

# All Our Favorite Cowboys

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The space ship skimmed Earth's atmosphere and the Captain quickly oriented towards the familiar shape of the Western United States.

"There," he pointed. "There is *Cal-ee-for-n-ee-aah*. Navigator – sync our Nav to *Holl-ee-whud*," buzzed the Captain's low voice.

The Navigator's fly-eyes blunked and blinked and twisted in the pattern meaning "*Aye aye*," and he quickly synchronized the Nav computer to land in *Holl-ee-whud*, *Cal-ee-for-n-ee-aah*, *Youu-ess*, *AAA*.

"There is *Ven-teur-aah Hi-wa-ay*, Captain," he pointed a sharp claw towards the port observation hole. There was a slight round of cheering and applause all around the ship – they had made it!

A squadron of F-22 fighter jets converged on the saucer-shaped ship, but they were quickly captured in the grav-nets, and then fastened to the starboard hull with glue-downs. "*Don't shoot, we come in peace*," the ship announced through a front-facing public address system.

"*Yippee!* We're here," shouted the crew, but the Captain was concerned – he'd not seen any of the advanced fighter jets before, so that was kind of a surprise. "Bring us in over there, Pilot. That's what we've been looking for."

The Pilot's many hands worked in a certain pattern on the controls, and the space ship hung, right over the Universal Studios parking lot for a moment, and then it cleared out about 500 square feet of parked cars with a micro-blast from the under-gun. Finally, it set down quietly and the hyper-drive engines glowed red to blue to green to black to off. "*Whoopee!*" everyone cried out! "*Earth! Holl-ee-whud, Cal-ee-for-n-ee-aah! We're here!!*"

Stan, a stunned and startled old parking lot guard was on the phone, trying to explain what he'd just seen to the front office, but he was so flustered that he couldn't communicate the serious nature of the problem. His supervisor didn't understand at all and just said "Sure, right – just remember to collect \$22 parking fee, because it's before 3 P.M."

"But...but..." Stan quietly hung up the phone and walked towards the space ship – they weren't going to bully him out of the parking fee, he decided, as he hitched up his Sam Browne belt and cocked his hat sideways just a little. Suddenly, he heard shooting – yup, definitely shooting – from multiple handguns, not just one. He ran for cover, and dove back into his control booth. The space ship announced "*YIPEEEE TII YII YAA!*"

Stan, who looked a lot like Deputy Barney Fife, peed his pants. The shooting continued, and he realized that the sounds were coming from *inside* the space ship. "They must be havin' an argument about something," he concluded. He stood up and approached the ship again. "Okay, *come on outta there! Hands up!* No firearms are allowed anywhere on the Universal Studios grounds! Come on out, y'all!"

The Captain and the Pilot clicked talons against each other – they'd succeeded in spite of huge odds against them. They'd gotten to Earth, their favorite place, and they were ready for a screening debut. There were a couple of dozen passengers on the ship – well-heeled, or at least well-meaning beings from *Susanaman Dor*, and they were all ready to begin their new careers – *right now!*

"Secure those six-shooters," he shouted. "We haven't even introduced ourselves yet and you're firing in the air like we're outlaws from some Tombstone bar – we're the finest troupe in the United Planets Federation. You'll scare these poor people." Everyone calmed down. "Come on now, holster those hog

legs, and whatever else you brought with. Give the Earthers a chance to say howdy, now, okay? Smoke 'em if you got 'em."

Stan stood underneath the ship with his arms crossed, looking mad. He would have been scared stiff if he knew that his hat was almost scraping the under-gun, which could easily blast a 6-foot circle right through the center of the Earth. He stood there with a stern look on his face, ready for whatever.

And then a staircase appeared near him, and his heart raced, his blood pressure soared, his feet felt like solid lead (else he would have run). And then the alien beings started coming down the ramp, one at a time. Stan's mouth could have caught a lot of flies, as he watched the menagerie disembark the space ship.

