



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Drug Store Cowboys

Drug Store Cowboys Report One

January 28, 2006

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today, I'm in Chandler, Arizona, taking a break from the winter cold up north.

I packed up Reporterette today, and we headed for Rawhide West, a Disney-like theme park of an old Wild West town. We visited curio shops, looked at burros and camels (a favored animal in America's Wild West), old wagons, make-believe saloons, curio stores, and make believe cowboys. Some of these scenes are shown in the photos in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Scenes from Rawhide West.

After the visit, we had lunch at Rawhide West's genuine, simulated Wild West café. One of the appetizers on the menu was rattlesnake, a meat I had eaten a few times when I was growing-up in New Mexico. I don't recall mom cooking rattlesnake, as dad was a cattle rancher, but not a rattlesnake rancher. Rattlesnakes do not like being rounded-up.

But I did try the meat while traveling through Vaughn, New Mexico, a town noted for some of the best chicken fried steak to be found in that part of America. The meat tasted like chicken breast.

- The waitress at Rawhide West informed us the treat was available only as a fried dish. Small wonder, it's America. Fried food has been fried into our palates.

- "I prefer my rattlesnake raw. Can you do that?"
- Waitress, "Eh, well, we have these health codes you know."
- Reporter, "Raw fish; raw shrimp; raw rattlesnake. It's all ..."
- Waitress, "Oh, Sushi!"
- Reporter, "Yes."
- Waitress, "I'll check with the cook."
- Reporter, "That's OK. We'll settle for your Wild West T-Bone."
- Shortly, the waitress returned to our table---sporting a Clint Eastwood demeanor, "Cook says we can do rattlesnake raw. He's cutting it up now. I'll bring it right over."
- Reporter, "I was just joking."
- Waitress, "Me, too." As she walked back to the kitchen.

A Fine Singer

As you may recall from the report, "Sing Me a Song Title," I like country music, at least some of the stuff that does *not* have a 100-person orchestra and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir confusing the verse. What can be more painful to the ear than:

- Drums drum; trumpets trump; flutes flute, creating music making John Williams and Lawrence Welk proud.
- A low-pitched Johnny Cash-like voice begins singing in a flat, minor key, "I love your fat, better than I love my dog." Cool. Then, a high-pitched 100-voiced choir, accompanied by a 100-piece orchestra chimes in, "He loves your pork, better than he loves his hog."

It just does not sound right to me. How about you?

Anyway, the lunch of Texas Toast, a T-Bone, topped off with a huge Strawberry Shortcake, followed by a beta blocker was made even more pleasant by the performance of Steve Barker, a talented singer and acoustic guitar player. (I'm listening to Steve's CD song "Abilene" as I write this report.) He played some of my old favorites, "Lucille," and Freddy Hart's, "Easy Loving."

(When I first heard "Lucille" I thought the lyrics, "You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille, with four hungry kids, and the crops in the field," were, "You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille, with four hundred kids, and the crops in the field." *I thought, no wonder she left. Self defense.*)

Gene, Roy, andKen?

After a fine meal and fine entertainment, we visited a few more shops, where I purchased three photos of old drug store cowboy movie stars. The three pictures are shown in Figure 2. What a find! Old pictures of old stars, a treasure before my eyes. One of them was even autographed. (Although I had never heard of a Ken Maynard.) I was thinking of their re-sale value on the Internet. Some things never depreciate and you can sell *anything* on the Net.



Figure 2. Rare photos!

- After selecting these pictures, I took them to the cashier, “I was wondering if you sell many cowboy photos?” *I hope not...I hope they’ve been overlooked.*
- Cashier, “They’re not one of our hot items.”
- Reporter, “What sells in your store?”
- Cashier, “Plates, coffee cups, and cowboy hats.”
- Reporter, “But not these pictures?”
- Cashier, “No sir. Other than your purchase, I can’t recall ever ringing-up a sale for any of those items. But I did sell a Sons of the Pioneers picture a couple months ago.”
- Reporter, “How long have you worked here?”
- Cashier, “Over a year.”

