

# SPIRITS OF VALENCIA COUNTY

for the Day of the Dead, 2016

*(House lights are dim. Severe vertical spotlight on podium. Actors are dressed in black pants with black long-sleeved, high-necked shirts -- only face and hands are visible. No makeup, jewelry.)*

*(MUSIC intro)*

*(Older woman dressed all in black with a mantilla comes out and lays flowers at a tombstone in foreground. Makes sign of cross. Pauses about 4 seconds, Makes sign of cross. Goes to podium to speak.)*

## Intro

Valencia County has over a dozen graveyards. Some are large and public, and others are small private cemeteries. Some are connected to a church and some are not. And some graves aren't marked at all.

But in every grave lies a person who had a life here in Valencia County. However brief that life, however long, all have a story to tell, with their own joys and sorrows, triumphs and regrets. If the inhabitants of those graves could speak to us now, their stories together would make up a mosaic of life in Valencia County over centuries.

Tonight, in Celebration of All Souls Day, we would like to present a few of those stories for you. Some of them are about real historical individuals who lived in Valencia County, and those are indicated in your program. Other stories you will hear are also about real people, but with the names changed, and others are completely fictional – no individual such person ever lived here – but many individuals like that person lived here, and the story they will tell you is true to the life lived by many others.

And now, the Mansion Players are proud to present “Spirits of Valencia County”.

*(requires a minimum of 2 men, 2 women – so the same person will never have to deliver two epitaphs in a row – and could be up to 41 – one per person)*

***(Note: Some of this is iambic pentameter, but also iambic tetrameter, and trochaic tetrameter – and also just odds and ends! And some plain old prose.)***



1

*(iambic pentameter)*

**Cora Burch, 1910-1980**

I was eighteen, a newly wed  
John was young too, and full of dreams.

All we owned was In our wagon  
All in just a Few square yards.

As the horses Pulled us westward  
The sun grew hot. The sky grew large

To me, the land was brown and ugly  
I wasn't sure I could survive

Would my soul shrivel, Without green?  
Dry up and blow away In the hot wind

But here, by the river, There was some green  
And here we stayed

It was hard at first But we built a life  
I planted a garden, with vegetables for food,  
And flowers for my soul.

I had twelve children, skin sun-browned  
And found I loved that sun.

As I grew old, A sunny corner

Warmed me

The sun was my comfort

And now, I have the comfort  
Of a sunny corner here  
Forever.

**2**

M () 1940s-50s

**Onofrio Bomba**

I was a soldier in World War II. I saw action in Europe. Some of it was horrible – I saw some terrible things when I was still a very young man. And I lost some buddies. *(pause and choke up, then continue)* But I was lucky because I came home and went to work as the local pharmacist. I liked my work. The service I provided was important and I helped many people.

But those years -- they were always something I remembered as very special. During those years, I traveled to places I thought I'd never get to see. I lived and fought with other recruits from all over the United States – and I kept in touch with a few of them. I had adventures – real adventures. I grew up.

All the rest of my life, those years stayed with me. Some may have become tired of hearing my war stories, but I was never tired of telling them. As awful as the war was, it was in some ways the best years of my life.

**3**

*(iambic pentameter/iambic trimeter )*

**Anastasio**

I grew the best green chiles in the county.  
All the people said so.  
They asked me for my secret, there was none.  
I was just a farmer.

Except perhaps for how I loved my plants.  
I talked to them each day  
Encouraged them to grow Hot and spicy,

but not too hot to hide --  
the flavor.

I was not special in this life, you know,  
not handsome, rich or smart  
Not well-educated or athletic.

But I grew the best green chiles in the county,  
and all the people said so.

#### **4**

##### **Jacinto**

I was a winemaker, as was my father.

Winemaking is the noblest of professions.  
Wine gives great joy to many people,  
and is part of the important events in their lives:  
the weddings, the christenings,  
the birthdays and saints days,  
and the funerals.

Father Picard used my wine in Mass,  
and it became the blood of our Lord himself.  
What greater honor could there be?

I know that wine can be a curse  
for some people,  
and that it brings great troubles to some families.

I don't believe that I am responsible for the choices of others,  
but it was a grief to me when my wine was misused and hurt others.  
And it was a joy to me when my wine gave joy to others.

The joys always outweighed the griefs, I believe,  
and so mine was a noble profession.

#### **5**

##### **Perla**

I gave birth to seven babies,  
Four survived.  
One son was wealthy, powerful

I was proud of him, of course.

Another had problems all his life.  
A dear boy, with a warm and loving heart,  
But, weak and self-indulgent,  
He caused himself so much trouble.  
I grieved for him,  
And did what I could to help.

I loved both those boys,  
And my other children,  
Each as much as the others,  
Even when I did not approve of what they did.  
Many of you parents know what I mean.

I now understand  
How it is possible  
For God to love us all,  
just the same,  
good or bad,  
saint or sinner.  
spiritually strong or weak,

Being a parent  
Gave me insight  
to the nature of God,  
And comfort in his fatherly -- or perhaps I should say motherly -- love.

**6**

### **Henry Shaw, 1919-2002**

Maria was my first love.  
We were so good together.  
But my parents wouldn't hear of me  
Marrying a Spanish girl.  
They threatened to cut me off –  
never speak to me again  
I argued and I begged  
I even cried.

