeth, wrote to Bob Hope and, in no uncertain terms, expressed disappointment that he had not replied to Mark's letter — "un-American," he called it.

On Tuesday, the following letter, dated 30th May, was delivered in Wauchope:

"Dear Bob Marchmont, — I've just finished writing Mark Meck in New York State, telling him that it was the truth — that Bunny Wallace had fished me out of the drink at Laurieton in 1944. So if you have any bets, you can collect.

"I certainly hope to visit Laurieton again sometime. In fact, I had an offer to go and play some dates from the Williamson & Tate Circuit down there. So I might do it. I'd just like to say hello again because that was a happy day when I landed in that lake — altogether! We've talked about it many, many times.

"Anyway, I hope you're all enjoying yourselves and are healthy and happy, and that I have a chance to see you soon.

Regards — BOB HOPE"

An enclosure was a copy of the letter sent to Mark.

"Dear Mr. Mark Meck — I've just received a letter from Bob Marchmont down in Wauchope, Australia, and I've got to confirm something. I have to tell you the truth — that I was pulled out of the lake back in Laurieton in 1944.

We had a great time in that beautiful little seaside resort. It was one of the nicest places I've ever visited; especially, in that way, and I'm very grateful to Bunny Wallace for helping me get to dry land. I'm enclosing a clipping telling about it. Our first landing there, coming down from Brisbane, was pretty exciting to say the least.

"Anyway, those are the facts and I'm supposed to give them to you. I'm sorry I didn't answer your letter before, but I guess it missed me between a couple of my trips. — BOB HOPE"

X X X X

The letter was written on Bob Hope's private stationery and air-mailed in an envelope carrying five 10-cent Andrew Jackson stamps and endorsed with Hope's address: 10346 Moorpark St., North Hollywood, Calif. . . . seems genuine enough, but would be interesting to hear an opinion from Rufus and Jacko!

X X X X

The cutting referred to by Hope was taken from the May issue of the "Readers Digest," being an excerpt from a story titled "Bob — Everybody's Hope" and is reprinted adjacent to this column.

If Bob does accept the invitation to visit Australia again, what a wonderful opportunity to raise funds for charity (he is famous for his help in that regard) by local Service Clubs combining to re-enact his landing at Laurieton. With the right type of promotion, it could prove the most spectacular and biggest charity bonanza this district has ever known!

Through the window of the Catalina flying boat, Bob Hope was taking his first look at Australia, laid out like a relief map below. It was August, 1944. Hope and a party of entertainers were flying south to Sydney for a rest break after entertaining troops in Guam.

Suddenly, above the northern New South Wales coast, the plane struck trouble.

The pilot ordered his passengers to jettison their baggage to lighten the craft while he searched for a landing spot. Out through the hatches went the entertainers' wardrobes and several crates of hard-earned wartime whisky.

The plane skimmed down on the Camden Haven River, near the small town of Laurieton, and fisherman Allan Wallace rowed out to bring the passengers and crew ashore.

"Say, buddy, is this Sydney?" the pilot asked.

"You're about 200 miles out," Wallace replied, chuckling that Laurieton — population 600 — should be mistaken for Australia's largest city. But if navigation wasn't the pilot's strong point, then Wallace equally was not too well acquainted with Hollywood.

He showed little emotion when he was introduced to Hope, Jerry Collona, Frances Langford and dancer Patty Thomas.

"I saw the fellow with the big moustache and thought I recognised Collona," Wallace recalls now. "But I was doubtful about Hope and the others."

In Laurieton, the entertainers headed at once for the post office to cable reassuring messages to relatives and friends. "I'm Bob Hope

— I want to send a telegram," the star announced. Postmaster Fred Plunkett glanced up, and said: "Young man, it's Monday. I'm much too busy for your jokes." He later atoned for his abruptness by lending Hope £11 to pay hotel bills.



"Bunny" Wallace

Once Laurieton was convinced that it indeed had famous visitors on hand, Hope and company were persuaded to join in a night of festivities that townsfolk still remember.

Hope and Collona danced the Hokey Pokey until dawn with local girls at Laurieton's hastily booked School of Arts building. The town's Patriotic Fund reaped a surprise bonanza.

Cars arrived the morning to take the south to Sydney. Before then the fishing fleet was dragging the net for Bob Hope's whale. Not even a sick found, but wastefulermen still dream crates hobbling to surface or catching their nets.

Hope made a se trip to Australia in At Sydney's rain-s airport, he jested: always make no landings in Australia I've wet my feet.

On stage at Sydney Stadium some Lauri people gave Hope painting of their to

The actor, come hasn't forgotten t He still sends card Laurieton each Ch mas. And he did member to repay £1 the postmaster.

Camden Haven Courier

May 2 1968

Bob Hope in Laurieton

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Suddenly, above the northern New South Wales coast the plane struck trouble. The pilot ordered his passengers to jettison their baggage to lighten the craft while he searched for a landing post. Out through the hatches went the entertainers' wardrobes and several crates of hard won wartime whisky.

