The 1955 movie, *Smoke Signal*, was filmed on the Hauer Ranch on the Colorado River near Moab Utah. It was a major production with a fort and the river playing important roles in the film.

*Thank you John Hauer for this interesting information.*

Anywhere an outlaw rode to avoid being seen was known as an **Owl Hoot Trail**. An owl hoots at night, so “owl hoot trail” implies that the folks who traveled there tended to do so under cover of darkness. “He rides where the owl hoots.”

A type of long quirt, or **Romal** (Pronounced ro-MAHL), is usually made of leather or rawhide and attached to the middle of a set of closed reins. About four to five feet long, the Romal is not designed for striking the horse, but rather to assist in moving cattle.

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We talk about future generations embracing the Western Americana world but I think it’s important for everyone to really think about what's ahead and our challenges as a group.

The Written Record Shapes All – But It’s Going Away...

By Jayne Skeff

In this country, there is likely no other group as passionate about the history behind antiques and artifacts, than those who have chosen to embrace the rich Western American heritage. You love it and you live it. You read extensively and provenance is deeply respected if not, in fact, demanded. It’s about what still exists today that was created by those brave undaunted individuals who came before. Now consider that having the historical knowledge with provenance for what remains and how that fuels more value for those pieces. It’s the written word, the written journals, the signatures, the notes, scraps of old paper with quickly jotted writings. These are the foundations that fuel our passion, sustain and increase the value, and enrich the history.

The importance of the written word really hit home back in June when PBS aired an encore presentation of Ken Burns, *The Voyage of the Corps of Discovery*, two-part series tracing the four year journey and exploration of Lewis and Clark into the uncharted West. Throughout the four hours, original pages of the writings in the journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and many in their party, were visual on the TV screen to read. By seeing their written words and reading them, it gave a deeper and personal contact with the incredible experiences they had.

They key word here is *written*. In *cursive* is exactly how the majority of important historic documents were created and recorded today. They were NOT printed in block letters, they were written in *cursive*.

We take it for granted and read these original documents furiously to gain more knowledge and learn about the antiques and artifacts we hold in our hands and the people that came before. A quick journey into any archives, through Google or an actual brick and mortar library, finds historic documents are cursively written. But what if reading and writing cursive no longer existed? Sounds crazy but that’s what’s coming down the pike so to speak.

As I’m sure many of you are aware, cursive writing, and consequently cursive reading, is no longer being taught in many schools. American children, overall, are not learning to read or write cursively any longer. The ramifications of this are daunting. When we are all together at the *High Noon Show and Auction* or just chatting on the phone, an underlying mission for all of us is at our core — that the history and the legacy of the American West live on and grow stronger. But how will this happen for generations to come?

*continued on page 4*
Think about something as basic as the original Declaration of Independence. It’s entirely written in cursive. What will the phrase I need your John Hancock mean to generations to come? Will they even be able to read the signatures of John Hancock or for that matter, discern the signatures of artists like Frederic Remington and Charles Russell? How will they be able to read the rich journals of Lewis and Clark or the desperate writings of the Donner Party. How will they read and interpret the land grants that settled the West or Gold Rush documents that resulted in the development of San Francisco?

Riding the train recently from Chicago to Milwaukee, I had the opportunity to sit next to an elementary school teacher who was on her way to a special seminar at the Marquette School of Engineering. The week-long seminar was about teaching children in 2014 because it’s a whole new ball game now. I asked her about the long-term affects of eliminating cursive education from the schools. To be honest, she hadn’t really considered it. It may not have any affect in some areas but it will have a devastating affect on their education and understanding of history reaching back centuries if not thousands of years. We chatted a bit about this and her response was that it will all eventually be translated into printed text.

The information will remain but the ability to touch and feel and connect with those that came before us will be lost. Reading those journals of Lewis and Clark will be Greek to them.

Provenance and history is not only just the information and the facts, but the genuine archives and historic documents that remain that we thirst for and cherish.

Our mission in the pursuit to sustain and increase the rich and wild history of the American West just got tougher.

Charlie Smith

By Jayne Skeff

From cook to cowboy to collector to letrbuck on eBay, this gentleman has left no saddle unturned in his amazing life.

Well, this was a wild ride through the life and times of Charlie Smith. It’s not often after a long phone interview that you hang up the phone more energized than when you dialed the number to start. Infectious laughter, long contemplative pauses and numerous sidebar stories [many about Linda and Joseph]... we’ll begin when he was just 15 living in Orange County, California.

He jumps right in with saying, “I ran away from home when I was 15. My family was into some religious trip that wasn’t for me.” Right here, you can see that this young man had a mind of his own that would set the tone for a life yet to unfold.

“I worked as a line cook for several years until 1972 when I came home from work one evening and my roommate was packing up and moving out. ‘Where are you going?’ I asked and he said, ‘my uncle has a
ranch in Utah and needs a ranch hand so I’m going to Utah tomorrow.” Being a cowboy had always been Charlie’s dream and his roommate wasn’t going without him. They picked up the phone, called his uncle who said Charlie could come too and that was that. Charlie went from cook to cowboy overnight.

Now he had no idea what he was doing when he got there but he didn’t care. He learned quickly from the young teenage ranch hands, who showed him the ropes and a few days later he was wrangling horses. “It was a beautiful ranch in the mountains,” he recalls. “Then they discovered I could cook so I became the cook for the crew as well.” Charlie worked on this ranch for the next few years until the opportunity to work on a ranch in Montana came up and off he went, then on to Oregon in 1976 to work with a large cattle and wheat operation. Yup, Charlie had become a professional cowboy and loved the life. But, it was along the way, that he became fascinated with antique tack. He began reading furiously and learning everything he could about it. He recalls at the time, that The Maine Antique Digest and the Antique Trader were his favorite publications and would read them cover to cover when his subscription arrived. It also made him wonder, “Who were these people buying and selling and collecting across the country?” And within short order, he jumped in. By now, he had amassed quite a collection of his own and decided he would run some ads and see what happened.

Well, what happened next was Charlie the Cowboy became Charlie the Antiques Dealer. This was also when he met his wife Karla whom he married in 1977. Together, they became quite an unstoppable team. He credits Karla with being instrumental in developing their business. She was an amazingly talented sewer who could create jackets and coats from Indian blankets and Pendleton blankets the likes of which no one had seen. She was also able to expertly repair Navajo blankets.

So now business is thriving and Charlie is buying and selling his Western antiques with customers across the country and several in Europe which really surprised him.

He pauses to interject a sidebar here that, even on the phone, you can see and feel his excitement and his pride in relaying the story. “I have to tell you that in 1980, my daughter Karlie was born. In 1998, when she went to college, she was awarded the very first NBSSCA Scholarship! We were so proud and so excited. What most don’t know is she went on to become a Loan Officer with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the position she still holds today. She’s helping farmers and ranchers and that makes me feel really good.”