First, a red duck, about 6 feet tall came out – it was wearing a cowboy hat and a blue polka dot bandana, smoking a Lucky Strike.

Then, a spider, but with only 4 legs – it had a cowboy hat and wore 4 boots. It was smoking a hand-rolled cigarette.

Then, a 3-foot-tall elephant, also with a cowboy hat, a cigarette, and a Winchester 30-30 strapped to its trunk came down.

A crocodile with a cowboy hat and 4 long, strong arms came out. Two of the arms were twirling rope lariats with great ease.

A pair of blue and white giraffes, decked out with cowboy hats and wearing bandoleers full of 45-caliber ammo came next. They passed a cigarette between themselves. One of them cracked a 20-foot-long whip in the air.

A fat black swan with a very, very long neck and a slim cigar hanging from its beak came out next. It was carrying a holstered six-shooter on each wing.

Sirens sounded, and then more sirens.

Stan walked towards the red duck and said "Sir, or madam, the parking fee at Universal Studios is \$22, because it is before 3 P.M. Also, please do not wander off; the next tour doesn't start for 20 minutes."

More creatures came out of the space ship – a couple of dozen in all. Finally, the Pilot and the Captain came down the gangplank and looked around. Stan saw them: a huge black bear and an oversized tortoise.

"Excuse me, sir, or madam," he said to the tortoise, "I don't mean to be rude, but there is a parking fee involved. If you'll just let me have your credit card, I'll run it, and we'll be done."

But before he quite finished, the two dozen beings started shouting "YIPPEE!" and "*We're here!*" and "*Holl-ee-whud, Cal-ee-for-n-ee-aah!*" And then they drew out six-shooters, and Winchester rifles, and sawed-off stage coach style shotguns, and they started firing them in the air in celebration. The air filled with gun smoke and cigarette smoke and all manner of unheard-of-before sounds.

Stan ran back to his booth and dove in – and then he clicked the lock. He picked up the phone to call his supervisor, but a huge snake caught up with him and pulled him out of the booth and set him down in the center of the lively crowd. "*Human!*" the snake shouted to the crowd, "*A REAL HUMAN!*"

And then they all started whooping and hollering and shooting their guns all around.

A cordon of Los Angeles police vehicles quickly surrounded the space ship, and a police helicopter circled the area at a discrete distance. "*This is the Los Angeles police,*" the helicopter announced. "*Stop shooting and lay down your firearms.*"

The snake conversed with the tortoise and the black bear, and very soon, the crowd was under control. They quietly laid their weapons on the ground.

"We didn't mean any harm," the tortoise Captain said. "Please understand that this is all very exciting to us. Please excuse us. We mean no harm. The bullets are not real, so no harm will come to humans or their property."

As he spoke, the translator, which was connected to the ship's public address speaker, translated it pretty well, and pretty clearly. At least the SWAT team leader raised his clenched fist and stopped his men from shooting any of the aliens.

"Sir," he said, "Weapons are never allowed at Universal Studios. My men will make sure that you comply with this regulation, and then we will speak."

The translator did its thing, and everyone laid out their weapon cache and stood quietly in the warm California sun.

Soon the SWAT team gathered up all the pistols and rifles and shotguns, and a few odd things that they weren't sure of, but they were being cautious.

"Captain Thouro-guad, at your service," said the tortoise, bowing his head to the ground. "And these are my comrades. We have come a long way – about 3.2 space-folds, and we are anxious to meet the head of Production at this studio. We would like to begin filming as soon as practical."

The SWAT sergeant talked on his hand-held radio for several minutes. "Okay, Captain, there's no rule against you being here, and since you disarmed peacefully, I don't judge you to be a threat. We'll have Mr. Spoday down here soon – he's in charge of Universal Studios Park. He can help you out."

Then he made a hand-gesture, and the SWAT team members secured their automatic weapons and went into rest mode.

Ambulances and fire trucks arrived, sirens screaming. A squadron of F22's circled high overhead.