The plane skimmed safely down on the Camden Haven River, near the small town of Laurieton, and fisherman Allan Wallace rowed out to bring the passengers and crew ashore. "Say, buddy, is this Sydney?" the pilot asked.

"You're about 300 miles out," Wallace replied chuckling that Laurieton, population 600, should be mistaken for Australia's largest city, but if navigation wasn't the pilot's strong point, then Wallace equally was not too well acquainted with Hollywood. He showed little emotion when he was introduced to Hope, Jerry Collona, Frances Langford and dancer Patty Thomas. "I saw the fellow with the big moustache and though I recognised Collona," Wallace recalls now, "but I was doubtful about Hope and the others."

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Cars arrived next morning to take the stars south to Sydney. Long before then the local fishing fleet was out dragging the estuary for Bob Hope's whiskey. Not even a slick was found, but wistful fishermen still dream of crates bobbing to the surface or catching in their nets.

Hope made a second trip to Australia in 1955. At Sydney's rain-swept airport, he jested: "I always make novelty landings in Australia...I've wet my feet both times I've hit the place." On stage at Sydney Stadium some Laurieton people gave Hope a painting of their town. The actor comedian hasn't forgotten them. He still sends cards to Laurieton each Christmas. And he did remember to repay \$11 to the post master.

fan's journey

home. In back row are children Linda, Tony and Kelly. In the front are Bob (nursing basset hound named *Recession*) and attractive daughter Nora



Colonna, of the eyes and handkerchief, sought Edward... comedian, recovering from a stroke, was full of his Sydney with Bob and Frances Langford in 1944. crash-landed at

flight to Sydney from the New Guinea war zone, where they'd been entertaining troops.

"Jerry has never forgotten having to jettison all their luggage, including a bottle of scotch," Edward smiled. "Whisky during the war, of course, was more precious

JERRY COLONNA (moustache) is seen with Bob Hope and Frances Langford in picture above, taken in 1944, when the three stars were in wartime Australia on tour. Jerry recently recalled the trip.



Thanks for a Wartime Memory



It was the single biggest happening in the history of the Camden Haven.

It was wartime, 1944, the month of August, just over 62 years ago.

Down below were the sleepy fishing villages of Port Macquarie and the Camden Haven.

In the sky above a major drama was taking place.

A Catalina Flying Boat was headed south with the world's most famous entertainer on board, the legendary movie star and comedian, Bob Hope.

For those today who do not know of or remember this English born entertainer, he was the biggest single person in American entertainment who was to carve a legend entertaining US troops in three wars, the Second World War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He was to host the Academy Awards for more than 30 years. He died in 2003 at the exact age of 100.

Witness to what was happening high above the Mid North Coast was a lovely 21-year-old dancer, Patty Thomas, who

Until now, the story of what happened on that flight has been somewhat of a mystery.

Interest in the story was raised several years ago when a series of banners titled 'Moments in Flight' depicting our local aviation history were researched and erected at Port Macquarie Airport.

Port Macquarie Hastings Council Heritage Officer Mitch McKay soon realised that there possibly might be one person still alive who could tell the story of what happened on this amazing flight.

Jerry Colonna and Tony Romano died many years ago and Bob Hope and Frances Langford passed away in 2003 and 2005 respectively.

So what of the youngest person on the plane, the dancer Patty Thomas?

In a search that became an obsession, Mitch even took a family holiday to the US West Coast late last year to continue the probe and even got within 25 miles of Patty Thomas, but didn't know it.

Whilst in the US, with the help of some American friends, Patty Thomas was found alive and well and with a very vibrant memory of what happened on that unusual flight 62 years ago.

In an exclusive account for the Holiday Coast Pictorial, Patty Thomas has put her recollections on paper and has submitted this account of what happened amazingly all those years ago.....

"At the beginning of the Second World War I was chosen to be the dancer for Bob Hope's first USO troupe to the South Pacific. Prior to leaving the US we went through rehearsals at March Field in California before heading out.

I was honoured to work with Bob Hope, Frances Langford (to become a lifelong friend), Jerry Colonna and Tony Romano in both the European and South Pacific Theatres of War.

In August 1944 our group, along with Barney Dean (Bob's writer) and a crew of two were flying from New Guinea to Sydney after having entertained troops there.

We were fortunately flying in a Catalina Flying Boat and our cargo included



(TOP LEFT) Bob and Patty doing part of their stand up routine.

(BOTTOM LEFT) Patty and Frances "primping". This Would have been taken about the same time as their crash landing. The girls were overjoyed to experience a Hotel Room at Laurieton.

(TOP RIGHT) Patty entertaining on a makeshift stage in Pavuvu. Whenever possible Patty would invite guys up to dance. She thought it charming to see how shy these young men look.

