

SADDLE BROOK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY – SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – OCTOBER, 2013

“The Lone Ranger, hi ho Silver, a fiery horse with the speed of light and a cloud of dust and a hearty hi ho Silver, The Lone Ranger.”

This introductory theme to the early television series *The Lone Ranger* was accompanied by the music from Rossini’s opera *William Tell*. When children of the 1950’s heard this theme, they knew it was time to sit back to watch *The Lone Ranger*, as they were transported to the days of the Old West.

Girls had dolls and dollhouses, and boys had toy six shooters usually loaded with a roll of caps. The caps were spaced dots of gunpowder, which simulated the sound of gunfire as they were struck by the gun’s hammer. The boys had gunfights consisting of two or more “cowboys” who went in different directions and then converged, hiding along the way to sneak up on and “plug” their opponent(s). This was in the early 1950’s, and television was in its infancy.

Televisions at that time had small screens, generally about 10 inches wide, and were housed in large wooden cabinets. There were no transistors or chips, only a tangled myriad of glass tubes and wires. The tubes frequently burned out and had to be replaced. A widespread audience grew almost “overnight” leaving producers with the challenge of filling air space. Old movies from the twenties, thirties and forties were recycled to fill the void. Westerns were popular with the young and old alike. Everyone had their favorite cowboy heroes. Hoot Gibson, Hopalong Cassidy, Ken Maynard, and a football player, Marion Morrison, who changed his name to John Wayne were the good guys who pursued rustlers, dry-gulchers and crooked bankers. New viewers instantly knew the “good guys” because they all wore white hats, all except Hopalong Cassidy whose hat was black.

We also loved and revered their horses – Trigger, Silver, Tony and Champion – who often had individual personalities and sometimes aided in “getting the upper hand” on the bad guys. The use of horses in our township declined before the 1950’s, and the pony rides at Coger’s on Market Street and Tony’s on Midland Avenue were the only ways of bringing us closer to what we thought was the Old West. Wonderful, innocent times!

All of this gets us around to Rocky, our township’s last horse. Rocky resides at Berghan’s Nursery on Midland Avenue across from the Delta service Station operated by Al, Ron and Eric. This family farm began in 1898 when George and Frieda Eishenhauer purchased the land. Their daughter Frieda married Fritz Berghan who had emigrated



from Germany in 1927. Fritz' and Frieda's son Fred, who reminds me of the soft-spoken actor Robert Duval, has vivid memories of our township in the days when Midland Avenue was a dirt road surrounded by farms. Fred's horse Rocky will be thirty-two next March. Rocky is half Morgan and half quarter horse, a good-looking guy. When I first met him, he came to me and nuzzled me on the cheek. Visit him when you shop at Berghan's. Until then, hi ho Rocky – happy trails to you.

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