

# Bob Crane

1928 - 1978

*"He turned that character (Colonel Hogan) into an icon of American culture."*

- *American National Biography*

Robert Edward Crane was born in Waterbury on July 13, 1928 and went on to become one of the most recognizable actors in the history of television. From 1965-1971, he played Colonel Robert Hogan in the CBS comedy "Hogan's Heroes."

Crane was the son of Alfred and Rosemary (Senich) Crane. Music was his first love and he was a drummer in the Connecticut Symphony from 1944-1946. He later joined a traveling dance band, playing drums all across America.

The groundwork for Crane's future acting career was established in radio broadcasting. Between 1950 and 1956, he worked as an announcer and disc jockey for radio stations in New York and Connecticut (WBIS in Bristol and WICC in Bridgeport) before beginning a talk show at KNX in Los Angeles. His career started slowly but within two years his comedic antics made him the top radio-man in California.

Utilizing his radio work to establish contacts in the entertainment business, Crane began dabbling with an acting career. He made his television debut on "The Lucy Show" in 1960. That was followed by stints on "The Dick Van Dyke Show", "G.E. Theater" and "The Alfred Hitchcock Hour". During 1964, he became a permanent character on "The Donna Reed Show".

In 1965, he landed the starring role in "Hogan's Heroes", a controversial comedy about Nazi Germany. Even though many people objected to Nazis being portrayed as lovable buffoons, the farce was an immediate hit. It was the most popular of the 33 new programs and was rated fifth of all 98 prime-time shows. Crane played a suave, coolly intelligent, witty prisoner of war stationed in Stalag 13. He led a band of POW's in outsmarting the bumbling authority figures of Sgt. Schultz and Colonel Klink. The satire premiered September 17, 1965 and ran until July 4, 1971. The production of "Hogan's Heroes" comic books, toys, records, trading cards and lunch boxes reflected the enthusiasm for the series. Crane received two Emmy nominations for his work in 1965 and 1966 and twice graced the cover of "TV Guide".

During and after "Hogan's Heroes", Crane made guest appearances on many of the popular television shows including "Police Woman", "Twilight Zone", "The Doris Day Show", "Ellery Queen", and "Night Gallery". In 1975, he achieved the epitome of name recognition when he starred in "The Bob Crane Show", playing a former insurance salesman studying to become a doctor.



Crane was in the television production of "Arsenic and Old Lace" with Helen Hayes and Lillian Gish, was a substitute host for Johnny Carson and Merv Griffin and performed on a Fred Astaire variety telecast. His last television work was on "The Love Boat" in 1978. He also appeared in stage performances and movies, including "Man-Trap", "Return to Peyton Place", "Superdad", "The Delphi Bureau", "Gus", and "Nancy Drew".

Crane was found murdered in his hotel room in Arizona, where he was performing in regional theater, on June 29, 1978. Despite national attention the crime remains unsolved.

"Hogan's Heroes" continues to entertain worldwide audiences through syndication and video-cassette sales. Although Bob Crane died more than twenty years ago his image still lives on, wearing that familiar pilot's cap and leather jacket.