(RIGHT) Bob and Patty dancing. (RIGHT BOTTOM) The famous Catalina

was on her first overseas USO tour.

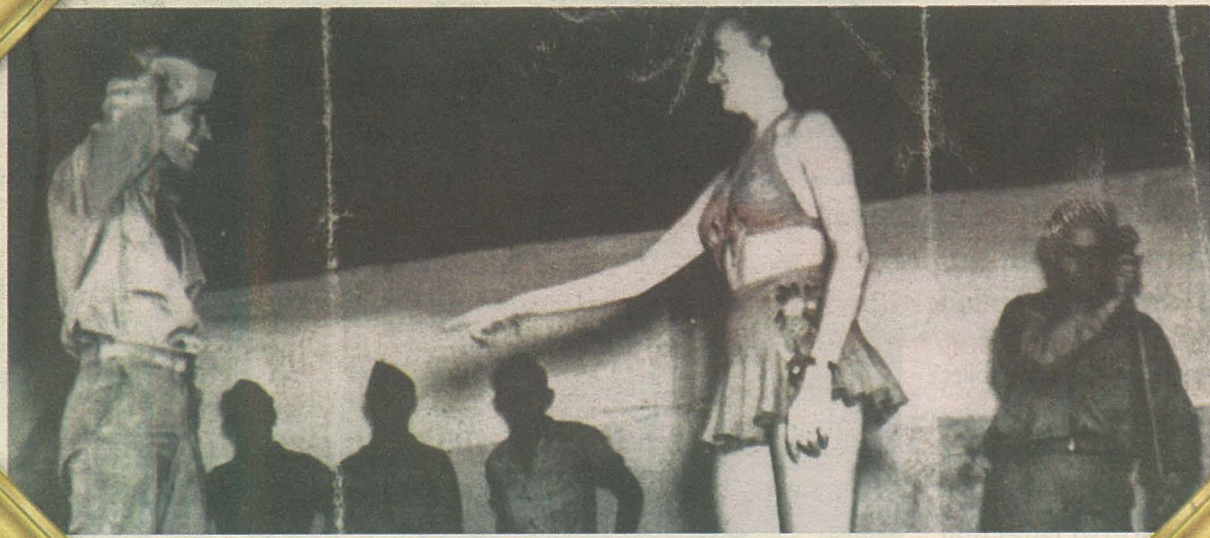
(Some of the world's leading movie stars and entertainers were co-opted by the US Government and Military to entertain troops in theatres of war throughout the world to help boost morale).

Patty had been invited to join the tour personally by

Bob Hope who had seen her perform some months previously. Patty always referred to the entertainment legend as 'Mr Hope'.

Also on that plane were famous and beautiful movie actress and singer Frances Langford and equally famous comedian Jerry Colonna and guitarist Tony Romano.

Patty Thomas remembers . . .



'emergency supplies', sometimes referred to as 'medicinal reinforcements' for our troops and the usual show paraphernalia.

We were having an uneventful flight over some beautiful, green mountains (North Brother, Middle Brother, South Brother) when suddenly we lost altitude. I remember looking out the window only to see the treetops getting closer and closer and the mountainsides becoming dangerously near.

The men did everything they could to make the plane lighter. They opened the 'blister' and we all helped jettison everything we could. The tools and equipment went first followed by case after case of our precious 'emergency supplies'.

We were hoping for a water landing when our pilot yelled out 'get down and hold on'. Diving to the floor, I wedged myself between two fixed uprights. Frances sat in the navigator's chair, but forgot to fasten her seatbelt.

We hit a sandbar before we made it to the river (the Camden Haven River). Frances literally went flying by and landed on the floor. Being a good Irish Catholic girl, I was saying my Rosary as we went down. When we hit the river, a bottle of bourbon came flying by and I grabbed it so that it wouldn't break. I was so afraid that it would break and spill on me. I guess I didn't want to die smelling like bourbon. There I was with a bottle of bourbon in one hand and a Rosary in the other!

When we collected ourselves and looked out of the blister, we realised that we were in the middle of a river. We stood on the wing and were delighted to see a man (Alan 'Bunny' Wallace) rowing towards

families and our managers know we were ok. As I recall, some of the townspeople had no idea who we were, although word soon spread that Bob Hope had literally 'fallen from the sky'.

The people were gracious, helpful and welcoming. In my memory, Laurieton remains a postcard pretty little resort town with beautiful flowers everywhere. I'm sure it has changed since 1944, but I hope the residents still maintain the warmth I remember.

Frances and I shared a hotel room and we changed there into our costumes for an impromptu show we



offered to put on in a local school auditorium. (They performed in the Laurieton School of Arts hall - something well neigh impossible in wartime or at any other time were it not for a Catalina engine failure).