But they wouldn't change their minds.  
It was for my own good,  
And some day I would thank them.

So I didn't marry Maria,

and I never married at all.  
I had a good life,  
with friends and work and family  
and many little love affairs.

I was close to my nephews,  
They were like sons to me,  
Especially when their father died  
While they were still so young.  
I left everything I had to them,  
and they come to visit my grave.

**7**

### **Maria Cruz**

Henry was my first love.  
I was 15, and he was 17.  
Our love was passionate and deep and sweet.

But his parents wouldn't let us marry.  
I was Spanish, and they were Anglo.  
Only that.

His family was one of the richest in town,  
-- But my family was not poor,  
And as good and respectable as they were.

*(deep breath – not so much as sigh of regret as a – well, that chapter ended)*

It was hard to go on.  
But eventually I recovered,  
Married,  
and had a good life, with a good husband and fine children.

Henry's parents did not hurt me,  
He was the one they hurt.

But now I think it was his own fault  
He should have gone against them.  
I'm glad I married a man  
with more courage, after all.



8

Felipe Chavez – (picture of current wall, and former mausoleum)

They called me “El Millionario”,  
I was the richest man in all New Mexico  
I made millions and had a seat  
on the board of the New York Stock Exchange

I had a fine grand home in Belen,  
I was generous with charities and with the church.

I founded and funded from my private wealth  
A girls’ school in Belen  
so that girls without money  
could receive an education.

And then, over time, things change.

Very few remember my name  
And of course the wealth is gone

Today, my house is not so grand.  
It still exists, you can go and see it  
But the front door now opens  
Not to the lovely view of the distant Manzanos  
That it did when I built it,  
But into the blank side of the local Walgreen’s.

The grand mausoleum,  
I built for myself and my family,

...

was dismantled for a parking lot.

The school I built is gone, too.  
The doors are closed.

But its influence remains.  
The girls who attended  
Sent their own daughters to school  
And so educated women  
Rippled out into the county  
over generations.

That is the only part of my legacy that endures.  
Thank God.  
Because it is the only part that really matters.





**Juan Picard – 1900-1916** (*picture of wall*)

I was a priest who never believed  
in separation of church and state.  
Religion is not just about the next world.  
So I sat on the school board,  
and was the town marshal.

I feel a little strange here in my grave.  
It was moved, you know.  
When the parish made the decision  
to dismantle the mausoleum  
of Felipe Chavez, El Millonario.

And to bury me, Felipe,  
his wife and daughter  
together here,  
with a single wall  
from the original mausoleum. Well,

When they made that decision,  
I was already dead.  
What could I do?  
I knew him in life to be a generous man  
So I hope he doesn't feel too crowded!

10

**Marisela**

After my father died,  
My mother was very poor,  
And had six children to raise.  
And still, people cheated her,  
Because she could not read or write.

Her greatest sorrow, though,  
was that she could not read the Bible.  
She wanted more for me.

So she sent me to Don Felipe's school.  
She couldn't help me with my homework,  
but she made sure I did it.  
Woe to me if I skipped a class, or made a bad grade.

I loved school, though.  
I drank it in.  
I loved it so much  
that I went on to become a teacher,  
to give back what was given to me.

With my pay,  
I bought things for Mama  
that she had never had,  
like a Maytag so she wouldn't have to wash clothes  
Over a boiling hot pot on a boiling hot Valencia County summer day  
And a brand new Philco, the best radio made,  
to bring her news from the big world outside the county.

But I don't know how much she cared about those things.

I do know  
that she loved it when I read the Bible to her,  
which I did every night of her life,  
until the day she died.

Thank you, Don Felipe,  
And thank you, Mama.

PICTURE HERE

I know  
that those who see my tombstone  
might laugh at the backwards Ns.  
Obviously, it wasn't carved by a professional  
like the others around it.

No, it was carved by my husband  
with his own two hands.  
My Jose left school after the third grade,  
to work and help support his family.

He was a hard worker,  
and a loving husband  
and a good father.  
We were very happy.

When I died, he wanted me to have  
a real stone for my grave,  
not the simple wooden cross  
so many others had,  
which of course would last only a few years.

Jose had no money for fancy granite or marble  
or to pay a carver  
so he carved it himself,  
from a rock he found in the field  
one that he thought was beautiful enough for my grave.

With great effort, he dug it out  
and brought it back to our home  
He worked many evenings  
to shape, and then to carve it.

He did this because he loved me,  
and I think it also helped him with his grief.

He wanted a permanent marker  
So that I would be remembered,  
After he  
and our children  
and our grandchildren  
and everyone who ever knew me in life  
were gone.

Well, now they're all gone.

So go ahead  
Smile at my stone.  
If you, who never knew me in life,  
think of me now,  
after seeing the tombstone that my Jose worked so hard to make,  
(*pause*)  
that's just what he wanted.

**12**

**Bea**

We were never really happy in our marriage.  
I realized too late what I had done  
I should not have been so critical, so hard  
Tearing down what could have been between us.

I always felt that need – that need to "win"  
So I could never let anything go.  
Then when he died I was surprised to find  
that I missed him. I was lonely.

Why ever did I throw those years away?

