

20 "Return with us now to those

**By Jerry Ahern,
photos by Sharon
Ahern (Lone
Ranger boxed set
photos provided by
Classic Media)**

I began riding with The Lone Ranger every Thursday night, long before we had a television set. I think he and Tonto and their trusty steeds, Silver and Scout, came on at 7:30; but, my earliest radio memories of The Masked Man and his faithful Indian companion actually date to after the series' 1949 debut on television – for those who had such a luxury. We did not have a TV. Like most boys in the early 1950s – I was born in mid-1946 – the Wild West was synonymous not only with adventure, but doing the right thing. No characters ever created in modern times more typified "doing the right thing" than The Lone Ranger and his friend, Tonto. 2008 marked the 75th Anniversary of their first appearance and, to commemorate that, Classic Media Incorporated and Entertainment Rights Group Company have released "The Lone Ranger 75th Anniversary Collector's Edition" (available from all the usual DVD sources, such as Amazon, etc.).

For those few who might not know the Legend of The Lone Ranger, here's a very brief version. The two Reid brothers were Texas Rangers, the older of the brothers a Texas Ranger Captain. The Reids were part of a small company of Texas Rangers chasing the Butch Cavendish gang right into a trap set for the Rangers in a box canyon known as Bryant's Gap. Cavendish and his heartless outlaws lay in ambush on the higher ground and poured it on as the Texas Rangers rode into the trap. All the Rangers were killed – Cavendish thought. Even Collins, the Judas Goat who led the Rangers to the slaughter, was shot. The younger Reed brother, near death, is the only Ranger left alive. An Indian named Tonto enters the box canyon, sees the carnage and "does the right thing" by looking to see if there are any who can be saved. Tonto comes across the young Ranger who is clinging tenuously to life and undertakes to use what skills he has to help the man, only after making that decision discovering that this man is "Kemo Sabe" (according to Fran Striker, Jr., son of the creator of The Lone Ranger, it meant "trusty scout" or "faithful friend"), who, as a boy, had saved Tonto's life after marauders had destroyed Tonto's village and murdered his family. Young Reed vows to track down the Cavendish gang. Tonto vows to help. Reed dons a

mask Tonto fashions from the elder Reed's vest. An extra grave is dug, so no one will ever suspect The Masked Man's identity.

I was always a fan of The Lone Ranger, and so was Sharon. We'd listened on radio, watched on TV (once said electronic marvels were available to our respective households), read Lone Ranger comics, Tonto comics, even Silver comics. Sharon had Lone Ranger finger puppets from the back of a box of cereal. I had – and still do – Lone Ranger and Tonto Hartland figures. My cousin Jerrell, 12 years my senior, proudly showed me his first "unbreakable record" Lone Ranger recordings, demonstrating their amazing resiliency by putting one on the floor of his bedroom and proceeding to jump on it. Somehow, the record always sounded a little

scratchy after that. TV journalist Dan Rather was quoted once as saying that, "An intellectual snob is someone who can listen to The William Tell Overture and NOT think of The Lone Ranger."

This anniversary package contains seasons one and two (including episode guides) of the television series starring Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels, 78 episodes in all, starting with the three-part origin episode which debuted on the then-new ABC on September 15, 1949 (the series ran until September 12, 1957), which I first saw as an anniversary program, perhaps as early as 1959. Over 1900 minutes are included on 12 discs. Additionally, there are three episodes from the 1960s animated series – interesting, but strange. There's also an episode from TV's "Lassie," in which Timmy (no – the Lone Ranger doesn't rescue Timmy after Timmy falls down the well) is trying to win a contest wherein he will meet The Lone Ranger. Also, there's an original radio broadcast from 1950. You can listen to your television set while reading the original script from the screen.

This Anniversary set is a collector's dream, come true. Included with it is an 86-page commemorative book, replete with photos and Lone Ranger Trivia, and a copy of a signed black and white photo of Clayton Moore and Silver. Talk about cool stuff! There's also a serial-numbered Lone Ranger Victory Corps Identity Card from 1942 and a letter to Victory Corps members including Victory Corps materials. And, there's a reproduction *Legend of The Lone Ranger* comic book from 1969. Let's not forget the packet of Lone Ranger color picture trading cards

