

Seneca Sue

Suzanne Amos lives out Wild West fantasy as 'pistol-packin' matriarch'

Wild, Wild West meets Rotary

By EMILY WEAVER
Editor

Suzanne Amos, owner of Amos Insurance Agency, came to Thursday's Rotary meeting at the Patrick Center with her boots on. Topping her wavy blonde hair was a black cowboy hat.

"How do you do? I'm Seneca Sue," she greeted her fellow Rotarians in a melodic rhythm.

She was clad in leather in an outfit cut to the fashion of the old Wild West. On each hip was an empty holster — the guns safely tucked away on the arsenal table at the front of the room. In the back of her belt were two holstered knives. One hilt was the head of a rattlesnake, the other a rattler's tail.

It wasn't dress up day, though dressing up is part of it. Seneca Sue, who says she loves that part, came to Rotary to share information about a program that has swept the world. The Single Action Shooting Society, which brings the old West, its guns, its style and its charm back to life, is 75,000 members strong.

About 20 percent of those modern-day, historically- or fictionally-based "gunslingers" are women like Seneca Sue, who was first introduced to SASS by another Rotarian in her former home in Seneca, SC.

"I was introduced to this six years ago," she said, adding that she was fascinated at first by the clothing.

Amos, who had never fired a gun, much less a Winchester or a Remington, took aim at joining the club. She learned to shoot, sent off for a tailor-made outfit and developed her new alias.

Each member must create an alias based on a character straight out of history or from the old silver screen like the Lone Ranger, the Cisco Kid, Hopalong Cassidy, the Rifleman and other classic Westerns.

Amos created her alias based on the character of "Victoria Barkley" played by Barbara Stanwyck in "The Big Valley." Barkley was a widow. Amos was

widowed after the death of her first husband. Barkley owned and operated her own ranch. Amos owns and operates her own insurance agency. Both have blonde-haired daughters, though Amos laughed that her daughter is not ditzzy like the offspring of Victoria Barkley. Both women are classy and strong.

And, as Amos developed her character, she decided that the background of her alias should also include a love interest with a Native American.

She looks back on that last character decision with wonderment now. After she decided that her character would have an Indian love interest she ended up actually falling in love with and marrying a man who is part Cherokee, she said. "It all worked out."

The SASS has turned "gun-slinging" and "shoot-outs" (minus any type of live target) into a competitive sport. Shooting ranges are transformed into fields where different scenarios are played out.

The different scenarios call for different firearms and/or techniques. Ever heard of a "reverse Nevada sweep"? Seneca Sue says that's just one of the techniques she has learned.

Cowboys or cowgirls must be fast on their feet, accurate with their aim and extremely safe with their weapons. Penalties and fouls can take players out of the game.

You have to be very careful when you are out there, said Bill Poteat, who is a modern day gunsmith and member of a nearby SASS club with Amos. He was also at the Rotary meeting under the character alias of "Ugly Bill." He talked about the organization and shared some of the safety laws they must abide by in this competitive sport.

Don Messenger, a SASS member from Blacksburg, SC, was also at Rotary as "Smooth Leather."

Amos' husband, Ronnie Anderson, has joined the club under the alias "Buggy Master."

No animals or any other type of live creatures are used as targets in any of the SASS scenarios.

For more information about SASS, visit sassnet.com



Left to right, "Smooth Leather" (Don Messenger), "Seneca Sue" (Suzanne Amos) and "Ugly Bill" Bill Poteat are members of a local SASS club.



EMILY WEAVER PHOTO/KMH
"Seneca Sue" (Suzanne Amos) shows off the knives she uses in her SASS role.



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