

## **Interview with Royce Raven regarding his remembrances of the National Theater in Bridgeport, Texas**

**I lived on a farm two miles south of Bridgeport in the East Mound Community. In the middle to late 1930's I would walk or hitch a ride on a horse drawn wagon to Bridgeport to attend the Saturday matinee at the National Theater. Actually, I don't remember the theater being called the National Theater. I remember it being called the Curley Movie Theater. The Saturday matinee was always a cowboy shoot'em up with one of the following cowboy movie stars: Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Tom Mix, Bob Steele, Hoot Gibson, Buck Jones, Charles Starrett, Harry Carey, Johnny Mack Brown, Ken Maynard, Lash LaRue, Rex Allen, Tex Ritter, Tim Holt; just to name a few. My mother would give me a dozen fresh chicken eggs which I would sell at the John Butler Grocery Store for ten cents. I would buy a sack of ten candy kisses from the Walt Johnson Cafe and buy a movie ticket for nine cents. Walt Johnson kept a 55 gallon barrel of candy kisses in his cafe just for the kids. So you see I had a great weekly treat of candy and a cowboy movie most every Saturday afternoon just for a dozen eggs.**

**I moved from the country community in to Bridgeport in 1939 and continued attending the Saturday matinees at the Curley Theater. Mr. Curley also had movies every night through the week and on Saturdays he had a midnight show that started following the regular evening movie, usually about 10:30 PM. The midnight movie was very popular since all the area people came to town on Saturday night to visit and roam up and down Halsell Street. The area residents that owned cars would come to town early, park their cars and watch the people walk up and down the street until the midnight movie started. The late movie topped off the evening before returning home for a quiet Sunday . Then it was back to work on Monday.**

**Mr. Curley kept his movie house clean by giving free passes to young boys and girls that volunteered to clean the building. A group of kids would gather in front of the building around 10 AM each morning. Mr. Curley would select several from the gathering and allow them to clean the theater, and then give them passes to the evening movie. Money was very hard to come by during those great Depression days so this was an easy way to get into the see movie.**

**I continued attending movies in this theater until Mr. Curley closed the movie house in 1946. Steven Curley, the son of John Curley, built a movie theater across the street at 1007-1009 Halsell and named it the Arcadia Theater. The theater was constructed by W.J. Mann in 1945 and it opened during 1946. I attended movies at the Arcadia Theater a few times. I graduated from the Bridgeport High School in 1946 and left Bridgeport for college. This ended my movie going in Bridgeport, but the memories of those days still exist.**