It’s true. Some things never depreciate. And some things never appreciate, such as these pictures. Anyway, let’s do a poll. Send in your vote for your favorite cowboy of these three men. In case you don’t know them, they are (from left to right): Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Ken Maynard. My vote goes to Ken because he’s wearing a bigger hat than the other two. My only hesitation is that I don’t know if he sang cowboy songs accompanied by the New York Philharmonic.

(Write-ins are also allowed for Whip Wilson, Hopalong Cassidy, and John Travolta).

Your on the Street Reporter

Drug Store Cowboys Report Two

January 30, 2006

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Before we examine today's report, I'll recount the results of our Favorite Old Movie Drug Store Cowboys poll. One reader asked me to inform everyone that he would never vote for Hopalong Cassidy, even though Hopalong was a fine actor. He said Hopalong was not a cowboy but a football player (All American, by the way).

I did not vote for Hopalong because I could not identify with a drug store cowboy by the name of **Hopalong** Cassidy. Hop? What sort of cowboy would hop along the Chisholm Trail? I could go for **Getalong** Cassidy, but wild west experts would likely associate that name with cattle, as in getalong little doggie.

Anyway, before we recount these results, let's review the responses to some recent polls in these reports. First, the number of responses to this poll far surpassed the other polls taken in these reports. As best I can determine, the only explanation for this result is that the Favorite Old Movie Drug Store Cowboys poll was the only poll giving you leeway in your responses. Or you have a thing for cowboys. Maybe you just watched *Brokeback Mountain*? Don't ask, don't tell, I don't care one way of the other.

You may recall previous polls summarized in this table.

Poll Question	From Report	Prevalent Responses
Are you upset if someone asks about your religious preference? (yes/no)	<i>Here Comes the Neighborhood (II)</i>	Only if they offer street directions to the wrong church.
Is America engaged in a religious war in the Middle East? (yes/no)	<i>A Religious War?</i>	Yes. See thousands of Muslim clerics who chant daily, <i>Death to the religious infidel, America!</i>
Is it (a) 4 balls and 3 strikes or (b) 3 balls and 4 strikes? (a or b)	<i>Baseball in the Nation's Capital</i>	a: yes; b: no. With a comment, "This man in not from America, he's from Mars."
Does your chewing gum lose its flavor on the bedpost overnight? (yes/no)	<i>Sing Me a Song Title</i>	No responses...maybe no one wanted to admit they chewed gum.
Would you attend an Ashley Judd speech to (a) hear her talk or (b) watch her talk? (a or b)	<i>Ashley Judd at the National Press Club</i>	Females: 100 % yes to a. Males: 100 % yes to b.
Does Dick Cheney look better on TV than in person? (yes/no)	<i>National Press Club and Vice President Cheney</i>	Republicans: 100% both. Democrats: 100% neither.

Here are the results of the latest poll:

Who is your favorite Old Time Movie Drug Store Cowboy? (Choose or write-in your opinion)	<i>Drug Store Cowboys</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roy Rogers 2. Gene Autry 3. Johnny Mack Brown 4. Hopalong Cassidy 5. The Lone Ranger
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Other votes: John Voight (from the movie, *Midnight Cowboy*) received a vote from a person living in New York City (what does a New Yorker know about cowboys?). John Travolta (from the movie, *Urban Cowboy*) received a vote from an oil-field worker in Houston. A fan of *Brokeback Mountain* voted for Dustin Hoffman (from the movie, *Midnight Cowboy*).

Whip Wilson garnered two votes, likely from a couple of perverts. Although I'm not into whipping and stuff, I thought of voting for Whip because he is the only movie cowboy I've seen in person. When I was a lad, Whip paid a call on my home town and appeared on stage at the Mesa Theater. He showed-off his whip skills in between a double feature of his films.

The bull whip, as it is called, is a long, lethal device. Like many handheld tools, the effective use of honing its "snap" is through a proper wrist action. Whip whipped it around with amazing dexterity. Returning home from seeing my first live stage performance, I pulled out my 18 inch quirt and quirted it around, pretending I was the great Whip Wilson.

