

# "Travels with Flip" shades of Blazing Saddles

Flip Wilson, who hasn't made a paid personal appearance in more than six years, is out on, Oklahoma, doing what he likes to do best, meeting people. A self avowed "good neighbor," Wilson is in the midwest to be grand marshall of the annual Boley Rodeo and to put this foray into Americana onto film for an upcoming television special, "Travels With Flip."

Says the comedian, "I'm going to Boley for everybody, everywhere. I feel my audience is my friends, so I'm just introducing one group of my friends to another group of my friends. It's got to be great--just me and the people are great."

The inspiration for this groundbreaking television special comes from both Wilson and producer-director Lee Mendelson, himself a three time Emmy Award winner. "I've always wanted to take a personality and put him out on the road and film the inter-action between him and the people. Nothing planned, everything spontaneous; but you know there are very few comedians who can handle that sort of situation, who can deal with the people directly. Flip can, he loves it and he's really the best."

"Travels With Flip" will take the comedian and his film crew--to such far-flung corners of America as Atlanta, Georgia, for baseball and Honolulu, Hawaii for an authentic luau. Boley is the first stop. Says Flip, "My first special will be a studio production, but the next two will be 'Travels With Flip' and we are shooting with film, not video tape. The process is longer and we'll be shooting much more and traveling to quite a few cities. It's an involved process, but well worth it."

"You know," he says smiling, "this is about the hippest thing I can think of--going to Boley. It's got to be fun."

The people of Oklahoma couldn't agree more. First and foremost there was the sight of bad dude Flip, dressed to the teeth in an elaborate western costume custom made by Nudie's of Hollywood. Nudie's, as every devoted follower of country music can tell you, is where such superstars as Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash get their rhinestoned outfits. But no one would outshine Flip.

White bucksin and red roses were the word of the day, as Flip got ready to lead the parade. His shirt was heavily fringed and studded with rhinestones, opulent massive red roses were embroidered over the yoke. Trimmed in gold leather, Nudie's also provided Flip with a genuine white western hat, banded in silver. A rhinestone holster completed the look.

There was only one drawback, Flip is not the world's best equestrian. But undaunted, the grand marshal looked his horse in the eye and spoke in a quiet roar, "I'll make a deal with you. I never rode you and you never rode me."

With that the annual Boley Rodeo was off and running; a journey that for Flip began more than 12 years ago when he was browsing through a

little book store in New York City and found a poster advertising a picture called The Crimson Skull, the first all-black motion picture made in the all-black town of Boley, Oklahoma. Says Wilson, "It was labeled 'Four Smashing Wheels of Entertainment' and it was such a funny poster that I kept it and I've had it all these years. But I never knew anything about Boley, other than that poster."

"Then in the early part of this year, I got a letter from Boley asking me to be their Police Chief. It was so strange really, I had never had any contact with the people of Boley since seeing that poster and I thought this is very, very interesting."

Flip traveled to Boley, accepted their invitation to be Police Chief and realized this would provide a rare opportunity to help some people out. "I thought I could get involved in this city," says Flip, revealing what one associate calls a heart a mile wide, "and do some good and get a little in return." The "good" he's done includes providing the city with its first police car, building a city swimming pool and renovating their fire truck.

During the Rodeo, the city experienced its worst traffic jam in its history, with cars lined five deep abandoned by latecomers minutes before the parade. The film crew had to scramble for camera space as Wilson rode out under the bright afternoon sun.

By 4:00 Flip completed the parade route and was impressing spectztors with a dazzling, if unplanned, trick of riding backwards. Pulling his horse in front of Bernice's Barbeque, the oldest restaurant in Boley and he announced, "Geraldine's in for a drink."

As the crowds dispersed and Flip made plans to return to Los Angeles for a short working stop over that would include recording sessions, someone asked him why he agreed to police chief. Wilson quickly replied, "Because there's no crime in Boley." Who could ask for more.

## Maestro gets Platinum



It was a royal occasion at Royal Albert Hall, London, England, when Maestro Barry White not only sang his love songs to an overflow crowd, but was presented with Platinum Record Awards, as shown in the above picture, being held by Glodean White and other members of The Maestro's musical entourage.

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