After the show, Frances and I went back to the hotel, thrilled to have a chance to have a 'real' bath and a chance to wash our hair. We had become accustomed to using an Army helmet as a wash basin, so the Laurieton Hotel was pure luxury. Our landing on the Camden Haven River reminds me of how much people pulled together during the war years. Our South Pacific tour had been demanding. We often entertained in the rain and the mud because we had promised to be with 'our boys' wherever they were. We wanted them to feel a touch of home.

I represented each boy's sister or girlfriend and was proud to do so. Once, in a torrential downpour in Pavuvu, the boys lifted me on to the hood of a jeep for an impromptu dance. Several times we performed so close to the front lines that there were snipers shooting at the troops.

In addition to entertaining, we also made it a point to spend time with the wounded men. In the hospital tents we did not entertain but sat quietly and talked to the men. Some of them would make it home, others would not. In each case the boys always talked of home and family. We were honoured to be part of their lives.

Our stopover in Laurieton was a welcome break. I will always remember the wonderful people who helped us. I wonder if the man in the rowboat ever found those cigarettes? Perhaps in your memory we have remained those crazy American entertainers who crash landed on your sandbar. Please remember, too, that you have remained those wonderful Aussies who took us in and helped us.

Frances, Bob and I remained close friends and continued to work together for many years. I was at Frances' bedside when she died in July of 2005. After the war she had returned to her home State of Florida and there, with her husband Ralph Evinrude, established a number of charitable foundations and supported a marine research institute. Ralph and his father, Ole, had patented the first outboard motor and he and Frances were boating enthusiasts. They invited me to join them on a World Tour in their yacht the Chanticleer. After Ralph's death, Frances and I continued to travel and even took a trip around the world on the Concord (a far cry from the wartime Catalina).

During the 1950's and 60's I worked as a dancer and choreographer and taught music at a Catholic school. As you know, Bob died at 100 years of age in 2003 and Frances died in July in 2005 at the age of 92. In October 2006 Delores (Bob Hope's wife) and I, 97 and 84 respectively, will be in San Diego California to take part in the dedication of a memorial to the USO and to Bob.

I have loved the life I have lived and our stopover in Laurieton remains vivid and colourful to me all these years later. "As Bob would say: "Thanks for the Memories" ", Patty Thomas remembers.

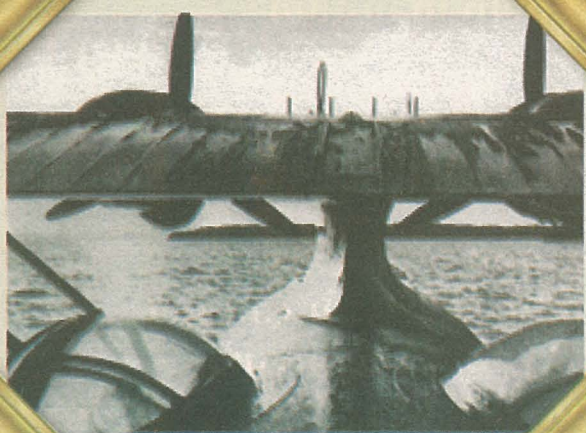
- Bob Hope himself was asked many years later what was the most amazing thing that had ever happened to him in his life, and he recounted the Laurieton crash landing. He also met with people from Laurieton when he returned to Australia in the 1950's (that photo is displayed at the Port Macquarie airport).

- The Catalina Flying Boat remained moored on the Camden Haven River until parts arrived from Sydney. It was repaired and flown on to Sydney.

- Bob Hope, Patty Thomas and the other entertainers stayed one night in Laurieton before heading to Sydney by car the next day, but not before they entertained the locals, just as they had done for thousands of troops around the world.

- By sheer accident, Laurieton and the Camden Haven River became a 'haven' for a group of people who, at the time, were the world's most famous entertainers.

- Patty Thomas now resides in the Los Angeles area.



us. He seemed rather nonplussed by our crash landing and asked if we had any cigarettes. Our pilot responded by asking if we were in Sydney - I'm pretty sure he knew we weren't. We were soon to discover we were in the lovely hamlet of Laurieton. When we got to shore we all wanted to let our

Stars fell to earth

ISW country locals were stunned by a Hollywood visit, says DAVID JONES

Thirteen-year-old Merv Wallace and his uncle were catching mullet bait on the Camden Haven River at Laurieton, on NSW's mid-north coast, when a Catalina flying boat suddenly appeared heading perilously low towards them.

The pilot's intentions were obvious. He was coming down, fast, and very close to the uncle and nephew, who were there to gather bait for Merv's sherman father. The aircraft was in serious trouble. One of its two wing-mounted engines was out of action, its propeller uselessly idle.

Whoever might be on board was in for a spectacular landing. On contact, the Catalina catapulted 60m into the air after hitting a partly submerged sandbank, before finally coming to a bone-juddering rest 100m from shore.