**13**

**Gloria**

I was a very pretty girl, and I made the most of it. I loved it. Men wanted me. They gave me presents. Other girls were jealous of me. There was no need to develop my mind, or my skills, or my character. Attention and success came to me easily, without effort. But as time passed, new girls came along. I wasn't quite so pretty any more, and they were younger. I had a hard time dealing with age. In my mind, I lived in the past like those high school athletes who're always thinking about the big game they won. I got to the point where I avoided mirrors. My own dissatisfaction led me to be dissatisfied with my husband, and I drove him away. He'll tell you that I drove him to his death, but, really – I didn't give him diabetes!

But I can see now that I should have lived my life differently. I should have enjoyed being a pretty young girl, but built my self-worth and self-respect on something more solid and durable.

14

**Sandra**

What is wrong with God?  
Why does He do these things?

I was born with the gene for Huntington's,  
A loathsome, crippling disease.

First it steals your strength,  
and you become weak.

Then, one by one,  
it takes away everything else.  
I became too weak to hold my children,  
and then it becomes hard to breathe and swallow  
every breath is an effort. (*model this*).

I could no longer (*let voice break here*)  
sing.

It steals every bit of joy from your life,  
and still you must live on a little longer,  
until finally it steals life itself.

But, oh, God,  
the worst is  
(*pause*)  
that I didn't know that it could be inherited.  
I didn't even know that I had it  
until after my children had been born.

And three of my children inherited it.  
I am more angry on their behalf than my own.

And now I wonder  
Will this affect my grandchildren?  
And my great-grandchildren?  
Where does it stop?  
What have they done to deserve this??

Even lying here in my grave,  
I cannot forgive God for this.

15

## Cesar

*(cold, matter of fact, sometimes ironic tone)*

I was a criminal, a thief  
And not just a petty thief.

I used a gun and I robbed banks and trains  
Where the big money was.

The first time I had to kill someone, . . .  
It wasn't my fault: he was trying to stop me.

I felt bad, but I got over it.  
After a few more, I ... really didn't feel anything at all.  
When they caught me, I didn't feel much either.

In prison, I had a lot of time to think  
The only emotion I could remember  
Was that thrill of danger, that adrenaline rush,  
When I would first break in.

Other than that, crime was just a job to me.

16

PICTURE HERE

**Frank Vigil** (*picture of headstone @ Sangre de Cristo*)

They woke me up that morning in May, 1898,  
to tell me that a train had been robbed in Belen.

As a sheriff's deputy, I rode off with the posse  
We found the outlaws, Bronco Billy's gang.  
There was a gun battle, and three of us were killed.

They called me "...one of the bravest officers in New Mexico",  
And they gave me this nice tombstone.

*(anger and cynicism)*

What the hell good did that do me, dead so young?  
Or my widowed wife? Or my little girl without a father?

They caught Bronco Billy and he went to prison  
But the governor pardoned him  
He only spent 8 years in jail  
And me and the others were dead forever.

I took a little comfort in one thing (*chuckle*):  
Bronco Billy was never able to find the loot he buried from the robbery.  
He drove himself crazy the rest of his life, looking for it.

It's probably still there – out near Alamosa Creek.  
If you go hunting for it, good luck, with my blessing.  
If you find it, come put one of the coins on my grave here, will ya?  
So's I'll know.

17

PICTURE HERE

**Father Robert Auman** (*picture of headstone*), Tome cemetery, 1919-2010

The life of a priest is hard  
In many ways.  
We do not have a family,  
Not in the usual sense.  
But I was a spiritual father  
to hundreds of children in my parish  
in Tome.  
And I wrote books about the history of Tome.

Those young people,  
and my books,  
were my life's work.  
I loved them  
And they have made me a very proud papa..

18



**Max Luna** (*picture of river*)

(*anapestic tetrameter/trimeter*)

You will not find my grave,  
in Valencia County.  
I died in the Spanish American war.  
My body could not be recovered

At the bottom of a river  
half a world away,  
Lie my remains --  
A body that belongs  
to my beloved home  
in Valencia.

Here I was born  
Here I played with other boys  
And kissed a girl.

Here I ate green chile and posole,  
I went to Mass,  
And helped with the sheep.

Here I volunteered  
to fight with Teddy Roosevelt.

On the steps of the Luna Mansion,  
I hugged my father  
for the last time  
before I boarded the train

I doubt my body will ever be seen  
by human eyes,



but there where it lies,  
lies a bit of Valencia County, too.

You will not find  
my remains  
In Valencia County.

But you will find  
Valencia County  
In my remains

19

**PICTURE HERE**

**Jesus Maria Luna** (*picture of plaque*)

Looking back on it,  
I suppose it was because I was still so young  
That I was so vain and foolish.

I was the oldest of the wealthy Luna brothers,  
and I was considered handsome and athletic.  
I loved to dance  
and all the best young ladies in the county  
wanted to be my partner.

So when the accident happened  
I couldn't really believe  
it had actually happened to me.

I had jumped onto a moving train many times before,  
The tracks ran right by the family home  
The Luna Mansion.  
But this time, I slipped.  
The wheel crushed my foot and ankle.

The doctor came quickly  
The injury was serious.  
To save my life,  
he wanted to amputate.  
"No," I said,  
"I would rather die."

And I did.

**20**

### **Helen**

I was always a girl with an adventurous heart.  
I was a tomboy and I never wanted to settle down  
and marry young like many of my friends  
in the small Ohio town where I grew up.

