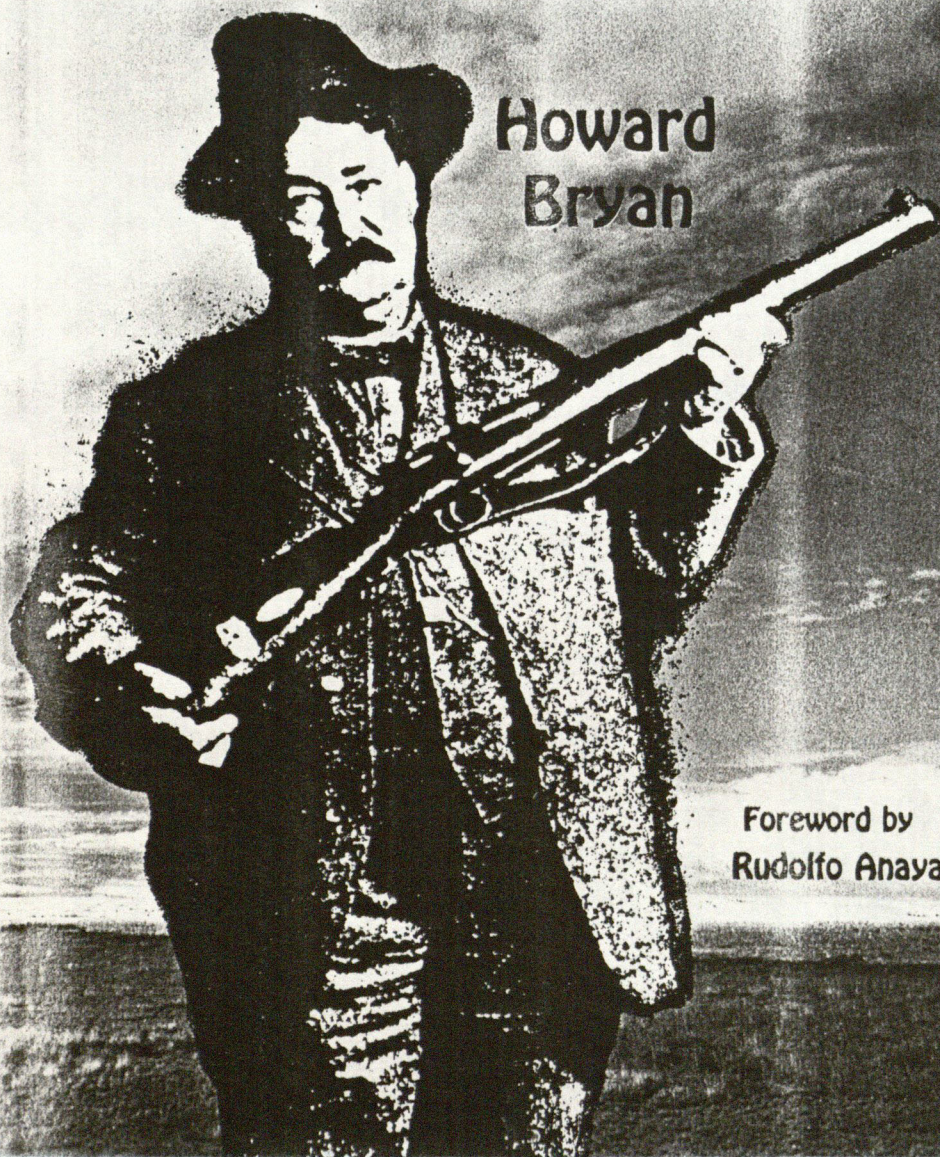


Incredible Elfego Baca

Good Man. Bad Man of the Old West

Howard
Bryan

Foreword by
Rudolfo Anaya



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Foreword

As a young university student in 1959 I remember taking a break from my studies to join my family around the television set once a week. The show we watched was "The Nine Lives of Elfege Baca," a Walt Disneyesque series which attempted to capture the life of this famous lawman from Socorro County.

The show had the usual appeal of a cowboy/western/adventure series, but we also watched for other reasons. Here, for the first time of television history, was a New Mexican, one of our own, standing up to the bad guys! Never before had Hollywood portrayed a Nuevo Mexicano as a hero, and very few have appeared since.

Since then I have been haunted by the ghost of Elfege Baca. I have wanted to know more about the life and times of this complex man, so I thank Howard Bryan for putting together this very readable book on Elfege. Howard has a nose for news, having spent most of his life on the Albuquerque beat. He knows intimately the old friends and haunts of Elfege. The portrait he draws is true. Warts and all.

Elfege wasn't the hero Walt Disney made him to be. Oh, we can wish he was, but life after the Civil War in the New Mexican territory was violent, and it spawned complex men. Perhaps Elfege mirrored his times as much as Billy the Kid. But give me the real man Howard presents rather than the Disney caricature anytime. With faults and good points, I'll take the man for what he was. Howard presents the facts with care and sensitivity.

When the time calls for heroes, the myth of the hero

INCREDIBLE ELFEGO BACA

becomes bigger than the man, and in our time we do need heroes. For me Elfego Baca has always been a hero — both the man and the myth. As a young man he stood up to injustice. So, I take his good points and excuse some of his follies.

As a character says in one of my novels, "They ought to build a statue of Elfego Baca." We should. We seem to honor too few of our heroes. My novel is fiction, of course, but it shows how history affects our stories today. History makes us yearn for those men or women who once set things right.

I hope Howard's book is the raw granite, the inspiration from which we can begin to carve an understanding of the man. At any rate, this book begins to fill the void in our history.

Gracias, Howard.

Rudolfo Anaya

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Anaya thanks the author for writing about Elfezo Baca, a true hero with warts and flaws, whose life reflected the violent times in the New Mexico territory after the Civil War. Anaya claims Baca as one of his heroes, as a man and the myth, and hopes Bryan's book will help bridge the gap in understanding Baca and his place in New Mexico's history.