Already amazed by the plane's dramatic arrival, locals in Laurieton, a riverside town south of Port Macquarie, were in for a bigger shock as famously familiar faces began to emerge from the craft. These people could have stepped off a Hollywood film set half a world away.

Bob Hope and his signature ski-jump nose were instantly recognisable. And the man with the bushy moustache and the seemingly motor-powered eyes was unmistakably Hope's accomplice in comedy, Jerry Colonna.

Singer Frances Langford, dancer Betty Thomas and guitarist, Tony Romano, completed the party of six laydied US entertainers bound for Sydney following troop concerts near the front line in Guam.

According to local legend, Bob Hope's first remark after the traumatic landing was a customary wisecrack: "Say, I thought Sydney was a much bigger town than this."

Merv Wallace, now aged 72 and still a local, remembers Hope and the others were calm and cheerful but, understandably, in no mood for ags. Anyway, with adults around, Merv knew that kids like him were supposed to be seen but not heard, so the saying used to go.

"No one was injured but they were shaken up a bit," Merv said. They were glad to have landed in one piece because it must have been quite a bang when they hit the sand pit for the first time."

Along with his father, Allen, and his soldier uncle Eric Eames, a veteran of the rugged New Guinea campaign, young Merv was among the first to reach the plane. Rowing to the Hollywood stars and their flight crew to shore, to Merv's teenage yes dancer Patty Thomas was by far "the best sort".

For the next 24 hours, Laurieton, with its 600 population was treated to Hollywood on the Camden Haven. The arrival in the village of six black



Crash landing . . . Bob Hope with Roberta Lynn after their Australian tour. Hope turns 100 next month

limousines to collect the stranded party just lifted the excitement and glamour another notch. Hope and his extroverted party endeared themselves with their good humour and the promise of an evening concert at the School of Arts hall, with all proceeds for the war effort.

It remains Laurieton's proud boast that Bob Hope and the others learned to dance the hokey pokey that night, although something may have been lost in the "translation" as Hope was to later insist that he'd danced "the hop scotch".

True to form, when a reporter asked him to describe Laurieton, Hope directed some barbs at Bing Crosby, his movie sparring partner, joking: "I'm glad Crosby is not with us. I think it would be a little too much for him. He can't stand speed".

Putting on any kind of show in Laurieton was tough for the stranded troupe because about all they had left were the clothes they stood in. As their disabled plane lost altitude over Bonny Hills, to reduce weight, the party had frantically ditched baggage including their concert wardrobes and, to their intense regret, a generous supply of whisky.

"We all let our souvenirs go first," Hope recalled, "and then the girls had to throw some of their glamorous clothes. It was very sad." Hope praised the locals who had helped, telling a reporter, "they were won-

derful to us and arranged a dance in our honour, so we are putting on a show for them".

Not everyone was starstruck by the famous interlopers. At the Laurieton post office, the comedian announced, "I'm Bob Hope—I need to send a telegram", to which postmaster Fred Plunkett responded, "young man, it's Monday. I'm much too busy for your jokes."

Looking up, Plunkett realised this was the real McCoy and even lent Hope money to pay his hotel bill. Not only was the loan repaid, but also for many years Hope remembered his Laurieton hosts with an annual Christmas card.

Merv Wallace recalls the visit as the most exciting thing that ever happened in Laurieton. People came from far and wide to mingle with the Hollywood stars. "I had never seen so many people at one time."

Merv is proud of his father's role in the episode including using his fishing boat Nikabit to tow the Catalina for repairs.

Hope shared a British heritage with the locals. He was born in England on May 29, 1903, and named Leslie Townes Hope, the fifth of seven sons. His father was an English stonemason, his Welsh mother an accomplished singer.

The family migrated to the US, Hope insisting thereafter he "left England at the age of four when I

found out I couldn't be king". When he "dropped in" on Laurieton, Hope had only recently started what became a lifetime commitment to boosting the morale of troops stationed overseas, a dedication that would make him a friend of US presidents from Roosevelt to Clinton.

Hope's first concert foray into combat areas was in 1943 but he made many more to Europe and the South Pacific during World War II.

From 1948, Hope made it a Christmas tradition to entertain military personnel based far from home.

His concerts were in full swing throughout the Vietnam War and as recently as Christmas 1991, he was still at it, this time in Saudi Arabia to entertain troops involved in the first Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm.

As Hope nears his 100th birthday on May 29, honours and accolades are flowing fast. In 1997, Congress bestowed the title of honorary veteran. A year later, the Queen gave him an honorary knighthood. And on Tuesday he will be named Citizen of the Century by the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Merv Wallace has a framed photograph that captures Bob Hope's dramatic landing site from a high vantage point. Merv's father had planned to present the photograph to Hope, no doubt with a message from Laurieton, "thanks for the memories".

5-2-70

NOT THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

Not all the fishing glory belongs to Port Macquarie; further south at Camden Haven fishermen still remember the NSW State Fishing Titles held there last June.

