

Have Gun Won't Travel



According to the podiatrist, I have a heel spur in my left foot that is causing the pain and discomfort that I am experiencing. It is something that is manageable and treatable without surgery.

That is good news. I love it when the body shows itself capable of making the corrections needed to fix whatever pain is being caused. The bad news is that for the time being, I've got a little hitch in my gitalong. I'm moving around like Chester from Gunsmoke.

Gunsmoke was an iconic radio and TV show. It was conceived as a radio program in 1952 where it ran until 1961 starring Bill Conrad as Marshall Matt Dillon. In the 60s it made the transition to television with James Arness as the star. There it ran for another 20 years making it the longest running American made television program in US history. (The Simpsons is poised to finally break that record sometime in 2019.)

Here are a few trivia facts:

- Gunsmoke produced a total of 635 television episodes during its span, not to mention a few reunion shows that aired after its cancellation.
- The first episode was introduced by legendary cowboy star John Wayne who encouraged viewers to "get used" to

this 6' 7" newcomer James Arness as he was going to become a big star.

- Chester's limp was devised by Dennis Weaver who played him. He thought it would help identify him to audiences as the "sidekick."
- The phrase "Get the hell out of Dodge" was said to have been popularized by the show. Gunsmoke was set in Dodge City.
- The gunfight scene that opened the show during the credits (pictured above) was shot on the same street used in the movie High Noon.
- Gunsmoke was almost cancelled in 1967 but because CBS president William Paley and his wife were fans of the show, it was moved to a different time slot instead. The show that got abruptly cancelled as a result? Gilligan's Island.
- Ken Curtis, who played Festus, was an accomplished singer who once succeeded Sinatra as vocalist for the Tommy Dorsey orchestra.
- The cast was not told that the show was being cancelled after 20 years. They found out by reading about it in the trade publications.

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