This Winchester 92 is one of three that were modified on the set of "Stagecoach" by a farrier for John Wayne. The belt buckle is a custom-made replica of the one Howard Hawks gave Wayne upon completion of "Red River." The original was stolen years ago.

Items loaned by John Bianchi, Rick Walker, Joseph Russo and Paul Spinheimer.
‘There are only two things that are better than a gun: a Swiss watch and a woman from anywhere.’

—JOHN IRELAND AS CHERRY VALANCE IN “RED RIVER” (1946)

Have you ever had a good Swiss watch? How about a favorite gun? I know you remember the first gun you ever had. Do you remember the first gun you ever saw? Chances are that the first gun you ever saw was in the hands of a TV or movie hero from your early childhood. Chances are also that you developed a liking for firearms long before you developed an attraction for the opposite sex, or Swiss watches for that matter.

For the balance of this year, the National Firearms Museum at NRA headquarters in Fairfax, VA, is hosting a unique exhibit entitled “Real Guns of Real Heroes,” a tribute to the guns and characters that the stars of the big (and small) screen made famous.

By Philip Schreier
Curator, National Firearms Museum
Ever since Bronco Billy Anderson leveled his peacemaker at the audience in "The Great Train Robbery" (1903), theatergoers have had a fascination for firearms in films, and sometimes the gun has even become the main star of the feature. For most little boys and some little girls, watching Saturday movie matinees on TV was a sure escape from a bout of bad weather, and nothing, save sunshine, could beat a good TV western. From Hugh O'Brian as Wyatt Earp or Clayton Moore as the Lone Ranger, images of good guys prevailing over bad guys became a weekend staple for many young Americans. Not only was it good entertainment, but it also conveyed a positive message with positive role models.

Some of those role models are gone now, but their guns remain and many are on exhibit at the National Firearms Museum. Ninety rifles, pistols and even a machine gun or two from some of histories most memorable films are on exhibit.

"Now, I call that bold talk for a one-eyed fat man."
"Fill your hands you son of a ..."

—ROBERT DUVALL ("Lucky" Ned Pepper) &
JOHN WAYNE (Marshal Ruben J. "Rooster" Cogburn),
"TRUE GRIT" (1969)

Winchester Model 1892 Carbine
Cheat Conours—"The Rifleman" (1958-1963)
LOADED BY RICK HACER

Did you ever wonder why (and where) John Wayne got that enlarged lever for his Winchester rifles? It was 1938 and a young Marion Michael Morrison from Winterset, IA, stood on the side of a dirt road in Monument Valley, UT. Director John Ford was filming "Stagecoach" and his young star, recently re-named John Wayne and in his first real starring role, stood waiting to hail the next passing stage. Wayne yelled out, "Ho there!" as he stepped forward and swung his repeating carbine with one hand, holding his saddle with the other as the stage approached. The six-foot four-inch actor with the hands of a bear tried to get the Winchester 1892 carbine to cock as he worked the action with one hand. He lost his grip as his hand didn’t fit in the lever opening and, in an attempt to keep from dropping the gun, ended up cutting a gash above his eye with the rifle’s front sight.

Enos Edward Canutt, a stunt man from Yakima, WA, and Wayne worked on fashioning an enlarged lever with the farrier on the movie set. The enlarged "D" ring lever would allow Wayne’s hand to fit nicely and prevent the close sharp edges from cutting into his wrist as he cycled the action. The rest is, as they say, history.

The very gun that the Duke and Yakima Canutt hand-fashioned on a blacksmith’s forge is here on exhibit along with numerous other Wayne items; his double’s hat from "The Cowboys," his "brand new silver watch" from "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon," as well as the original oil portrait of Henry Fonda as Lt. Col. Owen Thursday as seen in "Fort Apache."