The Camden Haven Angling Club, hosts for the first time, turned out in force to organise one of the best titles ever held.

For the first time beach, rock and estuary events were conducted at the same time as amateur deep-sea events.

Camden Haven's natural surroundings of ocean, river and lakes made this possible.

Camden Haven district, consistently among the top five of productive fishing centres, comprises three townships.

They are Dunbogan, in the south, North Haven, just across the mouth of Camden Haven River, and Laurieton in the west.

Practically every resident, and most visitors, have heard the tale of Bunny Wallace owner of fishing boat Jo Ellen, and the "one that didn't get away."

During the war years, Bunny was fishing the river. It was a reasonably peaceful day, the countryside calm split only by the sound of a Catalina flying boat.

The giant plane developed engine failure and landed close to Bunny in a few feet of water.

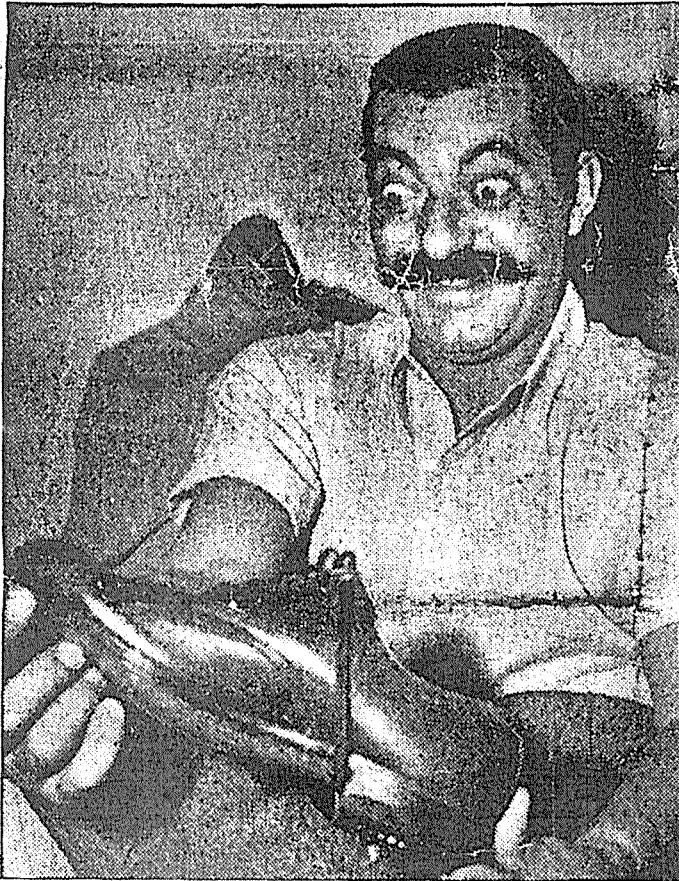
Bunny was first to reach the plane, and among the passengers was now world-famous comedian, Bob Hope.

Bob was part of a concert party en route to Sydney for a series of entertainment engagements.

The party stayed overnight, enjoyed the district's well-known hospitality, and after expressing thanks for their timely "rescue" were on their way to Sydney.

Bunny often prefers to forget the incident, but residents say Bob Hope sends a Christmas card to the Camden Haven residents every year.

ARMED PROVOSTS GUARD HO SUITES OF BOB HOPE'S PARTY



Shod Again: Jerry Colonna bought these shoes today to replace the pair he jettisoned when his plane struck trouble. Colonna said his moustache is "insured against jungle fire for 50,000 dollars." He learned to roll his eyes as a little boy "to tease teacher."

Flood Of Phone Calls From Girls

Armed U.S. Provosts guarded the private suites of film comedian Bob Hope and his party of troop entertainers at Hotel Australia today.

Since the party's arrival last night, a flood of telephone calls from Hope admirers, with absolutely nothing to say but "Hello," has overwhelmed the hotel switchboard staff.

"Most of them are girls," said Major George Kern, of General MacArthur's staff, who is in charge of the stars' arrangements in Sydney.

Major Kern made a rapid calculation last night of the amount of sleep necessary to keep a man alive and gave orders that the telephone was to be disconnected until 8 am today.

Still the calls came in. Throughout the night the hotel switch staff were repeating: "Mr. Hope cannot be disturbed."

Today at 8, the banked-up flood was released with a rush. Major Kern hadn't bathed or shaved when the first calls came through.

Girls See "Chance Of A Lifetime"

At 9 he was still unshaven and

Biography - Hope - 15

Historical reminder Reso fa



Last week's display by the Camden Haven Historical Society highlighting the visit of actor/comedian Bob Hope during a forced landing in 1944 in Laurieton was well received by many locals who inspected the memorabilia at the Laurieton School of Arts Hall. Stan Royan from North Haven is pictured above with his mother Janet who remembers the landing in the Camden Haven River and her late husband Allen's attempts to pull the plane of the sand spit using a draught horse.

