

Willam Boyd Biography

William Lawrence Boyd, better known to millions as one of the first multimedia heroes, Hopalong Cassidy, was born on June 5, 1895 in Belmont County, Ohio. He was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and following the death of his father, moved to California. There he worked many odd jobs until he started finding extra work in Hollywood motion pictures, beginning with *Why Change Your Wife?* in 1920.

Boyd became a leading man in silent film, starring in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Volga Boatman*, *The King of Kings* and *Skyscraper*, and D.W. Griffith's *Lady of the Pavements*.

Boyd's film contract with Radio Pictures was cut short when a 1931 newspaper report confused him with another actor, William "Stage" Boyd, who had been arrested. He acted in small roles for several years, using the more nondescript name "Bill Boyd" to prevent further confusion.

In 1935 he assumed the iconic role of Hopalong Cassidy, having first been offered a supporting role. Boyd changed Clarence Mulford's rough-edged character into a teetotaling cowboy hero that was an immediate hit.

The Hopalong Cassidy film series ran until 1948, for a total of 66 films. Believing in the future of the new television medium, Boyd spent over \$350,000 to purchase the rights to the character, the books, and the films, which he then offered to TV, becoming extremely popular with all ages of viewers. He also controlled the merchandising rights for the character, which led to a plethora of trading cards, lunch boxes, cowboy outfits, dishes, and toys. Many other items were offered to a ravenous public as well. He refused to license his name and the image of Hopalong Cassidy for any products that might be deemed unsuitable or dangers for kids.

Boyd starred in the *Hopalong Cassidy* radio program that was syndicated for 104 episodes from approximately 1948 to 1952. He portrayed himself in a cameo role in DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) but turned down the opportunity to play Moses in the director's remake of *The Ten Commandments*, a role that, of course, went to Charlton Heston. Boyd was married five times and after his retirement from acting, invested in real estate and move to Palm Desert, California. He died on September 12, 1972.