

Old-Timer Recalls—

'I Was Slow With Gun, Fast With Feet'

Most Men Wore Pistols in Days Of Rugged Living

By JANE PEMBERTON
Cowhands, peace officers and business men were all among the sturdy breed of men who built the West. R. M. Metcalfe, one of El Paso's most colorful old-timers, has put in time at all three jobs.



R. M. Metcalfe

publican. One day a staunch Democrat stopped him in the street and asked pointedly, "Ain't you from Missouri?"

Mr. Metcalfe admitted he was. The stranger continued, "Ain't that whers they killed Jesse James?"

Mr. Metcalfe admitted this, too.

"Well, they killed the wrong man!" the man said angrily and stalked off.

Mr. Metcalfe was a member of the police force for a year and a half and later served as a deputy sheriff. For many years afterward he was called in during emergencies such as fights and floods.

El Paso was a riotous town during the days of the Villa revolution in Mexico and feelings were strong both pro and con. The soldier contingent was especially riled, particularly on the day when news was received about the massacre of 19 American miners by Villa's men at Santa Isabel, Chihuahua.

Mr. Metcalfe was downtown when a mob started to form. About that time Mayor Lea drove up accompanied by two Mexican guards, one holding a shotgun in the back seat. The crowd surged toward the car in anger.

Mr. Metcalfe rushed to the window of the vehicle and warned the mayor to get away as quickly as possible.



GREETINGS—R. M. Metcalfe of El Paso says hello to messenger sent by old friend.

During his varied career, Mr. Metcalfe also took pictures. He was appointed official photographer for the Government during the building of Camp Cody at Deming, N. M. His job was to take pictures of the construction as it progressed.

One day a man stopped him and asked what he was doing.

"Taking pictures," the photographer replied laconically.

The man became excited and asked more questions without getting much in the way of answers. Finally he reported Mr. Metcalfe to his commanding officer, who in turn began asking questions. The photographer was tired and bored with both of them and refused to answer. Angered by this, the officer threw him in the guardhouse.

A "court martial" was ordered and a cold-eyed general took up the questioning. By this time the military was convinced it had a dangerous spy on its hands. Finally, Mr. Metcalfe told a general to "see Major Miller."

When the major, who knew

all about the photographer's activities, learned the story, he got so mad he told the general to "let this man alone or you and all your soldiers can go camp in the desert."

Mr. Metcalfe still has a scar on his leg from a rifle shot received when he was a deputy sheriff in Montana.

"We were trailing some bank robbers, and stopped at a ranch house to get fresh horses," he said. "I got orders to go to the corral and get more mounts. All of a sudden this fellow jumped out from behind the barn and leveled a Winchester at me."

"My horse jumped and threw me and I ran for some trees. My leg felt wet and I thought I had stepped in water. Later I looked down and saw blood pouring out of my leg. Scared me half to death," he added with a grin.

He added that the robbers were rounded up and taken back to be tried.

Mr. Metcalfe is proud of an "Oscar" given him by the International Assn. of Blueprint-



SENDS MESSENGER—Henry R. Davis of Los Angeles stops messenger on cross-country jaunt to Memphis, Tenn., with stopover in El Paso.

ers and Allied Industries for his 50 years in the business. He recalls the days when paper was coated by hand and put out the window in the sunshine to get the proper exposure.

Just recently the salty character of oldtime blueprinters was illustrated again by a friend of Mr. Metcalfe's.

Henry R. Davis, executive of a Los Angeles blueprint company, has been loaning books to friends for most of his 70 years. Some of his books have been returned, but many have not. This was a matter of small concern to Mr. Davis, except for one particular book.

A few years back he loaned out a copy of "Honey in the Horn." Time passed and the book was not returned. Worse yet, he forgot who borrowed it.

Last December Mr. Davis included a note in his Christmas cards asking friends to search their book shelves for it. He

added that he would send out one of his company's messengers to retrieve it. Mr. Metcalfe got one of the cards, but he didn't have the book.

Then came a letter from Wray Williams, a fellow blueprinter in far-off Memphis, Tenn. Mr. Williams said he had the book and to please send a boy to come and get it. Although momentarily stunned at the thought of sending a mob-crucifix all the way from Los Angeles to Memphis for a book, Mr. Davis kept his word.

He dispatched Fred Kiopins with orders to stop over in El Paso and visit his old friend, Mr. Metcalfe. Fred arrived Feb. 4 and stayed overnight at the Metcalfe home.

His comment on the trip...

"It's a heck of a distance... Mr. Metcalfe's comment on the whole business... blue- printers are apt to do any- thing!"

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"I learned blue-
riating when
I was a boy in
Kansas City,"
he recalls. "After
I came to El
Paso in 1908, I
got a chance to
buy a \$750 blue-
print machine"
for \$75/I figured
to sell it and
make a profit.

"But nobody
wanted a pay
cash, so there
I was with the
machine. Well,
I had a young
friend, a kid
with tuberculosis
whom I had met
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