When I saw an advertisement  
for jobs for girls  
to go out West and work as a waitress,  
I applied immediately.

I was hired and sent to be a Harvey Girl in Belen.

It was so different  
and I was homesick  
but only for the first few days.

Then I loved it.  
I loved the beautiful sunsets,  
and the wildness of the desert.

Eventually, I married a man who worked for the Santa Fe  
and I settled down out here.  
I never went back East,  
except for visits,  
and I never regretted it.

Life takes us in funny directions.  
I'm so glad I followed my adventurous heart to New Mexico,  
and I'm proud to lie here  
in the New Mexico earth  
forever.

**21**



**Tibo Chavez – 1912-91** (*our lady of belen memorial gardens*)

I was a state senator,  
a district court judge,  
and even lieutenant governor.

Those were my day jobs.

But my love was New Mexico  
Its history and folklore.

I collected “dichos”  
Proverbs in Spanish.

Like  
“No se pare  
entre un perro  
y un árbol.”

--

“Don’t stand  
between a dog  
and a tree.”  
(*pause for laugh*)

Good advice!  
Especially for a politician!

My tombstone  
Has another:  
“Haz bien,  
y no mires a quien”.  
“Do good deeds,  
Without regard for  
Who will benefit.”

I published  
my collection of dichos  
For that reason.  
To pass on wisdom  
That may help someone,  
Whom I will never know.

And now I'll stop,  
because, As they say:  
*A buen entendedor,*  
*pocas palabras*  
which means

*(twinkle in voice, flattering the audience)*  
A clever audience  
Needs only a few words.



**Anna Becker** (strong German accent) 1851-1922– , Terrace Grove Cemetery, Belen

My husband Johannes  
Was a founding father  
of the town of Belen.  
He was a merchant,  
and postmaster,  
a banker,  
and a pillar of the church.

He was an old-fashioned  
German Lutheran.  
I believe that's why he married me.  
I was born in Germany  
and had none of the new ideas  
of some women in the West

He liked it that way.  
But he was kind to me,  
and he loved me.

In front of the Lutheran church  
where we were married,  
and our 6 children were christened.  
He built a park

And named it for me

There was a little pond in the middle.  
In winter, it froze  
And we could skate on it.  
I loved that,  
It reminded me of home  
In Germany.

The park is still there,  
but the pond is filled in  
And there is a bandstand in its place.  
But maybe you can picture it  
When John built it  
And half of Belen  
– young and old –  
Came out to slip and slide on the ice.

Can you see me, in your mind's eye,  
sitting on a bench  
with my hot chocolate,  
watching the fun  
and remembering my girlhood  
In Germany,  
so far away.

## 22

### James Sanchez

Don Solomon of the Luna family,  
was one of the richest  
and most powerful men  
in the history of New Mexico.

His family became rich  
In the sheep business,  
and it is said that he said  
"Educar a un humilde  
es perder un buen pastor." –  
to educate a poor boy  
is a waste of a good shepherd.

Not a very charming sentiment.

I came from a family of shepherds.

My father,  
and his father,  
were pastores.

You've seen, I believe,  
The stone he made for my mother's grave  
so you know that my father was not an educated man.

The life of a shepherd was a good life in many ways,  
and I know that my parents were happy,  
but they were also . . .  
trapped.

So my father worked very hard to send me to college,  
and he was very proud of my achievements.  
I became a lawyer,  
and I made good money,  
writing up legal papers for large corporations.

My life was a good life in many ways,  
but sometimes . . .  
I felt trapped, too.

## 24

(Darlene's parents)

There's a verse in Spanish. Sometimes it's sung to the tune of "El Rancho Grande".

"Cuando se muera mi suegra,  
Que la entierren boca abajo,  
por si quiere salir,  
que se vaya mas pa'abajo".

That means  
"When my mother-in-law dies,  
bury her face down,  
so that when she's ready to leave,  
she'll keep going straight on down."

Well, that wasn't my experience with my mother-in-law. She did something amazing for my husband and me that changed our lives. Shortly after we were married, just scraping by as newlyweds, and she was a widow, living on very little, we had a chance to buy some land, but the \$200 price was way out of reach for us. My mother-in law heard us talking about it, and said "Espérense aquí" -- Wait here. About 20 minutes later, she

was back, with \$200 in cash – a small fortune for anyone back then, and especially for a widow.

We were overwhelmed. She wouldn't say where the money came from, and we suspected that it was her life savings from under the mattress or a can buried in the yard. So we were reluctant to take it, but she insisted. She trusted us with everything she had in the world.

We did buy the land, and my husband and I worked very hard on our little "rancho". Over time, we enlarged our lands and became very prosperous. My husband was a pillar of our little community down south of Belen, and we had 10 wonderful children who also led successful, happy lives. I don't believe any of this could have happened without the chance she took on us.

I blessed and honored my mother-in-law until the day she died and was buried – face up!

25



**Dr. William F Wittwer (1871-1965)** Fairview Memorial Park Albuquerque

I practiced medicine in Los Lunas for over 60 years.  
And for much of that time, I was the only doctor here.  
My office was in my home,  
and you've probably seen it, maybe eaten there,  
Because today it's Teófilo's (Tay-OH-feel-ohs) restaurant.

