

THE STRAIGHT SHOT

The Frisco War by Jess Hardin

Many of us yearn for a time and a place where authenticity reigns, and all are fairly tested... where the healing humor, insightful lessons and inescapable dramas of our lives unfurl against a backdrop of uncorrupted nature and wide open spaces. We hunger not only for the distant past, but for a future of no traffic and darn few lines, where everyone has the opportunity to become a hero in the eyes of the dusty children that follow behind! It was out of this mist laden world of Western legend and mortal dream that Elfege Baca stepped, an enduring icon of the Old West, and a survivor of one of the most uneven gunfights in American history!

In 1884, Elfege instigated and prevailed in a lopsided battle not more than 8 miles upriver from where I now sit to write this. Hearing that the local Hispanic farmers were being ill-treated by some hard-partying Texan cowboys, Baca either won a commission as deputy or unofficially pinned a badge on his own proud chest, before riding the one hundred and thirty mile trail between Socorro and what was then called Frisco. He wanted to get there while there was still plenty of light, intending – no doubt – to “make things right.”

Oddly enough, while most folks these days have heard about that Wyatt Earp fellow and the famous O.K. Corral, few know anything about New Mexico’s Gila country or Baca and his Frisco “war.” This seems a mite strange, given that the famous Tombstone shootout rather evenly matched 4 men against 5, involved less than a dozen shots fired, and lasted only 3/4

of a minute.... while the Frisco siege pitted a single individual against more than 80 armed antagonists, lasted a full 33 hours, and involved the expenditure of hundreds or thousands of rounds of ammunition. The walls of Baca’s refuge were splintered from the constant firing, a slender broom was hit eight different times, and the door of the jacal had three hundred and sixty-seven holes where as many bullets tore through.

Nearly everyone writing about this affair has accepted Baca’s tally of the casualties: 4 men killed and 8 wounded. A closer look at historical records indicates that only the one attacker actually died from gunfire, while one was killed when his own horse fell on him, and an additional hapless fellow suffered the effects of a 250 grain lead slug in the knee. It was nonetheless a stunning example of both pluck and luck, an episode that earned Elfege a lifelong reputation as a tough hombre long before his years as a flamboyant district attorney, chief bouncer of a Juarez gambling house, and then an active conspirator during the Mexican revolution. Elfege was armed, as much as anything else, with big-bore attitude. “If you think that a certain gentleman has done something that warrants a sock on the jaw,” he advises us, “the proper and only thing to do if you have regard for your own conscience is to walk up and sock the gentleman on the jaw.”

For slightly over 80 years, Elfege Baca remained a lively part of New Mexico’s cultural landscape, telling spirited stories to anyone with the time to listen. In the year of his birth

horses were the primary means of transportation even in the more civil East, and Winchester’s engineers were hard at work on an improvement of their Henry lever-action repeater, the “gun that won the West.” He died as 8-cylinder roadsters zoomed by outside his Albuquerque office, on August 27, 1945, exactly three weeks following the first wartime deployment of an atomic bomb.... and within months of the appearance of the first ball-point pen, the aerosol can and the frozen “T.V. Dinner.” By then the semiautomatic Garrand was in standard use by U.S. troops and precision scoped rifles were fast becoming the norm for stateside hunting. Once a simple country boy, Baca’s funeral took place in New Mexico’s largest city, his eulogy presented by a priest who sadly never knew him.

While we hear a lot about Baca’s remarkably good fortune, the trait that best defined him was nerve, or what in the Southwest is called huevos. He demonstrated an enthusiastic willingness to put adventure ahead of comfort, and principal ahead of physical safety, accomplishing the impossible with nothing more than an old Colt and an unshakable will.

It is that which I remember most, an example of justice-seeking initiative and spirited self defense, attitude and élan that is all too lacking in today’s government and corporate managed culture of acquiescence and appeasement.

Fortunately, like Elfege before them, the current residents of rural America demonstrate a tenacious ability to survive the worst of the modern world, hanging on to a challenging and stunningly beautiful land the way wind swept trees cling to the sides of precipitous cliffs. The stories of these people – my people – continues to live through the lives of this country’s best... and through their repeated campfire telling.

TO THE EDITOR:

It is very important that local contractors, plumbers, electricians and etc. do any construction in our area. After all they are the ones who supply jobs and pay taxes here in Coos County.

On any bids, they should be given at least a ten-percent edge. In Eugene they do this. Why don't we? If we don't look out for our own no one else will.

I noticed an outside company is building the fire hall. It is being built with taxpayer money. Does this make any sense to anyone?

Jacquelyn Pedersen
Coquille



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JAYNEE GERMOND SIGNS "NEW CONTRACT WITH AMERICA"

U.S. Congressional District 4 candidate, Jaynee Germond, recently signed the New Contract for America. Similar to the 1994 Contract with America, the current grassroots movement seeks to nationalize the 2010 elections. However, unlike the 1994 movement, which promised specific legislation, the current efforts are looking for a promise that all legislation will be looked at through the lens of the U.S. Constitution.

By signing the New Contract for America, congressional candidates pledge that, if elected, they will do their duty to uphold the Constitution and maintain and support these United States as our forefathers envisioned through the Constitution. As one of the first congressional candidates nationwide, and the first congressional candidate in Oregon to sign, Germond has indicated her commitment to work earnestly to preserve liberty, capitalism, and the great republic established by our founding fathers.

“I’m pledging to the American people, to Oregonians, and specifically to those of the Fourth U.S. Congressional District that, if the people of this district hire me as their representative, I will vote on all legislation with a conservative interpretation of the U.S. Constitution,” Germond said. “It is my commitment to vote in line with the U.S. Constitution 100 percent of the time. My opponent’s Constitutional voting record is at 20%.”

To learn more about the New Contract for America or to read the details of the contract being signed by conservative congressional candidates, visit www.NewContractForAmerica.org. To learn more about Jaynee Germond and her current campaign for Oregon’s U.S. Congressional District 4 Seat, visit <http://www.germond2010.com>.

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