

That's the Latest November 2022

Gunsmoke

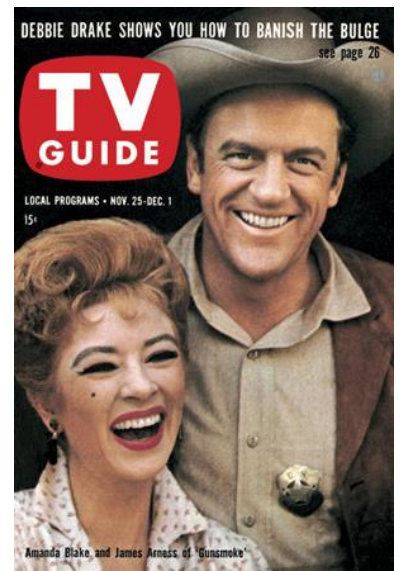
I wrote in a previous column about how my dad's bowling night was on Mondays. Back in the day they had enough bowling teams in the businessmen's league at WESCON lanes in West Concord to have an early shift and a late shift. The early bowling was at 7pm and the late bowling would start around 9pm. In the late 60's, Monday night TV had Gunsmoke airing on



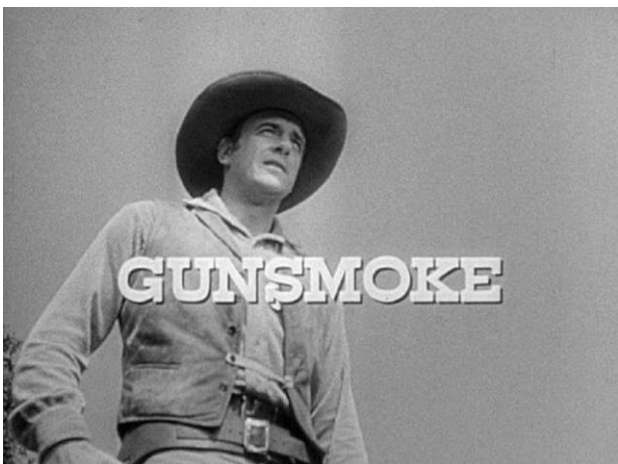
CBS at 7pm while NBC at the same time was airing Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In. I would check my dad's bowling schedule because when he had early bowling that meant I could watch Laugh-In and would not have to watch Gunsmoke. Late bowling meant my dad was home and Gunsmoke would be the program of choice.

Now don't get me wrong, I understand Gunsmoke was a very highly rated program and very well done. It had to be as it stayed on the air for 20 years. In fact, if you google it, or is that Google it, you would find that Gunsmoke was the highest rated TV show on any network from 1957 to 1961 and after that it kept very strong ratings. But I wanted to watch the younger hipster show Laugh-In. It was the only place you would have ever seen President Nixon say 'Sock it to me!' A few years later, he did get socked and sacked.

Fast forward to today. My dad, if he could see me now sitting in the easy chair and watching reruns of Gunsmoke, would laugh and say; 'See, I told you it was good!'



I had watched all the M*A*S*H episodes and thought I'd try a different old show which turned out to be Gunsmoke. It turns out James Arness was a pretty good actor who had Minnesota connections. He was born in Minneapolis and graduated from Minneapolis West High School in 1942.



He and I have some similarities I come to find out as I studied his background. His grandfather emigrated from Norway in 1887. My grandfather came from Norway in 1910. Arness was 6'7" tall. I'm close at 6'5". He was a very good actor. I was in two class plays. And thus you see that's where the similarities end.

Arness was a serious actor in the western drama although Gunsmoke did have its humorous moments with characters like Chester and Festus. I was not a serious actor and by watching Laugh-In, I honed my comedic skills that were very useful later in life on the radio. So you see, I was just preparing for a life career by hoping my dad's bowling team was bowling early on Mondays.

Speaking of things I do today that would have my dad laughing at me and saying 'See'. My sister Sylvia and I have in recent years attended some Lutefisk suppers. Sylvia still does not eat lutefisk but she attends the suppers for the lefse and the meatballs which are the lutefisk alternative for those who haven't gone over to the dark side and started to eat lutefisk like me. For about the first 60 years of my life, I would not be seen in the same room as a piece of cod that's been soaking in lye for 3 weeks. But this year was something even our parents did not do, and that is to go through a drive-thru lutefisk supper. I've gone through many a drive-thru for tacos, burgers, even a fish sandwich but never have I been through the drive-thru for lutefisk and lefse. Covid had brought about the lutefisk drive-thru as churches could not have big crowds sitting in their basement. Some are now allowing people in for a sit-down supper but some have found the drive-thru to be easier.



Such was the case at Vang Lutheran Church north of Kenyon in October. We got the works in a bag; lutefisk, lefse, meatballs, mashed potatoes and for dessert we had some Norwegian cookies; rosettes and sandbakkles. I told Sylvia, as we drove away with enough food to feed half of Telemark that Dad would both laugh at us but also be green with envy that we now have lutefisk drive-thrus. He probably would have driven the tractor to pick up a bag of Norwegian delicacies just to keep the fall harvest going. I saw him make a Norwegian taco out of lutefisk and lefse so it's almost like a Taco Bell drive-thru. He would fill a big round lefse full of lutefisk, pour on the melted butter, roll it up like a big Cuban cigar and take a big bite with half the butter oozing out the far end of the lefse.

Sure it went on the kitchen floor but my mom had a quarter inch of flour all over the floor from making all the lefse so what's a little butter on top of that. It was a bit messy and I didn't wait around to see if Dad had to help cleanup. I left the room as soon as I saw that first bite of the lutefisk taco.