Okay, back to Charlie and it’s 1984. He is buying and selling furiously at gun shows and antique shows numbering about 40 a year and crisscrossing the country. It was about this time that he was at a gun show in Los Angeles where he was scheduled to meet with one of his Texas customers, Paul Stuckey. Charlie had several bridles and horsehair belts that he hoped to sell him. He sold Stuckey about six and then Linda and Joseph showed up. Linda took one of the belts, which Charlie recalls he figured he would never sell because it was so big, and wrapped it around her waist twice – it fit perfect and she bought it. This belt would become more interesting as time went on so follow me here.

Now Charlie is back in Tacoma, WA, home to a rather renowned glass artist name Dale Chihuly who was an avid collector of Indian blankets and Charlie had sold him several. Then he asked him to find a particular horsehair belt that he was looking for and Charlie knew it was exactly like the one he had sold to Linda Sherwood back in 1984. But he couldn’t find another one but Chihuly got the belt he wanted when Linda got wind he was looking for the one she had. Charlie remembers this with a great laugh. Chihuly got the belt, Linda got Chihuly glass, which he’s quite sure she still has and “I got nothing…much less any piece of Chihuly glass.” But what he did get from this was great memories of how his life-long friendship with Linda and Joseph and the High Noon family came to be. (Yes, Charlie, Linda & Joseph still have the piece of Chihuly glass in their home!)

Now, back to Charlie and his ever-broadening antiques business. He found crisscrossing the country continued on page 6
doing shows to be exhausting and decided instead, to jump into renting space at antique malls throughout the Northwest. He had mall spaces in Idaho, Washington and Oregon and burned through several trucks over the next several years managing and working his businesses. But that wasn’t enough. He also had this idea to create a catalog of his collection that he would send, 4 times a year, to his customers. Now, before the ease of computers, he and Karla and his daughter, would painstakingly take photos of everything with their Polaroid, type the copy up, paste the photos down, Xerox the copies, pay his daughter 1¢ for each stamp she licked, and mailed them off the old fashioned way. This had a huge impact on his already thriving business. Now, between catalogs and antique malls throughout the Northwest, you wouldn’t think Charlie had much spare time for anything else but then again, you have to know Charlie.

“In 1990, I started working with photographer David Stoecklein.” Together, Charlie and Dave created and published a magnificent 228-page, full-color documentary book entitled Cowboy Gear: A Photographic Portrayal of the Early Cowboys and Their Equipment. To date, Charlie estimates over 20,000 copies have been sold. “This was an amazing project to work on,” he recalls. “We were on location for several months shooting real cowboys using my antique tack gear.” It was my job to make sure this antique gear held together which wasn’t always easy plus trying to get these real cowboys to be delicate with the tack. In the end, we captured the true cowboys that settled the West in true form.” This book is still being published, a truly rich and beautiful journey back in time.

Okay, now what? – Well, there’s more. So now it’s about 2000, and antique malls aren’t doing the business they used to and Charlie is at an antique show in Idaho and he keeps hearing the other dealers whispering “eBay.” “I’d heard of it but didn’t really want to get involved. But I came back and dipped my toe in the eBay water just to get it wet. Uhm, well, I quickly saw that my PayPal account was becoming quite active. So I put more up for sale and sold more, and more, and more. Once I realized what this was really about, my opportunity to get off the wild road and take things down a notch was apparent.” Charlie dove into eBay big time and now, if you go onto eBay and search for letrebuck you will be linked to Charlie’s page where he is noted as a top eBay seller with $1 million sold since he “dipped his toe in the water.”

And that’s where he is now. He’s relaxing a bit more, enjoying his family, still collecting and selling furiously but now from the comfort of his lovely home in Washington. He had to admit at the end, he’s even now gotten to where he can buy, take photos and post it on eBay right from his phone. He admits he can’t believe this ol’ cowboy can do this – but he’s doing it and loves it.

As for the High Noon Antique Shows, Charlie was at the very first one and was a fixture for the next 20 years. One closing funny story he recalls was the very first High Noon Show and Auction. He remembers it was held in a small hotel in Phoenix. He had flown in and was waiting for a cab outside the airport when he saw Linda and Joseph frantic on the curb with luggage containing all of the auction items, strewn everywhere, as the car that was scheduled to pick them up had never shown up. Well, it eventually showed up and they all got through the first show and auction together, but it was “a bit cramped,” he says with a smile. Okay, one very last story he had to share was year two of High Noon. “They had moved it to a hotel in Scottsdale called the Safari. I’m sure it’s been demolished by now. I remember my wife and I were in our room the first night and it started to pour rain. The hotel roof began to leak and water came pouring through onto our bed. The next year they moved it to Mesa and then it became the real deal and still is today.”

Thank you, Charlie, for sharing your story of being a cowboy and cowboy trader, from the road to the malls to the internet, with all the miles in-between.
Last Chance to Consign to High Noon's January Auction!

info@highnoon.com
SERVES 4-6

**Ingredients:**
- 8 cups good-tasting fish or chicken stock
- 12 medium raw shrimp, shells removed
- Other seafood of your choice: fresh mussels, scallops, crab, or sliced fish fillet (up to 1 handful of each)
- 1 stalk minced lemongrass*, OR 2.5 to 3 Tbsp. frozen, bottled or tube prepared lemongrass (or see substitutions list)
- 2 kaffir lime leaves*
- Zest from 1 small lemon
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. galangal OR ginger, grated
- 1-2 sliced red chilies OR 1-2 tsp. Thai chili sauce*
- 8 oz of fresh sliced mushrooms
- 1 medium carrot, cut into thin strips
- 1 medium tomato, cut into thin strips
- 1 baby bok choy
- 1 handful of bean sprouts
- 1/2 can (14 ounce) thick coconut milk (not “lite”)
- 2 tbsp. fish sauce* (if you don’t like the smell of fish sauce, see substitutions list below)
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- Juice of 1 lime
- Juice of 1 small lemon
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped

**Preparation:**
Pour stock, lemongrass and lime leaves in a deep soup pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. If using fresh lemongrass, also add the upper stalk pieces for extra flavor.

Add garlic, galangal/or ginger, chili, and mushrooms. Reduce heat to medium and simmer 2-3 minutes, or until mushrooms are soft.

Add the shrimp and any other seafood you’re using, plus the tomato, carrots, bean sprouts, and baby bok choy. Simmer over medium heat 3-4 minutes, or until shrimp turns pink and plump and mussels have opened. Scallops, crab, and fish should all be firm to the touch and no longer translucent.

