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PIPEFULS

By Jim Day

This is a little story about a gun which refuses to die and a man that refused to die, but primarily about the gun for the world has heard the story of Audie Murphy many times and much better written than I could do it.

Through Don Hart, probably the best known young man in the county and certainly one of the most popular, I had the pleasure the other day of meeting Audie Murphy, certainly one of the outstanding soldiers of the Second World War and assuredly one of our most popular young Americans nationally speaking.

Audie, since achieving international distinction as a fightingman, a combat soldier in the late war, has been working with conspicuous success in motion pictures, television and the like. In reality he proved himself a genuine hero and in pictures he simulates one, a peculiar twist even for a period which emphasizes mordant irony.

Nice Fellow

I liked Audie immediately for unlike many of the Hollywood gun toters and technicolor heroes he knows something about guns and is modest and mannerly. These manifestations are contrary to the kind of exhibitionism too frequently stereotyped in picture players.

Steve Strelch who has hunted with Audie tells me he is a remarkably good rifle shot. Audie denies this and says he is only a fairly good shot. He's probably an excellent shot.

Pistol Talk

Well, we got to talking about the gun which refuses to die, the famous old so-called "Frontier Model" or "Peacemaker" Colt the correct name of which is the single-action army.

The Colt people quit making the gun several years back because the model, obsolete technically, had fallen so low in sales that its continuance was not warranted.

Want Gun Now

Almost immediately with the discontinuance of the old model and perhaps because of it, people wanted the gun. In its heyday it could be purchased for under \$30. Within a year or two after the gun's discontinuance the prices for secondhand ones jumped up to as high as \$125.

In the classified department of the American Rifleman where guns are sold or traded, I've seen even higher prices asked for single actions in good condition. Hollywood wanted the old guns too, for no "western" would be complete without these famous old sidearms. A cowboy armed with a magazine pistol would be a joke.

Col. Hubbard, at one time had owned a single action army which he gave to his fellow officer Gen. Wainwright, hero of Corregidor. Believing that Col. Hubbard liked the old type of gun better than the current doorstopper with which the Army is armed, I gave him my single action .45 along with the gun's history.

Heywood Hunter

Down In Burbank, Audie Murphy has a friend named Heywood Hunter and this young man conceived the idea of making single action army revolvers with modern materials and modern methods but following the precise shape and mechanism of the old

gun. To test out whether or not the public was really interested in buying modern versions of the old gun, Audie told me that Hunter sent out many questionnaires and that he was overwhelmed by the response. Hunter told Audie there are potential orders available for almost \$1,000,000 worth of these projected guns.

Audie said the Colt people were not interested in reviving manufacture of the old equalizer, that they do not care to "retrogress" by reviving a mechanically obsolete handgun. So Mr. Hunter plans to go it alone with his own factory. He will make .45 caliber single action army revolvers identical with the old Colts but with completely modern methods and according to Audie better steel and materials than were used in the old gun which was brought out originally for black powder and low pressures.

He plans as well to manufacture the gun in .38 and 357 magnum calibers.

Popular idea

That Audie's enthusiasm for his friend's venture is not misplaced or too optimistic is indicated in the response of an eastern gun manufacturer, the Ruger outfit which has been swamped by orders for its gun similar to the old revolver only modernized in materials and manufacture and brought out in .22 caliber only. These guns have been advertised for a long time now but few persons have been able to obtain them.

While I was talking to Audie and Don Hart a pretty blonde asked if she could be photographed with the famous young man. Another wanted his autograph. He has nice manners and it was a pleasure to meet Don's famous young friend.