"That reminds me," said the Captain. "Ship, release the grav-nets."

Suddenly, the captured F-22's came to full-power and took off into the wild blue yonder. The local news media babe pointed at them flying higher and higher, and she stepped up to the tortoise and said "You're the Captain of this ship, right?"

"Yes."

"Are you in the habit of capturing American aircraft?"

"No, but it's the standard practice – to gently disable attackers who actively pursue us. We do not wish to be harmed."

"What do you wish? Why are you here?"

"Why, we're here to make movies! *With all our favorite cowboys!*"

News-babe blinked and did a double-take..."What? *Who?*"

"All our favorite cowboys – you know: Tom Mix, George Hayes, Randolph Scott, Gary Cooper, Art Acord, Tex Allen, Rex Bell, William Boyd, Hoot Gibson, William S. Hart, and Lash LaRue. Cowboys! We're here to work with them and be in their next movies."

News-babe just about dropped the microphone as she looked at the menagerie of animals that had deplaned the space ship. "Well, sir, *uh-ah*, do you mean that you're planning to play alongside Tom Mix as a cowboy? What are your, *ah*, qualifications?"

"Qualifications, why I'm a classically-trained *Thuviian* actor, so of course I'll be able to work with any of the cowboys. *Budso-klava*, over there can ride *tou-ramas* like the wind, and *FlogneFlog* there is mighty good with a lariat – show her, *Flog!*"

Twin ropes started spinning, and the oversized blue rooster started jumping through the double-loops, like it was an every-day thing.

"Wait, wait! *Soob-dallay* – show them your trick shooting!"

The red duck just shrugged his wings "Can't – no guns."

"Okay, well human, we have to show you *Soob-dallay's* shooting skills. You'll see qualified."

News-babe turned to her cameraman and shrugged. He said "They probably came from so far away that the TV signals just made it there. I didn't do too well in physics class, but I guess they must think that Tom Mix and those guys are current cowboys."

News-babe didn't know about the cosmos and time-space folds and Earth's TV signals, traveling at the speed of light crossed paths with a planetary system called *Susanaman Dor*, where 3 planets of the United Planets Federation had built a complete culture based on Cowboys and the fictionalized West of Hollywood's *Golden Age of Cowboys*. She didn't have a clue that this was an acting troupe that had braved hyperspace in order to perform, alongside their heroes. She just knew she had a good interview, with just the right amount of cleavage exposed, and that she'd probably just won an Emmy, at least.

The guy in charge, Mr. Spoday arrived in the nick of time to see *FlogneFlog*, the rooster, spinning ropes and jumping through them at incredible speeds. "Good afternoon, sir," he asked the tortoise. "How may I help you?"

"Well it should be obvious: we came to work with our favorite cowboy stars – we want to be in a picture with them. We've traveled a long, long way, and we're very interested in getting started."

Mr. Spoday looked at the tortoise, and then at the lariat-spinning giant rooster. He saw the huge snake and the pair of giraffes exchanging a cigarette. And then he took in the rest of the crew, and saw the space ship in all its glory. He didn't need to think twice!

"Sir, with a crew of cowboys like this, who needs Randolph Scott? Please come to my office while I sign you gentlemen to a contract with Universal Studios. We have very competitive terms, and we offer generous residuals for speaking roles. Please follow me." He was thinking of the Emmys, the Oscars, the constant media coverage for the foreseeable future.

And he smiled a big smile as he thought "*I believe that the new Golden Age of Reality TV has just begun!*"

He wheeled around. "Sergeant, please return those BB guns to our new cast members – I'll take full responsibility – after all, they're Universal Studio cast members. You may leave."

Within moments, two dozen aliens from a far-distant world were shooting into the air, whooping and hollering, and generally having a great time.

Back at home; back on *Susanaman Dor*, in just a few decades, they would all appear in their Mega-Hit TV series *Real Cowboys of the West*.