Reduce heat to medium-low and add the coconut milk, fish sauce, soy sauce, lime and lemon juice, and sugar. Stir well to combine and gently simmer until hot (do not boil at this point). Taste-test the soup for salt and spice, adding more fish sauce instead of salt, or more chili as desired. If too sour, add more sugar. If too spicy for your taste or if you’d like it creamier, add more coconut milk. If too salty, add another squeeze of lime juice.

Serve in bowls with fresh coriander sprinkled over. For an extra hit of flavor, you can also add some Thai chili sauce.

**Substitutions that Work:**
If you can’t find lemongrass: try 3 slices fresh lemon (boil in the soup)
Instead of kaffir lime leaves: use zest from 1 lime
For chili: 1/2 to 3/4 tsp. cayenne pepper OR dried crushed chili (chili flakes)
If you don’t like the smell of fish sauce: 1/2 tsp. dark soy sauce + 1 tbsp. regular soy sauce
Casey Frazier
*A tragic loss for Team Nestor and our High Noon family*

Scott Morgan
*Friend, Artist, Renaissance Man*

Barbara Schmitt
*Friend and High Noon family dealer*
Bullets flew by my head like thoughts in a bad dream.
The sound made the lady in the red dress scream.
I dove behind the bar as a chair flew by.
Someone yelled, “Today’s a good day for you to die.”

The whole thing started about ten years or so ago.
I had been working on a ranch in southern Idaho.
One of the wranglers was this beautiful girl.
And, being young, I thought I’d give her a whirl.
She happened to be the boss man’s pride and joy.
How was I to know better? I wasn’t much more than a boy.
We teased and fooled around and such.
I could tell she was beginning to like me a bunch.
She was as hard working as she was good looking.
She also showed off her skills at southern cooking.
Her hair was softer than fresh-combed sorrel mane.
And her lips were sweeter than a bite of sugar cane.
Her touch was softer than the wing of a dove.
Oh, I guess you would have to say we fell in love.
But, I was a greenhorn at the whole scary love thing.
And, where was I going to get the money to buy a ring?
I decided to talk with my best pal Dan McPrice about it.
I called him over one day and asked him to sit a bit.
I told him what was going on and that it was great fun.
He said, “Boy, if I were you I’d get my stuff and run.”
He explained to me that girls grow up to be women.
A CLOSE CALL, continued

That their pretty smile turns out to be sour as a lemon.
    They will argue, nag and drive you insane.
Your carefree life will never ever be the same.
I worried and thought on it a really long spell.
    My head spun and my brain began to swell.
What could I do? What could I possibly say?
    That cold night haunts me even to this day.
I decided to take Dan’s advice and skedaddle.
I left without seeing her to avoid a word battle.
I quietly walked away with my horse feeling little fear.
    I looked back over my shoulder and shed a tear.

    Bottles started exploding and crashing above my head
    I coward in the corner figuring I’d soon be dead
    Men had scattered and the place got quiet.
I was really scared and there was no way to hide it.
    She walked slowly, steadily and loudly toward me.
I stood up and I could see that she was quite angry.
    A very sly, narrow smile came across my face.
She stopped and must have thought, “Oh what a waste.”
I blinked and watched her walk back toward the door.
Each of her boot steps pounded on the bar room floor.

    My mind danced back to that talk with Dan McPrice
    And I was really glad I took his sage advice.

Bob Frost
www.bobscowboypoetry.com
Barbara Louise Schmitt passed away on September 2nd, 2013 at the age of 78 in Jackson Hole. Here's a photograph of us at one of our first shows when we were BOTH quite a bit younger. Mom didn't love to be in the camera lens, and portraits were out of the question.

It’s hard to encapsulate a whole life into a few paragraphs, but I guess I'm not the first to attempt it.

On a personal level, my mom embodied the post-depression, post-war, midwestern mindset that hard work fixes everything. Although she had some great life experiences traveling the world, collecting fine objects, and attending cultural events, she maintained a forthright, direct attitude about life. She never wavered from the opinion that you cleaned your own house, cooked your own meals, and solved your own problems. Barbara couldn’t stand whining, tears, or excessive talk and had little patience for anyone with a propensity to be “maudlin.” She faced her ovarian cancer with the same attitude. She never felt sorry for herself, and did not want it to be the topic of conversation, much less dwell upon. Barbara just continued to live her life, giving the disease very little of her time and her thoughts, outside of being annoyed at various setbacks. She continued to enjoy cooking and keeping up with Western Americana trends to the very end, and was determined to attend shows when many in her position would have found it daunting.

As I continue forward, I will miss many things about my mom, but in particular, her declaration that “we need a good dinner.” My mom loved well prepared food paired with good wine, and was generous in sharing the experience with me and many of my friends and colleagues as we traveled the west attending shows. There are many things we can do to honor her: donate to cancer research, donate to hospice care, donate to institutions supporting the preservation of western culture. But truly, the most meaningful thing is to buy or make someone a meal. Raise a glass to her, enjoy every bite, and for God’s sake, don’t get maudlin. Easier said than done, but I’ll give it a try.  – Written by daughter Mary Schmitt (info@cayusewa.com)
Shortly after the release of the July/August 2013 issue of *Smoke Signals*, we received a call from an art dealer in New York wanting to correct our reporting in the lead story regarding the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In the story, it stated, “For the first time since their doors opened in 1870, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York will be featuring an exhibit of Western bronzes. Scheduled to open December 18, 2013 and titled The American West in Bronze, 1850-1925. This exhibit will feature the works of Remington, Russell, Fraser and Manship to name a few, and their artistic representations of the Native American Indian, cowboys, cavalry and pioneers.”

He wanted to correct our reporting as the “MET” had hosted an important Remington exhibit in 1989.

In fact, we are both correct. There was a Remington exhibit in 1989, however, this new exhibit opening in December 2013, will be the first time the MET has hosted an exhibit of the works of several Western American sculptors and artists, one of which is Frederic Remington. This is not a Remington-specific exhibit, but an exhibit of The American West in Bronze and will be the first time a number of these sculptors and artists will be featured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

On behalf of everyone at High Noon and Smoke Signals, we thank you for your input and careful eye on our reporting!

And, reader Corinne wrote:

Just to let you know we missed announcing one award, one of the Western Heritage Awards from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. Bill Barwick (who entertained us all at the Denver Old West Show on Saturday) was the winner of the WRANGLER AWARD for his new CD, *The Usual Suspects*. He received this prestigious award at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole in April.

Our apologies, Bill, for this omission.

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**High Noon is on Wikipedia**

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Noon_Western_Americana

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*Can you guess who is in her photo?*

*Photo by Nadine Levin.*
The Last of the B-Western Museums

By Ed Henderson (Cowboy Ed)

This is the largest (over 20,000 items on display); it is dedicated to the singing cowboys and all other b-westerns from William S. Hart to Rex Allen.