Anyway, I thought of casting my vote for Gene Autry, primarily because he was a former owner of a baseball team, and as you know, I am a big baseball fan. But on Super Bowl Sunday, I changed my vote to the Lone Ranger's sidekick, Tonto. I'll explain why I voted for Tonto shortly---and then changed it again. Let me first explain why I did not vote for Gene.

Super Bowl Sunday

This last Sunday, I prepared myself for THE game. Up here in Northern Idaho, located near Spokane, and fairly near Seattle, the population was pro-Seahawks. So, I got into the spirit of my surroundings and turned on the TV to watch.....hours upon hours of pre-game programs featuring sports commentators.

Anyway, I had tuned in for the game well before kickoff time. So, as any normal American male would do, I executed some serious channel surfing operations, which with our new satellite TV service, presented over 100 channels of infomercials, 75 of which were home shopping.

Lo and behold, I came across a channel devoted entirely to western (cowboy) movies. Even more, Gene Autry was playing in *Blue Montana Skies*. I said to myself, *Settle-in, the game doesn't start for a couple hours*. I then discovered I had to vote for someone other than Gene. Here's why:

Blue Montana Skies

A cowboy saga about old timey times in the west.

Starring Gene Autry, the singing cowboy; his primary girlfriend (Sarah Something); his sidekick (Pat Butrum); and Gene's secondary girlfriend (his horse, Champion)

Scene a:

Camera cuts to Gene, who is wearing western garb designed by a future Gucci. He's inside a house, but still wearing his spurs and hat. Strumming on a simple guitar, Gene sings a western song, accompanied by an (invisible) orchestra.

Scene b.

A large *automobile* comes into the scene. Yep, a *car*, which in the mid-1800s, had not yet been invented. I recall seeing this film many years ago, or another in which a car was part of the props. As a child, I was not very perceptive, but I do remember I was confused because I was under the impression cars were not around during those old times. Otherwise, why all those covered wagons, buggies, and stagecoaches?

Scene c.

Gene is in Canada---not Montana---chasing bad guys who are stealing fur pelts and bringing them into the States. He confronts the thieves in a pelt-storage cabin. They forthwith shoot Gene at point blank range with a .38. Gene falls to the floor unconscious, and the robbers load the pelts onto a dog sled. On cue, Gene wakes-up and spots an electrically powered security alarm switch which is coincidentally located under the table where Gene is lying. He pulls down the switch and the scene changes to the local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) office. An electrical buzzer goes off and turns-on at the RCMP Strategic Air Command-like wall display---which identifies where the malfeasance is taking place. Aided by technology that has not yet been invented, the RCMP heads for the pelt cabin.

Scene d.

The pelt thieves abscond for Montana in the dog sled. Gene suddenly recovers and runs outside to find another dog sled waiting for him. He jumps onto the dog sled, and gives chase to the scoundrels, leaving a miffed Champion at the cabin. (The horse was being paid on a "per appearance" basis in the film.) Undeterred by a new form of transportation, Gene is seen wearing his hat and spurs as he pursues the fur bandits---no worse for wear from the .38 slug in his chest...and no blood.

Scene e.

The robbers are soon caught by Gene and the RCMP. Immediately thereafter, Gene, his girlfriend, Pat Butrum, and the RCMP troops smile as Gene mounts his girlfriend...oops...his horse and heads out into the horizon singing about Blue Montana Skies. Which is the wrong song, because he's still in Canada.

The End

Automobiles in the 1800's Wild West? Electric lights? Security alarms? I've changed my vote. And it's not cast for anyone mentioned thus far in this report. I've decided to vote for Clint Eastwood. Here are my reasons:

1. He doesn't sing.
2. He doesn't kiss his horse.
3. He doesn't kiss anyone's ass.
4. He doesn't smile with absolutely perfect teeth. Most real cowboys never saw the mouth of a dentist in their lifetime.
5. His cowboy movies don't include cars, electric lights, or security alarms.
6. His one-liners are much better than the persons in our poll (*Go ahead, make my day.*) Don't believe me? OK, name one notable sentence you can recall from Roy or Gene. (By the way, an also-ran in our poll, Sgt. Preston of the Yukon, is said to have coined the famous phrase *On King!* But this utterance was first spoken by Fay Wray to King Kong. Before the movie reached the theaters, it was banned by the censors.)
7. Along with XO and Irish coffee, Mr. Eastwood is an ongoing foundation of this series. And like XO and Irish coffee, he often comes to my rescue.