Looking back, I believe the Lord led me here.  
To this isolated, poor, rural area,  
Where I was able to do so much more  
Than I could have in a city practice



With wealthy patients.

My grave is in Albuquerque, but my life was here  
So I have presumed to join this group  
Like a handful of others  
Whose souls are in Valencia County,  
No matter where their bodies lie.

My tombstone, you see, is simple. *(note that “you see” may have to be removed)*  
Dignified, and I like it.  
But if I had an epitaph, perhaps it would have been  
“Stopped pellagra in Valencia County”.

Perhaps you don't know what that disease is.  
I'm not surprised.  
I hadn't heard of it either  
when I first came here,  
and I was a trained doctor.

Pellagra was never mentioned at my medical school.  
I suspect that was because it's a disease of the poor.  
It's caused by poor diet, especially a corn-based diet,  
And the professors in my medical school  
Didn't survive on tortillas and green chiles  
Like so many in Valencia County did.

Pellagra is a ugly disease.  
It can be horribly disfiguring,  
and lead to stunted growth.  
It can even kill you.

I saw so many cases of this strange affliction  
That I began to research it  
It was slow work,  
because there were no libraries, no telephones.  
I could only use the mail.  
But eventually I found  
that the illness I was seeing had a name: pellagra –  
and a cure – niacin  
That's vitamin B3, and it's found in dairy products, among other places.

I began to educate my patients to add milk and cheese to their diets,  
and pellagra slowly began to disappear from Valencia County.

So if you stop by my old office  
Have a bowl of their Green Chile Chicken **Cheese** Stew.

And think of me,  
and how cheese became a standard  
in Valencia County diets.

It's one of my proudest achievements, and my legacy.

Which remains here in Valencia County, even if my remains are not.

*(this is a bit of a play on words, see if you can bring it out or not if it's too strained)*

26

**Heather Phillips (wife of Dr. Norman Phillips) 1924-2005, Terrace Grove, Belen**



*(speaks with a British accent)*

I was a British war bride.  
When the war ended  
Norman and I moved here  
He was the first veterinary  
In the county.

He was very very good, you know.  
He had a national reputation.  
He treated very valuable animals,  
Like Roy Rogers' horses,  
And the Budweiser Clydesdales,  
And exotic animals from the Albuquerque Zoo.

He could have taken his practice anywhere  
But he loved Valencia  
And so did I.

I was nurse, so I helped Norman with his animals,  
and I also helped Dr. Wittwer with his humans.

*(pause)*

And as patients,  
I often preferred the animals!

I know my last illness was hard on Norman.  
He nursed me tenderly.  
But he didn't want to go on without me  
He had a heart attack within hours of my own death,  
And died himself the following day.

**27**

**George**

I was a smart guy  
Very high IQ  
Tenured at a prestigious university  
I prided myself on intellectual superiority.

I believed I was making the intelligent choice  
When I left my wife and two young girls for another woman.  
I thought she would make me happier –  
Take care of me better, as I deserved.

By the time I found  
My new wife had faults, too  
It was too late.

When my girls grew up they would barely speak to me  
I seldom saw my grandsons.  
I never had the warm family Christmas  
That I craved.

I abandoned dull but solid gold  
For cheap and shiny brass  
Because I was so damned smart.

**28**

## **Marta**

I should never have married Bill.  
A moment of youthful passion,  
a baby on the way,  
and we were man and wife.

We barely knew one another.

We stayed together,  
for the children, you know,  
He wasn't a bad man,  
nor I a bad woman.  
but we were just wrong together.

Over time,  
it is wearing  
to live that way.  
I died young –  
barely 40 –  
worn out and unable to be content.  
Bill was happier after that  
And so was I.

## **29**

### **Colleen**

He swept me off my feet. He seemed to want me and need me and love me so much. But after we were married, the real man emerged – controlling, angry, contemptuous ... rough. Some nights I would go into the baby's nursery and curl up on the floor under the crib, just to get away from him and get a few brief hours of blessed sleep. I knew he would not scream or hurt me with his son there.

For years, I told no one, until he tried to choke me, and in terror for my life I finally told my parents what had been happening. They helped me fool him into letting me escape, on the pretext of a short trip back to see my family with my son. When he found out that we weren't coming back, he was furious. After years of fearing that fury of his, it was hard for me to defy him and not return, but I did, thank God.

Not long after the divorce, he had a serious stroke, and was bedridden for the rest of his life, over 20 years, unable to speak or even to turn over by himself. I think it was caused by the anger within him, which had no outlet after I left. Strangely, I felt sorry him, after

that. Was it my old habit of making excuses for him? Or perhaps I felt a little guilty, because I raised my son, remarried, and was very happy, while his life was hell.

**30**

**Joe Ramirez**

I know that Marcia loved me when she married me.  
She was serious, and I was happy-go-lucky  
So I was good for her.  
We laughed together all the time.  
I loved to hear her laugh.

But I wasn't ambitious.  
I got a job as the custodian at the local church.  
I enjoyed it and felt useful  
I didn't realize, at first, that she was humiliated by it  
Because my job was never the most important thing in my life.  
She was, and our children were.

Then she went to work, and because she was smart and serious,  
She was promoted quickly.  
And when she made more money than I did,  
She thought she would be better off without me.

She divorced me  
I was miserable without the children.  
And I could see that she wasn't much happier, either.

