You Gotta Be Tall To Star In Western Movies

By BOB THOMAS

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — How to create a western star:

Find a big fellow — six feet two and a well-built 190 pounds, 25 years old with some stage training and a little movie experience, born in the western United States, though not on a ranch. Teach him how to draw a gun fast and how to sit a horse. Have him move slowly—unless provoked — and say his lines without much expression.

That's all there is to it!

Of course, it's not that easy. Those are merely some conclusions I have reached after studying all the adult westerns on TV and averaging the specifications of 15 top gunslingers on the home screens.

NO AVERAGE STAR

There is, however, no such thing as an average western star. They range from sagebrush veteran Ward Bond, 52, (Wagon Train) to 24-year-old Pat Conway of Tombstone Territory. Most were born west of the Mississippi.

One thing is certain: You gotta be tall. Maybe not as tall as Jim Arness (Gunsmoke) and Clint Walker (Cheyenne), who scrape the barroom ceilings at six feet six. But you can't be less than six feet and expect to cut the mustard.

These western heroes have shot down their opposition with deadly accuracy this season, the most notable being Maverick's riddling of both Steve Allen and Ed Sullivan. Why has this been so? I of an answer — and podner, that's a lot of gunplay.

The fact is that the western is ideally suited for TV. You have a background that is immediately recognizabble — no buildup necessary. You have colorful characters and the basic struggle of good vs. evil. You have wide open spaces, a refreshing change from the cramped sets of live dramas.

NEW CROP OF STARS

Furthermore, the producers have come up with an attractive and convincing crop of western stars, most of them entirely new to the public.

What makes them so convincing? A man like Arvo Ojala helps.

Ojala is a ruddy - faced young man from the Yakima Valley of Washington who is deadly with a gun. He helps the TV gunslingers look as rapid on the draw as Billy the Kid.

Guns have long been Ojala's hobby and now they are his business.

Ojala (the name is Finnish) has supplied holsters and coaching to James Garner, Hugh O'Brian, Wayde Preston, Clint Walker and dozens more.

"First I teach them gun safety," he said. "You can hurt yourself badly, even with blanks. The important thing is to start the draw from a relaxed position with the thumb out to pull back the hammer as the gun is drawn up."

Soble Suicide Attempt Fails

NEW YORK (AP)—U.S. Attorney Paul W. Williams said Tuesday confessed Russian spy Jack Soble attempted to commit suicide by swallowing a quantity of rivets, nuts and bolts shortly before being brought here from prison for further questioning on espionage.

Soble underwent an operation at New York's Bellevue Hospital Monday for removal of the hardware from his stomach.

Physicians reported him "doing very well" following the surgery.

Soble, 55, was brought here Sunday from the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pa., where he has been serving a seven-year sentence.

Soble was sentenced last Oct. 8 after pleading guilty to conspiring to commit espionage for Russia and helped federal authorities trace an espionage ring he had headed for a decade.

Soble's wife, Myra, is serving a four-year sentence. The couple lived for a time in Montreal.

Queen Invests Former Cricketer

LONDON (Reuters) — The Queen invested former England cricketer Denis Compton with the insignia of Commander of the British Empire at Buckingham Palace Tuesday, and asked: "How is that old knee of yours?"

"It's splendid, thank you, Your Majesty," replied the sportsman, who had his right kneecap removed in 1955 after years of trouble.

Compton, honored in the New Year's list "for services to sport," was among 180 men and women invested at the palace Tuesday.

JAIL EGYPTIAN REDS

CAIRO (Reuters) — Six Egyptian students and workers have been sentenced to prison terms of one to three years for membership in the outlawed Communist party.

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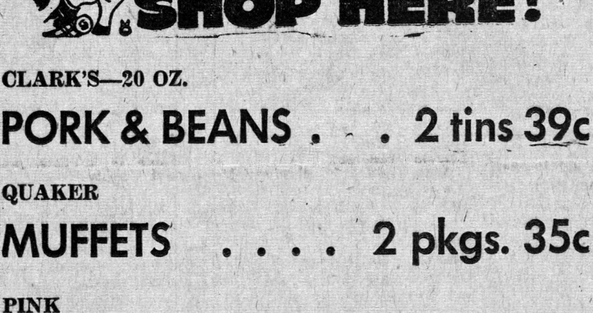

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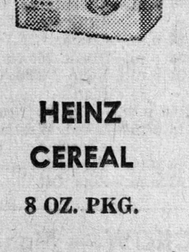

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