In 1938, Gene Autry purchased 1,200 acres of land at the railroad stop of Berwyn, OK. He built a large stone structure for his stock and apartment for his men. It was called The Flying A Rodeo Ranch. Mr. Autry had a landing strip for his personal airplane. He flew back and forth to his home in Studio City, CA. The first Champion was purchased and boarded here. The first pistol bits for Champion were made in Ardmore, OK, a few miles away.

The Flying a Rodeo Show would board trains in Berwyn and go east. Gene Autry's first Madison Square Garden rodeo livestock were from this ranch. Mr. Autry owned and managed all the rodeo stock and hired his cowboys to work the show. Of course the music was provided by Mr. Autry.

The name of the town changed. The people of Berwyn, Oklahoma (population 800) asked their famous rancher if they could use his name for their town. Mr. Autry agreed. He knew the town was never going to be a big city, but the honor of being on a USA map was quite an honor. On Sunday, November 16, 1941 a flatbed trailer set up with radio remote broadcasting ability for Gene to perform his Melody Ranch Show arrived at the railroad station in Berwyn, Oklahoma. It was advertised he would be here. Tour trains from several cities and states brought people to watch Gene Autry get on his famous horse Champion to rope the only sign and pull it down at the train depot. They nailed up the new sign with the name of the town of Gene Autry. This was filmed by Republic Studios. Over 30,000 people came to see the most famous singing cowboy to ever hit Hollywood. He was the top money making star of B-Westerns. He passed out sticks of Wrigley gum, his radio and television sponsor for nineteen years. In recent days I have personally interviewed people who were there as children and they proudly displayed (in a plastic bag) the gum he gave them those many years ago.

December 7, 1941; this date changed America forever. Republic Studios, Hollywood, California told their star making the most money that they would get him, Gene Autry, an exemption from serving in the military. Let someone else bleed. That is not what Gene did though. He went on his coast to coast radio show and had a Major swear him in as Private Gene Autry. Like a lot of Hollywood movie stars he would not take a rank. He did ask for two favors for his fame. He promised his fans they would not see him without cowboy boots, so the Army had the good sense to grant this favor as long as Gene paid for them. He was a licensed pilot so he wanted to fly. The Army allowed that this was no problem. He got his wings to fly at the Love Field Airbase. He was transferred to India to fly supplies over the Himalaya Mountains to China Theater of war. He was discharged in 1946, Gene completed three films for Republic Studios honoring his contract. Then he moved to Columbia Studios. All of this took place in 1946.

The making of a ghost town: Gene Autry sold the Flying A Rodeo Ranch at the end of the war. He had a new rodeo partner in Texas. His name was not on it. The school in Gene Autry never had more than 115 students in all twelve grades. The only sport the school played was basketball. One year a student wrote to Mr. Autry and explained to him the bad shape of their uniforms. Yes, you are right; Mr. Autry bought the team uniforms. He kept in contact over the years. By the late 1960s the school, which was built in 1938, had its last graduation from high school. Consolidation
closed it by the 1980s. The town was “long gone” – post office moved into the school building. The rest of the interior of the school was gutted and the windows boarded up.

Two people came to the rescue. Two school teachers: he was a women basketball coach and she was a math teacher, had a dream. Elvin Sweeten and his wife Flo took a long term lease on the leaking old rock and plaster school building. The ceilings were dropped, the stucco walls were covered with wood, heating and air conditioning added, and a sound system was added in the old gymnasium. Flo was raised in this town. The ranch where she grew up is a few miles away. Yes, Flo played half-court basketball while in school. She wanted the entire museum to be a movie memorabilia tribute to Gene Autry; of course she got it done. Flo and Elvin Sweeten traveled coast to coast, border to border, buying up whole collections. Something happened though; they had Gene items, but to achieve this they literally had all the other B-Western heroes’ memorabilia items also. Some you may never have heard of. Toys, big books, fat books, comics, tricycles, pistols and holsters like you have never seen in one place. There are over 20,000 items on display and over 100,000 ft. of glass. Every singing cowboy has his own individual display area. Elvin is still adding items. We have the only full display of all four Red Ryder movie stars. It goes on and on.

The museum is owned and operated by Elvin and Flo Sweeten. They want to share their love of a bygone age with those of us who still remember it. Admission is by donation. The museum is open February 1, 2012 to November 30, 2012, Monday through Saturday, 10AM to 4PM. The museum will open for special tours.

We decided to celebrate Roy Rogers100th birthday on his birthday, November 5th. We had seven radio stations that started in September advertising the birthday party. Children from the local Methodist church youth group printed “Happy Birthday, Roy Rogers” on several hundred popcorn bags. KCCU Radio station furnished free sarsaparilla and popcorn. During the showing of the movie Yellow Rose of Texas child actor, Don K. Reynolds, who was in three Roy Rogers movies told of making the movie. Don, “Little Brown Jug”, also had a studio date with Cheryl Rogers. She mentions it in her book, Cowboy Princess and also has a picture of the two of them. Two birthday cakes, each with Roy and Trigger in color on them, were served to over 300 people. At 4 PM we sang “Happy Trails,” and shed a tear and told our hero goodbye.

We have a large Roy Rogers collection of memorabilia. Elvin is continually adding to the collection.

My wife, Elizabeth and I visited the Roy Rogers Museum several times while it was located in Branson, MO. We even attended a New Year’s Party there. There was never a full house for Dusty’s show or the museum itself. In fact, we were told there were days when nobody visited the Museum. We were sad to hear that it had to close. We know people in our age group are dying fast; those that remember Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. We are the last of the B-Western Museums. We will not be open much longer, so come on while you can. We offer handicap accessible access. Come share your dreams.

One of my many surprises in working as greeter at the museum is the number of people who want to tell their memories and have a photo taken in front of the large oil painting of Gene and Champion. Several times people (mostly women) will cry telling their love of Gene or other stars all because of seeing them displayed at the museum. We have had people visit from Europe; one was from Transylvania. The visitors take lots of pictures and mail post cards home with the Gene Autry Oklahoma postmark on it.

Those of us who remember those days when we believed that good would prevail are dying off fast – those times of good guys always win will never be back.

Gene Autry OK Museum
42 Prairie St., Gene Autry, OK 73436
580-294-3047 www.geneautryokmuseum.com
A Century of Silver Screen Heroes on Horseback
No. 16 in the Series

By Gary Eugene Brown

“All the world’s a stage,
and all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances…..”

As You Like It, William Shakespeare,
Jaques Monologue, Act II.