Her lawyer hounded me for child support  
That I couldn't provide.  
I had diabetes, and lost my foot, then my job.  
And the stress was so hard on my body.

I died at the age of 43,  
But I hardly minded,  
Because my heart was already broken  
And I felt dead inside.

I wonder if she was happier after that.

**31**

## Ruth

Things were different then.  
Girls had abortions, yes.  
Of course they did.  
But no one talked about it.  
It was shameful.  
Even for someone like me,  
who was raped when I was only 14.

I was so young and ignorant  
that I didn't even know I was pregnant  
Until it was very far along.

My parents were more disapproving than I thought I deserved,  
But at least they tried to help  
Instead of kicking me out.  
They found a doctor in Albuquerque  
Because they didn't want the whole county to know about "our family shame",  
That's what they called me and my baby: Our family shame.

The doctor told us the baby was damaged  
It probably would not survive.  
And he said the birth would be risky for me – I was so small.  
He recommended an abortion.

Only bad people had abortions.  
So my parents decided I should have the baby.  
And give it up for adoption.

Like the doctor said,  
The baby lived only a few minutes.  
And I myself lived only a few more hours after that.

I don't blame my parents.  
It was that man – that criminal – who stole  
first my innocence, my purity, my happiness,  
and in the end,  
my life.

But society,  
with its hypocrisy  
and even cruelty  
to girls like me,  
helped him.

Sunset Memorial Park of Albuquerque,



### **Jake**

*(There was a real Elfego Baca who came from Socorro County, and a real cowboy involved in this incident, but his name is not known)*

*(Strong cowboy accent (“I” is “ah”, etc.) Could be Anglo or Latino. Starts in prose, then moves to doggerel.)*

*(Pronounces Elfego the Anglo way “El –FAY-go”, rather than ELL-fay-go, and says “LAS Lunas”)*

I was kind of a two-bit cowboy. But I had one very excitin’ day in my life – the day I helped Elfego Baca break into the Los Lunas jail.

You’ve probably heard of ol’ Elfego. He had an excitin’ life as a sheriff and then a lawyer. He wrote a book about his life that made him famous. What even ol’ Walt Disney made a TV show ‘bout him!

So I wrote this little poem about the day me and him met. It’s what they call “cowboy poetry”, so don’t expect no Shakespeare, but it goes like this:

*(act out where possible)*

Back in the year of ’81,  
Or mebbe eight-two  
Was the day I met Elfego Baca,  
The most darin’ man I ever knew

His daddy was locked up here  
In the old Los Lunas jail

He was accused of murder  
So he didn't get no bail

The fiesta of Santa Teresa  
Is the day we're talkin' about  
The whole town was partyin'  
And even the deputy'd snuck out (deh-pa-tee)

Well now I was locked up with him  
For "disorderly and drunk"  
I was tryin' to sleep it off, ya know,  
When above me, I heard a thunk  
(*look up*)

Now the old jail in Los Lunas  
Was a two story 'dobe mud  
We was on the bottom  
With the courtroom up above

I looked up and heard a whisper  
"¿Papá, eres tu?"  
"¡M'hijo!", said his daddy,  
(*look up, spread arms, and say this in a delighted way – it can be funny*)  
Cause when we heard that we knew

He'd snuck into the room above  
And in just a minute more  
He'd sawed a great big circle  
Right in that courtroom floor

I was taller than his daddy  
So I boosted him thoo' the hole  
And then they reached down and pulled me out  
And I thought it was time to roll!

But Elfego said no, they'd catch us  
And he had hisself a plan  
So we snuck out and lay down in the grass  
Right next door on some vacant land

From there we had a perfect view  
When the deputy came back  
And he saw us gone, and he saw the hole  
And durn' near had a heart attack.

Well, they put together a posse



But it didn't do no good  
Cause there was no trail to follow  
We was hidin' right there, real good

They shore looked funny, runnin' aroun'  
Like chickens whose necks was cut  
And the sheriff was yellin' and cussin'  
I like ta bust a gut

So after they gave up lookin'  
That night we got away  
Rode clear down to El Paso  
Laughin' all the way

For the rest of my life – and after  
I've never forgotten the day  
I met Elfego and his daddy  
and I hepped 'em get away.

*(wait for applause)*

Thank ya very kindly.

33



Picture

**Elfego Baca 1889-1945 OLB cemetery**



I'm Elfego (ELL-fay-go) Baca.

No, not that one.

I was a newspaperman.  
My father started the newspaper  
that today is the News Bulletin,

Later, I took over the paper from my father  
I thought it was the most noble job I could do in this world.  
Today, so many people get their news  
from television or radio,  
or their cell phones,  
or something called Facebook.

But how can any of those things  
take the place  
of the **local** newspaper?

Will they tell you what the county commissioners  
Or the city council is up to?  
What's going on with the hospital?  
Who died? And who celebrated a golden wedding anniversary?  
What's on sale in the local shops?  
What clubs are looking for new members?  
What plays or concerts or art exhibits are being presented?  
What new businesses are opening?  
Which local politicians are doing a good job?  
And which ones need to be replaced?

And when your nephew's picture gets in the paper,  
you can cut it out and put it up on the refrigerator.  
Can't do that with a TV story or an internet site.

It's a heck of a deal for less than \$30 a month!

If you're not subscribing to the local paper,  
then you're missing so much of life around you.  
You're not really experiencing your community.

