

Stars from the Past

Reuben Stroud's Hobby Tells Story of Western Movie Stars

The age of fast guns of the west, handsome cowboys, and swift horses is quietly recaptured on a visit with Reuben Stroud at his Woodland Acres home near Clinton.

"That's Ronald Reagan as a young movie star. This is a key to the late Clark Gable's dressing room. That is a memento I got from Jesse James's home," remarked Stroud as he pointed to a large display of personal western movie star memorabilia collection that tells a vivid story about those who captured the attention of movie goers from the 1930's, 40's and 50's.

"I've travelled hundreds of miles just to buy a puzzle bearing Roy Roger's photo," noted Stroud as he related an interesting and informative story behind each item in his collection.

"Movie star puzzles brought fun and excitement to our young people as their favorite hero unfolded as they assembled the pieces."

Most western movie stars that were popular prior to being displaced by television now occupy a special place in the eyes of hundred of collectors.

There was a time in history when every western movie maker had his own type of promotional materials, much like a politician attempting to increase identity for public office, and needless to say, Stroud travels thousands of miles annually searching through flea markets, Saturday night auctions, yard sales, and visiting with fellow collectors hoping to find a rare item worthy of a prominent place among his prized possessions. Western stars, posed with their favorite horse, female stars, guitars, or western scenes focus attention on much of passed events.

Stroud points with pride to a western branding iron purchased in Texas, a famous gun slinger's holster found in Arizona, and a series of photos given him by a family relative as he relates in detail a story about each of the western movie makers. Each item has its own history and this is what makes collecting anything interesting.

Once an unusual find is made, Stroud identifies the item and mounts it in a special manner. Among his treasured possessions are a Dell Evans ring, a 1935 movie advertisement featuring Tim McCoy, and a 1930 western Hoot Gibson patch attached to a child's American-made flannel shirt. All represent an era which contributed to the growth of an expanding continent.

"Western cowboy stars usually captured the hearts of America as they depicted a keen interest in law and order and a growing and expanding country on the Western horizon. Western movies played a special role in the lives of many people. Unfortunately, a fast changing society took its toll on their popularity," noted Stroud.

"I'm trying to reconstruct much of this history through the items bearing pictures and information about the western stars. Every American boy and girl had his own favorite western hero," stated Stroud as he wove an interesting fact about his display of movie makers.

A favorite past-time for the Clinton Mills Plant No. 2 Loom Technician, is watching one of the more than 100 western movies which he has on video tape. These also serve as a guide for items which can be bought to tell the story of America's western past.

To make his hobby more meaningful and



Reuben Stroud shows off large collection of Western movie star items.



Picture of Gene Autry occupies special place in Stroud collection.

enjoyable, Stroud carefully displays each item or advertisement comparable to its original form; other relics are mounted on special brackets, shelves, or display devices to increase their authenticity.

"Many people today find the names of such actors as Buck Jones, Randolph Scott, Lash Larue, Fred Thompson, The Three

Muskateers and others meaningless. I hope the multitude of knives, badges, puzzles, books, and other products will preserve the historical contributions of these actors and, at least, serve as a reminder of their actual existence and their contributions to our previous lifestyle."

In addition to many of the relics depicting

a passing era, he has numerous record albums recorded by the "singing cowboys" such as Roy Rogers and Gene Autry.

"Although items promoting the movie industry were produced by the hundreds of thousands, they have become very scarce in the last few years. Many collectors will pay \$10 for a \$.25 item," noted Stroud.