People often wonder why their lives take a particular course resulting in their ultimate destiny. Some feel it is being at the right place at the right time; others by creating a vision and working hard to achieve it; and there are those who are of the opinion it is mainly luck, like a spin of the roulette wheel, either by fate or by divine appointment. Our featured player today was born in a small Midwest town. As a boy, he was thrilled to see photoplays of his hero Tom Mix. During his youth he participated in sports and assumed student body officer responsibilities. After not receiving acceptance at the US Naval Academy, the young man decided he wanted to become a lawyer. However, he was going to be much, much more than your run of the mill barrister. He was destined to become an American legend. His name, known throughout the world to this day:

Born Marion Robert Morrison (at 13 pounds!!) in Winterset, Iowa on May 26, 1907, to the local druggist Clyde Morrison and his wife, the former Mary “Molly” Brown, a telephone operator. Marion was very fond of his father who the town folks often called “Doc.” Molly, a petite, energetic redhead, had a fiery temper which she would demonstrate at times, often aimed at “Doc.” Marion was saddened with the angry outbursts at home between his parents. A younger brother was born in 1912. His mother wanted to name him Robert, so they legally changed Marion’s middle name to Mitchell. It was the first of many acts that indicated she favored the youngest son. Marion spent the rest of his life trying to please his mother. Doc’s father encouraged the family to follow him to California.

Doc Morrison went back to pharmacy work and Marion entered the public school system. At about this time, he picked up the nickname “Duke,” the name of his large Airedale Terrier. Marion would frequent a Glendale fire station with his dog in tow, or vice versa. The local fire fighters began calling them both Duke. The name stuck for life as he was not too enamored with being called Marion.

Duke Morrison entered Glendale High School in 1921. He fit in very well and was quite popular. Duke became President of his Sr. Class (1925). He participated in school plays, was a sports writer for the school paper and was a star guard on the championship high school football team. Duke had a fellow

Doc went first and brought the family to the Mojave Desert town of Lancaster in 1914. The original intent was for them to become farmers along with Marion’s grandfather. However, Mitchell Morrison died and in 1916, and being tired of the heat, jack rabbits and rattlesnakes, the family moved to Glendale, which offered a much milder environment.

JOHN WAYNE

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teammate Bill Bradbury who had a smaller twin brother named Bob. Both Duke and Bill received academic and athletic scholarships to play football at USC. Bob Bradbury quit school in his junior year to follow his father out on film locations. Who would have thought, Bill and Bob’s father, R.N. Bradbury, later would direct many John Wayne B Westerns. His son, likewise, would become a leading man in B cowboy films – Bob Steele. Bill Bradbury would go on to medical school and become one of Los Angeles’s leading gynecologists, delivering babies for the likes of Shirley Temple and Esther Williams. Hollywood was a small community way back then!

Duke Morrison entered USC in 1925 as a pre-law major. He played football for the legendary coach Howard Jones and was shifted to a tackle position. Duke also became a fraternity member of Sigma Chi. A famous spectator who attended the Trojan football games when in town was the legendary, first King of the Cowboys – Tom Mix. Coach Jones had an arrangement with Tom Mix, whereby he would furnish Tom and his entourage football tickets if Tom would help find off-season employment for his players at Fox Studios. In turn, Duke and another player received an invitation to meet Tom Mix at Fox Studios. The two young men were impressed with the luxury car with a TM brand on it parked out in front of his dressing room. They went to his room and there he was in his fancy, custom cowboy outfit. Duke was hoping they would be hired to spar with the famous actor who boxed daily to keep in shape. The cowboy actor, whom he admired as a boy, asked Duke to show him how to play football. Duke assumed a leverage position and the 5-foot 10-inch, 160 pound, 45 year old actor would try knocking over the 6-foot 4-inch, 180 pound, 19 year old Duke. The cowboy actor told them that he was getting ready to make a film in Colorado and wanted them to join him and help him remain in top physical condition. In the interim, Tom said he would help them find work in the studio and introduced them to a man in charge of hiring the film crews. Duke was promptly hired as a prop man...moving furniture from one set to another. Duke, as recorded in his unfinished biography, noted the next time he saw Tom Mix drive into the studio lot in “his beautiful Locomobile, I quickly put the chair down and smiled at my benefactor, and said ‘Hello, Mr. Mix.’” However, the public’s number one cowboy star gave him “a blank look”...“that told me my date with Colorado had just been broken. He didn’t remember.” It is regretful that the super cowboy film star at the time, for one reason or another would convey a who-are-you look at the young man. However, the initial introduction made by Tom Mix enabled young Duke Morrison to enter the studio gates and the rest is history. This was a pivotal moment in his life as he soon injured his shoulder while body surfing which ended his football career.

The tall, lithe, handsome athlete, while moving objects from one set to another, came to the attention of many people including director John Ford. Jack, as he was called back then, had made several films by then including two critically acclaimed A westerns - The Iron Horse and 3 Bad Men. The director used Duke behind the scenes on Mother Machree (1928), where Duke met Ford stock player Victor McLaglen who would eventually costar with him in memorable films such as She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949) and The Quiet Man (1952). Ford would talk to the young man about his playing days on the gridiron. Ford immediately liked Duke and would use him to assist in three more films.

From time to time, Duke would get an occasional part as an extra in films. He even drowned in the flood in the epic Noah’s Ark (1929) which starred George O’Brien, John Ford’s first protégée and the leading man in both The Iron Horse and 3 Bad Men. Like McLaglen, O’Brien would go on to costar with the Duke in Ford’s Fort Apache (1948) and She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. Duke’s first film credit was in the film Salute (1929), another Ford/O’Brien collaboration.

1930 was a significant year in the life of Duke Morrison. John Ford claim ed later on that he learned that Director Raoul Walsh was looking for a leading man for a major “all talking” western about the Oregon Trail – The Big Trail (1930). He suggested Walsh consider Duke for the part. Walsh had wanted Gary Cooper for the role, but was not able to sign him. As such, he took a big gamble in hiring a virtually unknown actor (age 22) to play the lead role in a big budget, epic western. Walsh had been reading a biography on General “Mad Anthony” Wayne, a Revolutionary War hero and wanted to name his new leading man after this historical character. However, Anthony sounded too ethnic, so the name John Wayne was selected. Unfortunately, the film which depicted many of the
McCoy. He then signed with Warner Brothers in a series of routine oaters. According to The Old Corral (www.B-westerns.com), The best of the six Warner westerns was the first film in the series Ride Him, Cowboy (1932) and Haunted Gold (1932). Duke then signed with the Lone Star Productions unit at Monogram for sixteen B westerns beginning with Riders of Destiny (1933). The recommended Lone Star films by The Old Corral are: Blue Steel (1934), Randy Rides Alone (1934), The Trail Beyond (1934) and The Dawn Rider (1935). Monogram eventually merged with Republic Studios and eight more John Wayne westerns were produced starting with Western Ho (1935) and concluding with Winds of the Wasteland (1936). These two films and the King of the Pecos (1936) are recommended. Duke was then loaned to Paramount for one western with Johnny Mack Brown – Born to the West aka Helltown (1937) which was favorably reviewed. Then Duke was asked to replace Bob Livingston as Stony Brooke in the popular Three Mesquiteers series. He made eight of the trio films which co-starred Ray Crash Corrigan and Max Albi Terhune, beginning with Pals of the Saddle (1938). Two recommended films are: Overland Stage Raiders (1938) and Wyoming Outlaw (1939). Bob Livingston eventually returned to the series.