Well, that's my editorial for today.  
"Support your local newspaper!"

If you decide to subscribe,  
tell them Elfego Baca sent you  
– but not that one!

**34**

**Tomas**

I was a "Genízaro".  
Technically, that meant  
I was an indentured servant.

But the truth is, I was a slave.  
A Native American slave,  
Captured by other Native Americans  
To be sold to the Spanish.

That's right,

there were slaves,  
right here in Valencia County,  
for about 200 years

Even after the Civil War  
that supposedly freed all the slaves.

If a Pueblo Indian like me  
was unlucky enough to get captured by raiding Comanches  
They would sell you to the Spanish settlers.  
The Spanish bought you to save your life, because the Comanches immediately killed  
anyone the Spanish didn't buy. And they did it right in front of the Spanish. Everyone  
left, even the children, got an arrow or a quick blow of the hatchet to the head. And the  
Comanches found that the Spanish were more likely to pay rather than have to watch  
the slaughter.

But then your Spanish buyer would make you work off the cost of saving your life.  
You might be put to work as a house servant or a shepherd.

I was kidnapped by slavers  
when I was only about 5 years old.  
After a few years as a child slave,  
I could barely remember what my mother looked like.

Some escaped, if they could.  
But if you were caught, you might be beaten,  
sometimes beaten to death,  
or perhaps mutilated.  
You might have a foot cut off, or lose an eye or a hand.

They made us be baptized,  
And told us how much luckier we were  
Now that we would go to the white man's heaven.

My impression of Christianity was –  
well, a Christian wasn't something I wanted to be,  
but I had no choice,  
so I pretended to go along.

The law said that we could work off our slavery  
by paying back the price of our purchase  
from the slavers  
with our labor.  
It usually took 10 years or so, if your master was honest.  
And some were, but not all.

I was not as lucky as some,  
and I was never able to earn my freedom.

At least now, in my grave, I am free.

## 35

### Anjau

Over 400 years ago,  
I lived in a part of Valencia County  
You've probably never heard of.  
"Be-jui Tu-ay"  
That means Rainbow Village –  
isn't that a beautiful name?

Oh, Rainbow Village was a wonderful place to live.  
It was not too far from the river,  
With land and water to grow our corn.

I made pottery.  
I loved the feel of the clay in my hands,  
and I loved to design and create  
the patterns  
that made the pots beautiful as well as useful.

I suppose you today would think our life was hard  
no dishwashers or cellphones or frozen food.

But no, it was a good life.  
Joy in life has little to do  
with convenience or wealth.  
It's about feeling connected  
To your village, and your family,  
to nature and to useful work,  
and to beauty.

We had all of those in Rainbow Village,  
and we were very happy.

## 36

**Lessie Burch** (*Cora's sister-in-law*)

*(act out as appropriate)*

The first time it happened,  
I was so surprised that it hardly hurt  
I knew Clint was a different man when he drank,  
but he'd never hit me before.

He fell on the bed in a stupor  
while I sank down and cried.

I knew what Mama and Daddy would say  
"It's a wife's duty ..  
blah, blah, blah, blah  
Submissiveness, **good example**, and **prayer**,  
Blah, blah, blah. blah, blah, blah, blah, blah"

Submissiveness wasn't an option  
Hell, I married to get away from my Daddy's rules  
But maybe prayer and a good example?  
I dried my tears, got a needle, and some heavy twine.

I rolled Clint's smelly, snoring carcass  
In the sheet he was lying on,  
And sewed it up nice and tight.

First I went for the cast iron  
Skillet from the kitchen. *(mime reading out to take it)*  
No, not that. *(mime changing mind and withdrawing hand)*  
I didn't want to kill him.  
I got the broomstick instead

I kept away from his head  
so he'd be fully conscious.  
And as I beat him,  
I **prayed** out loud  
so he could hear:  
*(use a preaching intonation, punctuated with blows as appropriate)*  
"Lord, make me an instrument of your will.  
Let this poor miserable sinner learn by **good example** how it feels.  
Let him repent, Lord,  
and never sin again.  
In Jesus name."

*(pause for laugh)*

After that, Clint still got drunk

But he never tried to hit me again.  
I believe that was thanks more  
To the **good example** than to the **prayer**,  
But who's to say?

Some men need to be taught respect,  
And I guess I married me one of those.

**37**

**Doc (Doyle) Burch** (*cousin to Cora*)

Nineteen-fifty-nine was a very good year for me  
A song I wrote hit the top 40.  
There was my name, up there with  
Fats Domino and Alvin and the Chipmunks.

I had dreams of a career in music, but my timing was off.  
The signs were right there in the Top 40 list itself.  
There was Frank Sinatra right next to Frankie Avalon,  
And Andy Williams along with Annette Funicello

Music was moving from pop to rock-n-roll.  
And I was on the wrong side of that change.  
I was more "Lennon Sisters" than "John Lennon".

So I was a "one hit wonder".  
So what?  
I did have that one, and I went on,  
And I had a great life.

I knew friends in the business  
Who ran through three wives and a million dollars  
With nothing to show for it but a gold record on the wall –  
If they were lucky.

Family was a better investment of my time  
Than show business ever could have been.

**38**

**Ginny Strickland** (*Cora's daughter*)

I devoted my life  
to my family.