Job market boost

Port Macquarie's job market is to receive a boost as Bunnings commences its recruitment for 100 positions in prepara-

unique telephone process to screen the initial influx of job applicants, hoping to convey from the outset its

believes the concept will be of huge benefit to the Port Macquarie community.

"Bunnings has half the

The Laurieton Branch has been hosting "Coffee and History" buffs for the past few years.

The group meets on the first Tuesday of the month at the library and is an excellent opportunity for Genealogy. Recently the group has received donations to the Library.



Pat Longworth received Laurieton...

Camden Haven Courier

No. 20.

FRIDAY, JULY 30th, 1954.

Laurieton Party Applauded

Stadium Audience At Colonna's Show

For a few minutes Laurieton figured large at the Australian art tour of the American entertainers, comedian Jerry Colonna, clarinetist Artie Shaw and drummer Buddy Rich, who were supported by a large band, a crowd of 7,000 on July 24th, in the Sydney Stadium.

If the Sydney Morning Herald is right, the Laurietonians who took part numbered seventeen. Some of them were invited on Friday to a welcome party which started after the first concert at midnight and ended at an undisclosed hour at Glen Ascham's, Sydney's millionaire luxury hotel. Glen Ascham is described in last Sunday's Telegraph as an "impressive, mildly baroque building with great terraces overlooking Double Bay" which was bought in 1953 for £80,000. The weekly charge for the American visitors was £135 (each).

Highlight of the midnight repast was a display of eighteen genuine Laurieton lobsters and oysters. Mr. Bill Rodie, publicity manager, and Mr. Lee Gordon, promoter of the Tour, together with producer Benn Ryss, welcomed the Laurietonians. Mr. Ryss was in the plane in which Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna and other American Army entertainers, crashlanded in the Camden Haven Inlet in 1944. He was the official troupe photographer for them.

At the six o'clock performance Jerry suddenly asked: "Are there two gentlemen here from Laurieton—Bunny Wallace and Alf Longworth?" So these climbed the stage and amid cheers and applause they presented to Jerry the presents from the Laurieton people as a token of friendship. First—appropriately for a fishing resort, a fish, a stuffed one to take home to California. Mr. Longworth handed this beautiful work of our Laurieton taxidermist to Mr. Colonna with the wish "that the pilot fish may pilot Jerry home safely to America." Mr. Charley Kennedy had made a glass case at short notice which set off the gift to its best advantage and Mr. Ivor Barnes had kindly offered the fish which had adorned his lounge, as time was too short for Mr. Stan Thomas to prepare a new specimen. Laurieton fishermen are now asked to look out for a sizeable pilot fish so that Mr. Barnes receives the replacement in due course.

"Bunny" Wallace was duly introduced as the man who had rescued the Americans and was

wrongly said to have asked Bob Hope when sighting the first American: "Have you any American cigarettes?" Bunny was quick at repartee when—unrehearsed—Jerry tried to pull the old joke again, and said: "No, I did not ask you that, but I ask you now—have you any American cigarettes?" Jerry produced a package from his breast pocket amid general laughter and handed it to Bunny. He was then presented with a fine photograph of Laurieton and the inlet seen from the top of North Brother Mountain, and a second landscape. Jerry said: "I bring this one home to my father"—meaning Bob Hope. The photos had come from Mr. Bryant's shop and the frames had been beautifully engraved by the Sydney Telegraph commemorating the occasion.

Next in the lime light was our Ron McLennan—verbally as the spot light played on him when he was asked to rise from his seat in the audience as the artist of a striking caricature showing Colonna with his big moustache. "That looks more like me than I do," was Jerry's admiring verdict.

Spotlight again—this time on Molly Southwell, now Mrs. Willcocks, who, in 1944, taught Jerry the Hokey Pokey in the Laurieton School of Arts. Applause, photographs, autographs, smiles, handshakes.

And the meaning of it all—fun for some, publicity for all of our seaboard towns, a generous Australian welcome and a gesture of friendship to American visitors, all this contributes more to international ties than many would think. And, may be, we may have American visitors here one day—you never know.