After The Big Trail, Duke was first cast in mostly unforgettable roles in non-westerns and then for several years was relegated to being a cowboy hero in B westerns. With Columbia, he was cast as a costar in a Buck Jones film and two with Tim McCoy. He then signed with Warner hardships experienced by early pioneers was not a box office success. There were some pundits who felt that John Wayne was responsible for the poor showing, however, in this writer’s opinion, that was not the case. Duke carried his own in the role of Breck Coleman along with a stellar cast such as Marguerite Churchill (soon to be Mrs. George O’Brien), Tully Marshall, and an evil, downright ugly, Tyrone Power Sr. and former USC football player, Ward Bond. It was a grueling film for the cast and crew as they had to endure the same harsh elements of the pioneers, spending several months filming on the actual route of the Oregon Trail. The Big Trail was far superior to James Cruze’s The Covered Wagon (1923), the first epic western, also about the Oregon Trail.

John Wayne felt as though he was going to spend the rest of his film career as a B cowboy star, however, he really wanted to be a film director. Looking back on the 30s, he had learned his craft well, literally from the bottom up. He also had the opportunity to work with the likes of Yakima Canutt, George Haynes (before his Gabby persona), and Paul Fix, who were usually cast as the villains. He also got to know Harry Carey, John Ford’s first major cowboy film star. John Wayne, in an interview with Kevin Brownlow in his outstanding BBC series regarding the Golden Era of Hollywood, said that he was like a father figure to him (Duke’s own father died in 1937) and he that loved him. John Wayne shared that Harry had a natural style of acting. Also, Harry always wanted a good pair of boots and a cowboy hat, and what he wore in between didn’t matter that much to him.

In 1933, Duke Morrison aka John Wayne, married Josephine Saenz, his longtime girlfriend, who he had met at the beach when she was a teen and he a college man. The wedding was in the Bel Air home of her friend Loretta Young. Josie was the daughter of the Consul General for Panama. She was very attractive with classic Latina features and a very devout Catholic. The couple had four children: Michael, Antonia (Toni), Patrick and Melinda. Duke and Josie appeared to have a happy home life, however his being away on film locations around the world, a difference of opinion as to how their children should be raised and her desire to socialize with people that were not in her husband’s circle of friends eventually led to a separation in 1943 and divorce in 1945.

John Ford had not forgotten Duke Morrison. When he decided to make Ernest Haycock’s short story The Stage to Lordsburg, published in Collier’s magazine (1937) into his first sound western, he wanted Duke for the main lead. Several potential producers turned him down as westerns were considered passé by
them and Ford backing John Wayne to be the Ringo Kid did not go over well with them. Hollywood had not forgotten the dismal box office receipts for The Big Trail. Eventually, Walter Wanger agreed to produce the film; however, he wanted Gary Cooper and Marlene Dietrich in the lead roles. Ford stood firm for John Wayne, so a compromise was made whereby Wanger would put up slightly more than half the money he originally agreed to and that Claire Trevor, a well-established actress, would receive top billing. Ford agreed and an all-star supporting cast was assembled. The story was about nine people whose destinies were entwined on a perilous journey through Apache territory. The photoplay was strong on character development, similar to a Bret Harte, Damon Runyon or O. Henry novella, plus included panoramic vistas of the majestic Monument Valley. The film went on to receive rave reviews from critics, was a box office hit, and received six Academy Award nominations including Best Picture, winning two Oscars: Thomas Mitchell for Best Supporting Actor as Doc Boone and Best Music Scoring. John Ford won New York’s Film Critics Award for Best Director. The brilliant film maker Orson Welles said that it was “the perfect textbook on film making.” Before filming Citizen Kane, Welles claimed “After dinner every night for a month, I’d run Stagecoach.” However, the biggest winner of all was 32 year old Marion Morrison from Winterset, Iowa, who had previously earned his stripes playing the hero in 44 B Horse Operas. The best review of his role as the Ringo Kid was given by a fellow cast member Louise Platt, who played the expectant mother Lucy Mallory: “He’ll be the biggest star ever because he is the perfect ‘everyman’. ” Quite prophetic!

The 1940s was a hectic, trying period for our country and for Duke Wayne. With the success of Stagecoach, the opportunities for varied roles opened up for filmdom’s emerging movie star. Duke would make eleven western films during the decade, beginning with The Dark Command (1940), directed by Raoul Walsh. It co-starred Claire Trevor, Walter Pigeon and fourth billing was given to the next King of the Cowboys - Roy Rogers. Also, John Wayne played other roles in the 40s, especially the stalwart WW II military hero, which next to his western roles, were the most popular among his adoring fans. The Duke was especially heroic in Flying Tigers (1942), then followed They Were Expendable (1945) and Sands of Iwo Jima (1949). In 1975, Emperor Hirohito visited the US and requested the State Department help arrange a meeting between him and then the world’s most popular movie actor. When the Duke heard the request, he supposedly said - why would he want to see me, after all I must have killed off the entire Japanese Army. Yours truly was 10 years old when Sands of Iwo Jima, directed by veteran director Alan Dwan, played in our local theater. I was so moved by the film that I wanted to be a “leatherneck” just like Sgt. Stryker and yell out, “Lock and load!” However, when Sgt. Stryker was shot by a sniper after the fighting appeared over, I got teary eyed. John Wayne may not have served in actual combat, however he did more to help the morale of our troops and the folks back home than any bureaucrat in Washington, DC.

After his divorce from Josie Morrison was final, the Duke married Esperanza “Chata” Ceballos, a Mexican actress he had met in Mexico City (1946). It was a rocky relationship between the two right from the start. She even shot at him once. Duke said, “Our marriage was like shaking two volatile chemicals in a jar.” Chata was upset about his dedication to his work and the attention he paid to his children, plus she was extremely jealous of his leading ladies. The marriage ended in 1952, however the divorce was not final until 1954. There were no children from the union. Sadly, Chata died from a heart attack at only 37.

