

MACE MURGITTROYED: BARBER AND JUDGE OF GOOD WHISKEY

7/11/95

If you haven't figured it out by now, I am fascinated with characters. By that I mean individuals who stand apart from their fellow men. They may not be famous or renowned, but are basically true to themselves.

One such person was Mace Murgittroyed.

He was the first real character I ever met and I realized he was one-of-a-kind. I was six or seven at the time, but soon looked forward to seeing him. Mace, or "Murgy", as he was known to his friends, was a barber in my hometown of Phoenix, NY. His little shop was both a place of business and his home.

His quarters were a single room in the back of the shop. The shop was also a display case for guns and antiques of all description. The walls were covered with hunting and fishing trophies, which reflected his main passion. A connoisseur of fine whiskey, along with the aforementioned, insured that he was a confirmed bachelor.

I loved to go there with my dad and be part of that whole atmosphere. I would absorb the sights and smells of that old shop. There was the brass spittoon, put to good use in those days by proprietor and clients. The stories of hunting, fishing and trapping were endless and I soaked it all up.

Murgy never had a car; he would buy the gas and supply the grub to any of his cronies who would include him in their field trips.

My first such outing was with Murgy and my dad. Most of what I learned about Murgy I gleaned from conversations my dad had with others. I am sure that most of the episodes were not for my tender ears.

One comes to mind of a trip my dad took with my Uncle Wes, Joe Lum, and Murgy. They were on a three-day trip, fishing for trout at Redfield.

The first meal consisted of two hard-boiled eggs and a can of Campbell's beans. It was soon learned that that was the menu planned for the rest of the trip. Needless to say, a quick trip to Redfield remedied that.

With his handlebar mustache and western style Stetson, he was often the target of smart remarks.

He walked into Monty's Tavern one evening and parked on a barstool along side a couple of young twerps, as they were called in those days.

They started to snicker and one of them asked Murgy where his bronco was. Mace hopped off his bar stool, stuck his fist under the twerp's nose and replied, "Right there you SOB. Do you want to take a ride on him?"

The print shop was next door to Murgy's shop and one morning after a particularly hard night at the bar, Murgy stumbled out to the curb to empty his slop pail in the gutter.

The printer was outside sweeping his sidewalk and was heard to mutter something about drunkards.

"Listen, you little insignificant SOB," Murgy replied, "A drunken man will get sober but stupidity is forever."

Barbershops are still a real part of real men.