Bob Hope

25th July 2004

Unexpected war time landing remembered

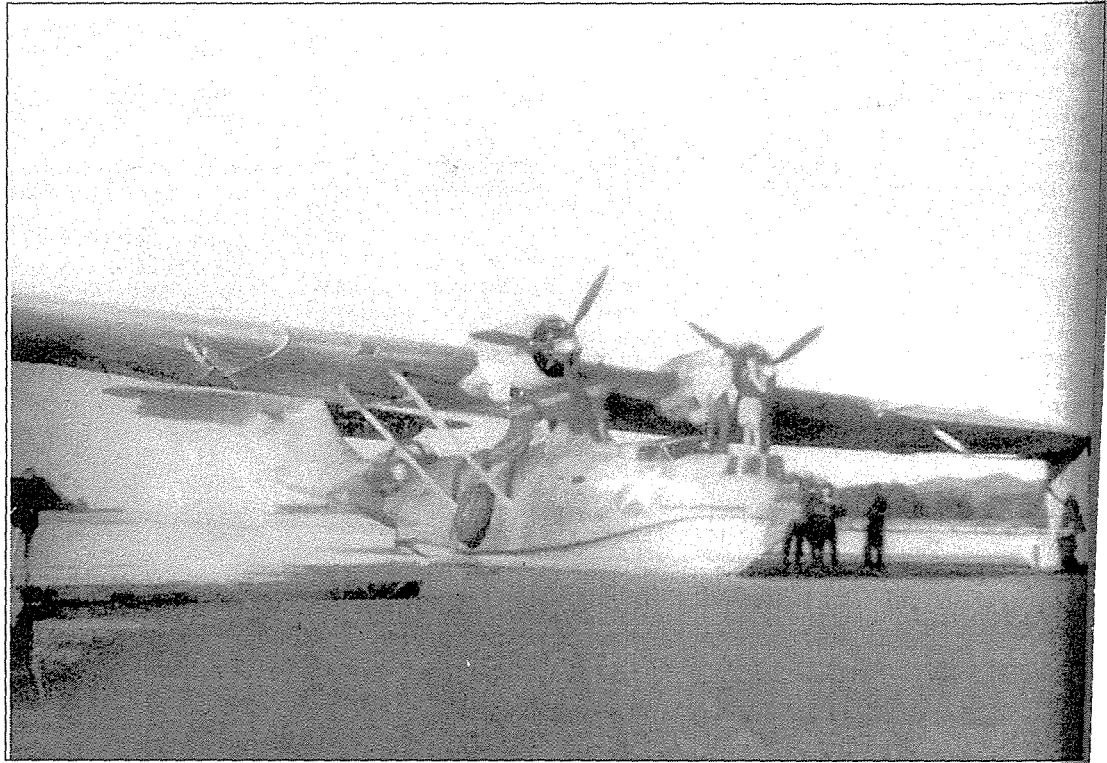
The Camden Haven Historical Society has issued an open invitation to the public to view their display and share the memories of the unexpected wartime visit of Bob Hope and his entourage in 1944.

The anniversary commemoration will take place in the Anzac Room of the LUSC on Thursday afternoon August 12 from 1.30pm.....

It is 60 years on August 14, 1944, since an American PBV flying boat force-landed on the Camden Haven River at Laurieton. Aboard was Bob Hope and his party who had been entertaining troops in Guam. None of the party was injured, but they had been asked to jettison their wardrobe and precious crates of whisky when the engine failed. Catching bait nearby were Merv Wallace and his uncle and they brought the party ashore from the sandbank where the plane was stuck. Beside Bob Hope, the party consisted of the comedian Jerry Colonna, singer Frances Langford, dancer Patty Thomas and guitarist Tony Romano.

Bunny Wallace, father of Merv who then managed the Laurieton Hotel, looked after the party. The late Mr Bruce Plunkett, Postmaster, was not impressed at first when an American saying he was Bob Hope tried to borrow money from him, but eventually lent him eleven pounds, which Bob repaid when he reached Sydney.

Laurieton had a population of only 600 at that time, but people came from every-



Bob Hope's boat after force-landing in Laurieton in 1944.

where when they heard the exciting news. A dance was hastily arranged in the School of Arts and Bob Hope's party agreed to put on a show. It is said that 450 people attended, the admission fee being three shillings and sixpence with the money going to boost the Patriotic Fund. Bob Hope danced with six or seven girls and they found him a good dancer and "very friendly." Locals taught him the Hokey Pokey. Much of his time was

spent signing autographs but the party did manage to put on a show with Bob and Jerry Colonna doing a sketch called "A Walk in the Park," Patty Thomas doing a tap dance and Tony Romano playing the guitar. Six big American cars arrived from Newcastle to take the party to Sydney. Something of a sensation was caused again when the cars stopped in Taree. The plane was eventually pulled from the sandbank with

draught horses and Bunny Wallace's boat "Nikabit" towed it for repairs.

Jerry Colonna returned to Sydney in 1954 and expressed the wish to revisit Laurieton, but this could not be arranged. However some Laurieton citizens went down to meet him and at his stadium concert made a presentation to him. Bob Hope returned in 1955 and was also greeted by some Laurieton folk. It was raining at the air-

port and he remarked "always make wet landings in Australia - I've wet my feet both times." Locals gave him a painting of the town and there is a photograph of him planting a kiss on Sylvia Kerslake's cheek.

The Historical Society issues an open invitation to view their display and share the memories of this unexpected Wartime visit in the Anzac Room on Thursday afternoon August 12.



Catalina at Laurieton after being pulled from the river