The five John Wayne westerns filmed between 1947 and 1950 were the best of the eleven cowboy movies he made during the 40s. Angel and the Badman (1947), costarring Gail Russell and Harry Carey, Sr. is an
Smoke Signals

often overlooked film. The first film produced by John Wayne is an excellent movie. Like *Stagecoach*, each character is fully developed to the point you actually care for them. Gail Russell was one of the most beautiful stars in Hollywood and the Duke was still the tall, handsome leading man. Duke’s wife, Chata, was of the opinion that her husband was having an affair with Miss Russell. That said, the two main stars definitely had the chemistry going between them. *Fort Apache* (1948), was the first of the trilogy of the US Calvary life in the West. It co-starred Henry Fonda and George O’Brien. The 3 Godfathers (1949), also directed by Ford, called Pappy or Coach by the Duke, was the fourth version of the Peter Kyne story. Ford had made a silent film of the same story *Marked Men* (1919) starring Harry Carey Sr. Interesting enough; the film co-starred his son Harry Carey Jr. and Pedro Armendariz. John Ford dedicated the film in the memory of Harry Carey who had recently crossed over Jordan. *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) was the second in the series of the US Calvary by John Ford. John Wayne, age 42, played Captain Nathan Brittles, a man who was approaching retirement, probably in his early 60s. The Duke turned in another wonderful performance. It has been said that he felt it was his favorite role.

No, I did not forget a particular western film released in 1948. I held it to last as it is a classic, one of the best westerns ever filmed. I remember seeing it on the big screen. Red River was my first adult western. I was mesmerized by the transition of Tom Dunson, who went from the benevolent, strong father figure to Matt Garth, played by Montgomery Clift, to the hardened, vengeance seeking tyrant. In my opinion, the role helped prepare the Duke to transition into Ethan Edwards so powerfully a few years later in *The Searchers*. After seeing the Howard Hawks picture staring his former protégé, John Ford commented: “I didn’t know the big, son of a bitch could act”.

*Rio Grande*, the third and final chapter in the Calvary trilogy was released in 1950. It co-starred the lovely Maureen O’Hara along with Ford Stock players like Victor McLaglen, Ben Johnson and Harry Carey Jr. As an aside, Ford had bought the rights to a short story written by Maurice Walsh, published in 1933 by the *Saturday Evening Post*. The legendary director wanted to bring the story to film, however Republic Studios said they would only do so if Ford agreed to first direct *Rio Grande*. The proposed film was *The Quiet Man* (1952), my wife Sherrill’s favorite movie. It was made on location in Ireland. It co-starred Maureen O’Hara and Victor McLaglen. It should be noted that the Wayne/O’Hara romantic screen couple rivals the most famous screen lovers of all time including Greta Garbo and John Gilbert, William Powell and Myrna Loy, Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. The film garnered John Ford his fourth Best Director Oscar.

While looking for film locations in Peru, Duke met Pilar Pallette, a local singer and actress. She was the daughter of a Peruvian senator. They met again later in Los Angeles and the romance blossomed. The two were married in Hawaii on November 1, 1954. They lived in Encino for several years and then moved to Newport Beach in 1965 where he could be closer to his beloved yacht, the 136’ long Wild Goose, a former USN mine sweeper. The couple had three children: Aissa, Ethan and Marisa. Ethan played an important role in *Big Jake* (1971) and in several television series. Today, he heads up the John Wayne Enterprises. Duke and Pilar separated in 1973, however never divorced.

The westerns following *Rio Grande* included *Hondo* (1953), the Louis L’Amour story filmed in 3D; *Rio Bravo* (1959) with Dean Martin, Walter Brennan, Ricky Nelson and Angie Dickinson and directed once again by Howard Hawks and *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) costarring William
Holden, with John Ford at the helm. However, in 1956, The Ford Stock Company once again returned to Monument Valley to film, in my opinion, and I’m not alone, the finest western ever made, *The Searchers*. The storyline was based on a novel by Alan Le May. The film enabled John Wayne to demonstrate what a fine actor he truly was. Sadly, the Academy Awards overlooked the movie. However, the film received many critical reviews. The American Film Institute ranked it number 12 of the 100 Greatest American Films and the Greatest American Western of All Time. The British Film Institute’s *Sight & Sound* magazine, survey of film critics, listed *The Searchers* the 7th Best Film of All Time (2012). *New York Magazine* noted it was “the most influential movie in American History.” The late Roger Ebert commented: “John Ford’s *The Searchers* contains scenes of magnificence, and one of John Wayne’s best performances. There are shots that are astonishingly beautiful.” The epic film director David Lean watched the movie repeatedly in order to get ideas on how to best film landscapes, in preparing to shoot *Lawrence of Arabia*. Famous directors of our time such as Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, John Milius, Peter Bogdanovich and Jean-Luc Goddard were influenced by Ford’s direction. Even though he was at times a tyrant and would dress down anyone from the leading man to a grip, he got the results he wanted. Henry Brandon, who played Ethan Edwards arch nemesis Scar in the film, is reported to have said John Ford was “The only man who could make John Wayne cry.”

Duke Wayne, in his unfinished autobiography, remarked when he was working behind the scenes at Fox Studios: “I decided to become a director, and if need be, I would take a brief detour into acting or whatever else was necessary to accomplish my goal.” Well that brief detour was about 30 years in duration, however in 1960, he finally achieved his ultimate goal. Beginning in 1945, Duke decided he wanted to make a film about the battle of the Alamo. He began the script process and discussed the project with Republic Studio executives. However, they balked at the $3M estimated budget. Eventually, he was able to secure financing with United Artists. He originally only wanted to be the producer/director and do a cameo role as Sam Houston. However, UA agreed to the deal only if he invested $2.5M and they would put up a like amount. In addition, they required he play one of the three principal roles based upon his box office draw.

Which was often the case, Duke would involve his family as much as possible, especially on long location shoots. Son Patrick played a significant role in *The Alamo* and his older sister Toni LaCava and her daughter Anita, wife Pilar and the Duke’s young daughter Aissa were also in the picture. Later on, Aissa remarked: “I think making *The Alamo* became my father’s own form of combat. More than an obsession, it was the most intensely personal project in his career.” The four-month location shoot in Texas and overseeing a cast of thousands was a monumental task. However, John Wayne pulled it off. The film did well at the box office, though it was not enough for the Duke to recoup his investment as UA took their money first. Later, when the film was ready for TV distribution, Duke sold his rights to UA, and he was made financially whole again. The film received six Academy Award nominations including Best Picture and won for Best Sound. Reviews were mixed with the New York Herald-Tribune giving it 4 Stars and noting “A magnificent job...visually and dramatically *The Alamo* is top-flight”; while *Time Magazine* referred to it as being “flat as Texas.”

