

South Pas' Cable Cowboy

Mark Bedor's TV Show (And Writings) Celebrate The Heritage of The Wild West



Like his cable TV show and published articles, Mark Bedor's South Pasadena home pays tribute to the Wild West tradition he loves so much and tries to preserve. Photo by Henk Friezer

*I grew up a-dreamin' of bein' a cowboy
And lovin' the cowboy ways
Pursuin' the life of my high-ridin' heroes
I burned up my childhood days ...*

*My heroes have always been cowboys
And they still are today ...*

IKEPT hearing Willie Nelson singing "My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys" while I was writing this story about Mark Bedor.

Bedor's heroes have always been cowboys, and the South Pasadena resident is keeping that love of cowboys and the West alive with his TV cable show, "Today's Wild West."

Interviewing Bedor is like hitting "play" on an ode to horses; the wind in your face; and everything you might think of when you think of the West.

"I love the West," Bedor — trim, with steel-gray hair and wearing a leather vest — told me during a recent interview.

"I've always loved the West's authenticity — the smell of the dust, horses. There's something magical about being on a horse. The snowcapped mountains on one side, the sage on the other. It's adventurous. It's exciting. It makes everything else boring."

Bedor grew up in a Minneapolis suburb watching the TV shows "Gunsmoke" and "Bonanza," and remembers, even as a little boy, wanting to be a cowboy and ride a horse.

He's never lost that dream. He's 64 years old now, and he is living his dream. He's not a cowboy, but he does ride horses — as often as he can.

And if he can't be a cowboy, he makes sure his TV show takes him places where cowboys — and native Americans — are sure to go.

He's also written two books — "Great Rides of

Today's Wild West" and "Great Ranches of Today's Wild West."

Bedor is the photographer, editor, writer and producer of his TV shows, and he takes the pictures and writes the copy for his book and freelance magazine pieces.

And boy, does he have an eye — both visually and verbally — for his subject.

Here's Bedor talking in his book about a ride he took along what is called the Trail of Billy (The Kid's) Last Ride in Lincoln, N.M.

"It was like being on horseback at sea, in a land so vast there was virtually no sign of man in any direction, as far as you could see. Then suddenly, out of the cloudless sky, I was hit with a roaring blast of wind that must have clocked at least 50 miles an hour. It literally picked up my horse and turned her 90 degrees. But she didn't spook. Like me, she was stunned. We'd just been hit by a dust devil."

Bedor's love of horses was woven through our conversation.

"I'm kind of a horseback evangelist," he admitted.

"It's an authentic kind of experience. It's very real. If you do something wrong around the horse, it puts you in touch with reality — you're likely to get stomped on. It's not a theoretical kind of thing. It's a real kind of life."

If he can't be out West, he rides the trails of Griffith Park on a rented horse at least once a week. When he rides, Bedor wears boots, a

cowboy hat — of which he has eight to 10 — and riding chaps.

"They feel good, they look good. It's part of the fun," he said.

And riding remains a special experience for him.

"It makes you feel better," he said. "Instantly, you are in a whole different world — connected with the power of the horse and far away from the ringing of your cell phone or e-mail. It's nourishment for your soul. I wish the whole world could do it — to have to learn to ride."

A teacher set Bedor up on a cattle ranch the summer after high school, but he hardly got on a horse, and heard that cowboys didn't make a lot of money.

So, after college at Bemidji State University in Minnesota, he went into TV news and worked in all sorts of markets before deciding he wanted to be an actor. He came to Los Angeles in 1995 and got small parts in the soap opera "Days of Our Lives" three weeks in a row and then never heard from them again.

"It was abundantly clear that I wasn't going to be an actor," he recalled.

So Bedor went back to journalism, working the overnight shift at KNBC. He read a short story about the Pierce College Rodeo in Woodland Hills and that it had an equestrian program. He decided to sign up ... and has been riding ever since.

By the time he was 44, he was writing freelance pieces for magazines and

Around Town

Andy Lippman

Outstanding Western Lifestyle TV program.

It's fulfilled all Bedor's dreams — except it hasn't attracted many sponsors.

"People have watched my shows and say, 'I want to go on those trips,'" he said. "It makes people want to go. I love that. It introduces people to the West."

"No one has heard of me, but I make a show that people love. It's a show that people can watch no matter what their politics."

He supplements his income by writing for magazines, and his wife Marilyn, whom he married in 2003, often gets on a horse and rides along with him in search of adventure. They've thought of moving to somewhere like Montana, but then they look at the temperature in the winter and decide that South Pasadena is a gem.

And there are trails to ride in Griffith Park until things warm up. He points out there is a lot of nature to see there, too.

Bedor is still out there — living his boyhood dream — along some western trail.

"The West is spectacularly beautiful — horses, wagons, deserts, Gila monsters," he said. "I've

had some wonderful experiences doing this and inspired others."

"The Wild West is still out there, and we'll show you how to find it. It's fun on so many levels."

You can read about Bedor and his show at Today'sWildWest.com. His show is also available for viewing on YouTube.

My email is ALippman@gavilanmedia.com. Please write if you have any story ideas about people, places or things of interest to South Pasadena residents.

CORRECTION

Last week's "Around Town" column — "In Any Language, A Success / Parents And Administrators Laud South Pas Schools' Dual-Immersion Classes" — contained an error regarding the birthplace of Janna Philpot, a parent whose son is enrolled in the Monterey Hills Elementary School Spanish dual-immersion program.

As Philpot wrote to us following publication, "I am not from Mexico. I was born and raised in Los Angeles. My mother emigrated from Mexico and Spanish was my first language."

The Woman's Club of South Pasadena
Cordially invites you to

*For The Love
Of Chocolate*
February 8 - 6:00 - 9:00 pm

A Valentine Themed Dinner Fundraiser
The Clubhouse: 1424 Fremont Avenue

Entertainment by the Darden Sisters Band
"Music through the decades"
Ragtime to Rock ~ Country to Classic

\$45 per person — Proceeds benefit Club charities & scholarships
RSVP to: (323) 254-0530 or Email: spwc1899@aol.com
Or purchase tickets on line at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/for-the-love-of-chocolate-dinner-fundraiser-tickets-88432747729>

Heart-Felt Stories Wanted

Do you have a romantic story you want to share? How about marriages that have withstood the test of time? Let me know about them by Friday, Feb. 7, and I'll try and get your story in a Valentine's Day column for Feb. 14. Thanks. Write me at: alippman@gavilan.com.