



## Bob Russell: Boniface, Horse- man, Gentleman

By SAM JAFFE

In many years of association with the hotel business, it has been my pleasure to meet innumerable managers of hotels. With hardly an exception, the typical manager is a suave, polished sort of fellow, usually the essence of satorical perfection and definitely possessed of a magnetic personality which is so essential in meeting the public.

Returning home from a vacation trip recently, I happened to stop off in the picturesque little frontier town of Las Vegas, Nevada, for a day to drink in the wonders of the nearby collusius of engineering, Boulder Dam, and Lake Mead, the sapphire inland sea which has been backed up for 115 miles behind its immense walls. Chance brought me, bags and baggage to the Apache hotel, Good fortune brought me in contact with Bob Russell — and then and there — I changed a lot of my ideas about hotel managers.

When I first met this gentleman, I rubbed my eyes and thought I was shaking hands with a re-incarnation of that beloved frontier hero, "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Standing before me in six feet of elegant cowboy regalia, was a lean, rangy man with thick, bobbed, corn-colored hair; flowing, handle-bars mustachio; and close cropped goatee; possessed of a kind and gentle face; yet with keen piercing eyes, despite his 55 odd years.

The Apache Hotel enjoys a thriving business. One does not have to be a mathematician to deduce that, particularly if he cares to sit around the lobby and watch the steady stream of perspiring tourists, divorcees-in-waiting, elopers from Hollywood, etc., trooping up

to the desk.

Success in the hotel business does not just happen. It takes a lot of shrewd ability on the part of the manager to keep his "house count" at the steady level that is the difference between red and black ink.

To encounter Bob Russell casually in the lobby of his hotel, one would not appraise him as the crafty genius who makes the Apache "go," but probably as some "paid atmosphere" around the hotel or a visiting rancher in from the hinterlands. He seems to operate his hotel with almost a bland sort of indifference, but I suspect that there is little, if anything, which goes on in that hostility which he does not know about or judiciously direct.

He takes a particular delight in casting off the usual dignity and hauteur of the ordinary hotel manager. With prankish insouciance, he delights in his guests' mistaking him for an old plainsman or cowboy and twitting him about his flowing hair and facial shrubbery, little realizing that he is their host at the Apache Hotel.

Upon meeting him, people invariably make some remark about his resemblance to "Buffalo Bill." I was no exception.) I was amazed, however, on one occasion, when a pair of pop-eyed tourists came up to us and asked Bob Russell if he were Kit Carson.

To make his personality complete, he is possessed of an inexhaustible fund of "tall" stories which he will recite for anyone with just a little encouragement — stories like the one about his long underwear which is beaded on both sides. Which leads to the inevitable question, "Why is it beaded on both sides and doesn't it scratch him something fierce?" To which Bob Russell replies that he is half Indian (this is as much fiction as the rest of the story), and inasmuch as the Government requires the Indians to change their underwear at least twice a year, he merely turns his inside out for convenience and economy's sake.

No occasion, regardless how important, will cause Bob Russell to desert his high heeled boots, cowboy jeans and colorful shirt. I am told on good authority that rarely, if ever, is he seen in city clothes. To the despair of Mrs. Russell, who continues to hopefully buy him tailor-made suits, shirts, etc, he steadfastly persists in allowing this type of clothing to hang untouched in his closet, for the benefit of the Nevadan moths.

That which attracted me most to Bob Russell, however, were his horses and his love for them. Horses are definitely a passion with the man. I really believe if he were sentenced to surrender either all of his earthly possessions or his morning horse-back ride, which he makes a daily religion, that he would unhesitatingly yield the former.

If you happen to be very fortunate, as I was, you might be invited to go riding with Bob Russell.

One day, in the cool of the early morning, we drove to his ranch a few miles out into the country. We stopped our car beside a corral, inside of which two magnificent horses were grazing. Bob opened the gate of the enclosure and "Bud," following obligingly behind in dulcet, melodious tones, as though we were speaking to two humans.

After a few minutes of equine conversation, Bob strode down the road toward the barn, the two horses, "Tony" and "Bud," following obligingly behind him, without so much as a bridle or rope on either one of them. I have seen many demonstrations of the so-called bond of understanding and fidelity between dog and master, but never such a memorable exhibition as that put on by Bob Russell and his two horses.

We saddled the two animals, and then ensued one of the grandest rides I have ever enjoyed. Though I have been riding, "off and on," for many years, most of the horses I have ridden have been of the tired, haggard riding academy variety. What a thrill to have that thoroughbred beast beneath me, his every nerve and sinew keenly attuned to the slightest impulse of the rein, the blood of his sires pounding in his veins, like a great powerhouse!

And did Bob Russell ride? Only as a man born and bred to the saddle would . . . only as a man who had a genuine love and appreciation of fine horses would . . . only as a man who knew all of the finer points of equitation could.

All during our ride, he continued to talk with the horses, carrying on more conversation with them than me. But was I offended? Does an art collector become mad when he discovers an original Gainsborough?

We rode through the mesquite for several hours till the ascending sun bade us desist. Everywhere that we encountered people, from the most tattered farm urchin to the most senile land baron, each had a friendly hail for "Bob." This started me noticing, for the balance of my visit in Las Vegas, what an endless number of friends the man has, and with what warm respect each regards him. How does that poem go . . . "and to be a friend of man?"

Upon our return to the hotel, we found a pair of jittery elopers from Los Angeles waiting for Bob to "stand up for them" at their wedding. With complete nonchalance, he hustled them across the street to the justice and acted as best

man, disdaining to change from his rough cowboy clothes, and even carrying with him to that sacred ceremony the earthy aroma of horses and the open range.

I left Las Vegas the next day for home, happy in the knowledge that I had made a friend and had discovered a new, refreshing kind of personality. As my fleet air liner winged its way toward Pacific shores, and a bustling workaday world, a few words which I had unconsciously blurted out to Bob Russell kept repeating themselves in my mind. "Bob," I had said, as we were cantering along on our ride, "you are one of those rare and lucky individuals who seem to have the knack of running a successful business, yet haven't lost sight of the finer things of life, as illustrated by your devotion to the simple pleasures of such things as horses." From the gleam that came into his eyes, I know that our friendship was sealed by those words.

## Paint Styling To Affect Architecture

**T**HERE'S a new trend abroad. Building contractors and architects, recognizing the part paint can play in keeping a house new and up-to-date in appearance, are turning more and more to the types of architecture that can be effectively styled with paint.

Laurence Kiefer, secretary of the Council for Paint Styling, calls attention to this fact in commenting on the surveys now being made by the Council to discover color trends in all parts of the country.

"Preliminary reports," Mr. Kiefer



states, "reveal that certain colors are not only more popular than others, but also certain exterior areas of a house are being emphasized while other sections are being played down or made less noticeable. There is at present, for instance, a tendency to paint the trim and the sash the same color as the body of the house and to center color interest on the doors, shutters—window boxes. A decade and more ago, the custom was to paint the body of a house one color, the trim another and the window sash still a third. There was also a vogue for painting the upper body of a house a different color than the lower section.

"By keeping homes painted in line with the trend of the times," Mr. Kiefer points out, "it's possible to give them a constant appearance of brand-newness as well as protecting them against the destructive force of wind and rain and sun."