Regardless, it is truly an entertaining, epic movie and a living testament to the man who made it happen.

Wagon (1967) and The Undefeated (1969). Also, in 1969, Duke Wayne portrayed Rooster Cogburn in True Grit based on Charles Portis’ novel, published in 1968. Marguerite Roberts adapted the story for the film. When Duke Wayne reviewed the screen play, he claimed it was the best script he had ever read. The movie was directed by Henry Hathaway and costarred Kim Darby and popular singer Glen Campbell. Over the years, Duke would cast popular, young male singers in his films, perhaps to draw the younger set, especially young women. There was public and encouraged people to quit smoking which he had done and to get a lung x-ray.

Who was the real persona behind the John Wayne, super star image? Most often, it’s not wise to take the opinion of an estranged wife, however Pilar in her memoirs seemed to provide a balance report. According to her, “his work was his life.” Duke was at times “stubborn, domineering and insensitive.” However, “He could be the sweetest, most caring man. He could be so tender.” His daughter Marisa shared that, “He was a great father. He loved having kids around all the time. He wanted us to be with him on the set, at home, on vacation or on our boat. Anita LaCava Swift, Toni’s daughter and his first grandchild, in a recent interview echoed Marisa’s remarks: “He loved kids! He gave you his complete attention and would ask you what you enjoyed doing and what your hobbies were. I had the role of Fagin in Oliver Twist when I was in the 8th grade. Unknown to me, he shows up for the performance. Then after each following show I would get a telegram and a bouquet of flowers. A typical telegram would read “Great show Anita…..would like to talk to you about a contract. Signed Louie B. Mayer. The next night it would be a telegram and flowers from someone like Lou Wasserman and so on. He was a great granddad!” Ethan regarding the subject of his father’s political views commented: “There’s a misconception about my dad’s political views. He was not a rubber-stamp conservative. He was an independent thinker. He had an enormous love for America, because it offered so much in terms of opportunities, if you knew how to work for them and take advantage of them.” Michael and Patrick were with him most often. Patrick once shared “I loved him. He was a great father. He never gave advice. And yes, I have to admit, even though I felt at ease with him, he could still be intimidating. He was John Wayne, after all.” Anita shared a particular story that relates to Patrick’s observation. Her closest friend in school was Pat, the daughter of the legendary director Alfred Hitchcock. As such, she would often have supper with the Hitchcock’s. “One evening Mr. Hitchcock inquired about my grandfather. I told him he just made cowboy movies. The director in his unique manner of speaking, told me that my grandfather was very famous. Frankly, I was surprised he knew of my granddad. I told my mother the story and she laughed. I also shared it with my granddad when I saw him and he chuckled and said, ‘Yes, I’ve met Hitch a few times.’” He was John Wayne after all!

During the 70s, Duke for the most part, maintained his busy schedule, making one or two films per year. In 1970, he made Chisum and Rio Lobo, then Big Jake (1971), The Cowboys (1972), The Train Robbers (1973), Cabill U.S. Marshall (1973), Roster Cogburn with Kathryn Hepburn (1975) and his final film The Shootist (1976). The two films, in my opinion, that warrant some discussion are The Cowboys and The Shootist. The Cowboys was based on a novel by William Dale Jennings. The former television actor and a relatively new director Mark Rydell supposedly wanted George C. Scott to play the aging cow boss as he opposed some of the well-known, conservative views of John Wayne. However, the
Duke lobbied for the part. The end result turned out to be an entertaining film, thanks to both the director and actor. Bruce Dern who had to shoot down rancher Wil Andersen in cold blood in front of the young boys was cautioned beforehand by the Duke that the audience would hate him for it. Dern’s reply: “Yea, but they’ll sure love me in Berkeley.”

The Shootist was destined to be John Wayne’s last film. It portrays an aging pistolero who is dying from cancer. Contrary to rumors, John Wayne was cancer free at the time. It was almost three years later that he was diagnosed with stomach cancer. That said, it was a fitting final screen appearance due to his reflecting on his own life and knowing the end was near. The opening montage which used film clips from John Wayne’s early westerns was a genius move. The producers M.J. Frankovich and William Self wanted George C. Scott to play J.B. Books. However, once again Duke lobbied for the part. He and the director Don Siegel had a relationship where they could be open about their differences, yet it was never personal and both made contributions to the film. However, Duke told the screen writer Miles Swarthout, who adapted the novel written by his father Glendon Swarthout, that he had to change the script. Duke said, “Mister, I’ve made over 250 pictures and have never shot a guy in the back. Change it!” And change it he did. Duke was also able to influence the casting by bringing in James Stewart, Lauren Bacall, Richard Boone and John Carradine who had costarred with him in Stagecoach. He also used his favorite movie horse Dollar, who he had rode in many other films including True Grit. The National Board of Review selected The Shootist as one of the Top 10 Films of 1976.

The Duke was eventually hospitalized for stomach cancer. He told the medical staff that in order to help find a cure for cancer they could experiment on him in any way they chose. John Wayne died of stomach cancer on June 11, 1979. He was buried at Pacific View Memorial Park in Newport Beach. Before he died, he challenged his family to find a cure for cancer. They accepted the challenge. Upon his death, President Jimmy Carter eulogized his passing for our nation and the whole world, over the loss of someone we seemed to know as well as a family member. The President said, “John Wayne was bigger than life. In an age of few heroes he was the genuine article. But he was more than a hero. He was a symbol of so many qualities that made America great. The ruggedness, the tough independence, the sense of personal courage – on and off the screen – reflected the best of our national character.”

Resource material included: JOHN WAYNE The Genuine Article, Michael Goldman, Insight Editions; JOHN WAYNE The Legend and the Man, Patricia Bosworth, Powerhouse Books; The Old Corral b-westerns.com, Chuck Anderson; and special thanks to Anita LaCava Swift aka Fagin.

GARY E. BROWN
is the retired Police Chief of Monterey, California; Ashland, Oregon and San Clemente. However, his avocation is collecting western art and memorabilia including many Tom Mix items. Tom Mix was his father’s hero, so he is Gary’s as well. Gary wrote an article on Tom Mix for The National Film & Collectors Magazine – Hollywood Studio Magazine, as well as a recent article on Tom Mix’s final day for American Cowboy magazine. He has also written articles on the Western Photoplays of the Golden Era and lectured on the Western Heroes of the Silver Screen. He can be reached at montereycowboy@hotmail.com or found, most mornings, at his son Jordan’s Maverick’s Coffee House in Visalia, California...the site of “possibly the best coffee in the world” with walls of vintage cowboy movie posters and a collection of 66 original, autographed photos of yesterday’s cowboy heroes.
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Linda Kohn Sherwood, Editor

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