As you can see, my tentative vote for Tonto has been rescinded for the simple reason that Tonto was not a cowboy; he was an Indian. How on earth can an Indian be a Cowboy? Far out!

But I was tempted, especially after thinking about this anecdote: Lone Ranger, "Tonto, we're surrounded by Indians."....Tonto, "What do you mean 'we' white man?" Pragmatism in action. Nonetheless, here is the revised poll.

Who is your favorite Old Time Movie Drug Store Cowboy? (Choose or write-in your opinion)	<i>Drug Store Cowboys</i>	1. Clint Eastwood 2. Brian Urlacher 3. My wife 4. My dog
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I changed all your votes (As they do in Iran, Florida, and other backwater democracies) to Clint and three others. It's my poll. As Gallup once said, "You don't like my polls? OK, do your own polls."

George Gallup didn't make that statement, but we reporters and writers of books such as, *A Million Little Pieces* need not worry about true facts. Just make sure the false facts stay hidden in the closet.

I added Brian Urlacher to the favored list. Yes, I know. Brian is not a Cowboy, he's a Bear. But I'm still fishing for free Nike shoes, so I have to keep his name in print. I added Reporterette to the list, because it's strategically wise to remind one's wife she is on the top ten list of everything important in her husband's life. I also added our dog to the list, because I think self-esteem is very important to dogs. After all, they *are* called dogs, and I can't recall anyone saying, "What a dog!" to imply anything remotely akin to a compliment.

As an irrelevant sidebar to this equally irrelevant report, I recently pecked my dog on the head, as sign of affection. Holly smiled and mentioned what a sweet gesture it was. I couldn't let well enough alone. No, I just had to reply that in my younger days, I did not kiss any dog until it was late in the evening and the bars were closing down. Holly was delighted with my joke. Actually, she laughed, which is one reason she is my wife.

Let's see, where was I? Truth is, I've forgotten. As they say, a senior moment. I'd better sign-off and recoup in the upcoming, final segment of drug store cowboys. I hope you enjoyed the brief visit to times past and some old celluloid heroes.

Your on the Street Reporter.

Drugs Store Cowboys Report Three

January 31, 2006 (and later postscripts)

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. I have more news on our cowboy poll.

Cowboy Poll Revision

Your reporter is in a funk. True enough, the number one person in the Favorite Old Movie Drug Store Cowboys poll, Clint Eastwood, did indeed sing a song in a western movie, "Paint Your Wagon." I listened to the song via <http://tinyurl.com/apzr7>. And I thank a British friend, Chris Lawrence, for pointing out that Clint sang the song, and also for pointing me to this Web site.

Clint's singing was actually rather pleasant. Nonetheless, Clint Eastwood is a singing cowboy. Just like Gene and Roy. Consequently, I'm changing my favorite cowboy vote to Harpo Marx, which solves my problem with singing cowboys.

Yes, I know. Harpo was not a cowboy. Yes, I know, he couldn't sing. Doesn't matter. Holly and Milli---numbers 3 and 4 respectively in the poll---aren't cowboys either; they're girls. So, in keeping with our politically correct, gender neutral culture, I have renamed our poll the *Favorite Old Movie Drug Store Cowpersons* poll. My wife and dog appreciated this change.

Here is the revised poll:

Who is your favorite Old Time Movie Drug Store Cowperson?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harpo Marx 2. Brian Urlacher 3. My wife 4. My dog
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And here is the first stanza of Clint's song (which disqualified him from the ratings), "I Sing to the Trees":

Strum, strum, strum... 

*I sing to the trees.
But they don't listen to me.
I sing to the stars.
But they don't hear.*

I ask you, is that a macho cowboy song? Whatever happened to Tex Ritter and songs like this:

Strum, strum, strum... 
*There'll be blood on the saddle.
And blood on the ground.
Yes, blood on the saddle,
and blood all around.
A cowperson lay in it,
all covered with silver and gold.*

Now that's cowperson stuff.

Your on the Street Reporter