All I ever wanted  
was to be a mother

I stayed home with five children  
And I babysat fourteen grandchildren.  
And twenty-six great-grandchildren.

I knew that Alzheimer's  
ran in my family.  
I never wanted to be a burden  
so I used to say  
"Now when I start acting goofy,  
you put me in a home."  
My youngest, the cheeky one,  
would answer "But mother,  
how will we be able to tell?"

But when it happened  
they could tell all right.  
My husband cared for me,  
For six years,  
even when I no longer knew who he was.  
When the children suggested  
putting me in a home,  
he would answer  
"She's in a home now.  
Her own home here with me."

Bless you, my love. You know  
That I'd have done the same  
for you.

**39**

**Clark Strickland** (*Ginny's husband*)

I grew up out in the open country  
Of the county.  
But my people were farmers  
Not cowboys.  
I had a horse, but no saddle, and the only cows we had were those stupid milk cows  
that have to be milked twice a day, every day. Every single damn day

And back when I grew up, cowboys were king.  
Roy and Gene and Tex and Wild Bill.  
I wanted to be like those men – brave and strong



Helping others  
But living free  
No ties  
Just a horse .. and a saddle, of course.

But love butted in, the way it does.  
Right after high school, I married.  
Like everyone else in our tiny community..

I loved her, and we had a good life, with 5 children,  
I did my duty as a husband and father  
But I still thought of cowboys and the free life all the time.

Love ties you down.  
And I was too young to see that  
That was the wonderful thing about it.

After the kids left, and she died, I was so lonely.  
My life was over, and I had never done anything but my duty.

And then something amazing happened.  
I met someone.

We were both too old for that kind of nonsense  
But she was funny and energetic  
She made me laugh.  
I had almost forgotten how good that feels.

We dated – we went to the movies and out to eat.  
I'd never really dated, even as a young man, because we were so very poor.  
Church socials and long walks were all our courtin'.

And so – we married.  
We were almost ninety, and people kept asking us why?  
Why not just live together?  
But I loved her. I wanted to be really, truly, legally committed to her.  
Why she would want to be tied to me, I don't know, but bless her, she did.

I had never been happier.  
I loved my first wife, and my children  
But I was always wanting to  
Get away, to get out there and have some adventure  
To be a cowboy.

And then, surprisingly,  
I found adventure in my life right here.

I felt like a teenager again

I felt that exultation – that joy in life.  
And at the age of 89, I finally stopped dreaming of cowboys.

40

**Daniel Fernandez** Santa Fe National Cemetery



*For the program:*

US Army Specialist 4th Class in Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Division, serving in the Cu Chi, Hau Nghia Province, Republic of Vietnam. Posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on April 26, 1967.

Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sp4c. Fernandez demonstrated indomitable courage when the patrol was ambushed by a Viet Cong rifle company and driven back by the intense enemy automatic weapons fire before it could evacuate an American soldier who had been wounded in the Viet Cong attack. Sp4c. Fernandez, a sergeant and 2 other volunteers immediately fought their way through devastating fire and exploding grenades to reach the fallen soldier. Upon reaching their fallen comrade the sergeant was struck in the knee by machine gun fire and immobilized. Sp4c. Fernandez took charge, rallied the left flank of his patrol and began to assist in the recovery of the wounded sergeant. While

first aid was being administered to the wounded man, a sudden increase in the accuracy and intensity of enemy fire forced the volunteer group to take cover. As they did, an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the group, although some men did not see it. Realizing there was no time for the wounded sergeant or the other men to protect themselves from the grenade blast, Sp4c. Fernandez vaulted over the wounded sergeant and threw himself on the grenade as it exploded, saving the lives of his 4 comrades at the sacrifice of his life. Sp4c. Fernandez' profound concern for his fellow soldiers, at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.

*For the show:*

Death didn't hurt at all.

When I jumped on that grenade to save my buddies, I never felt anything but the shock of hitting the ground with my body an instant before the grenade went off. I didn't have time to really think. Just an instinct, I suppose. I did what I thought should be done in that instant.

They gave my family this medal – the "Congressional Medal of Honor". It's a big deal, apparently. White House ceremony and all. I hope it gave my mother some comfort.

Of course, I know that she'd rather have had me than a medal.

Heck, me, too. I'd much rather have grown up than had a medal. You know, a wife, children, grandchildren. A whole career and maybe some nice vacations. Christmasses and birthday parties. I missed all that.

I hadn't been in-country in 'Nam but 6 weeks when I died, and I was just 4 months from my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. *(pause, slightly regretful)* I was really looking forward to that. I'd finally be able to drink a beer legally.

Kind of funny, that. We say 18-year olds aren't responsible or mature enough to drink a beer. But they're responsible enough to carry an M16. And they're mature enough to watch people killed in horrible ways – blood pouring out of their bodies, and some of them are screaming in pain. Grown men screaming for their mothers.



Your buddy that you'd just been joking with a minute before, and now part of his skin is torn away and you can see his stomach and his intestines. And you've gotta say "Hang on, buddy. The medics are on the way. You're gonna be fine." And you know it's a lie.

*(a little catch – he's about to cry himself from re-visualizing it -- before going on)*

And here's the thing -- we weren't really mature enough to see that. None of us were, not even the older guys. Almost all of the guys that really saw action on the ground got messed up in the head at least a little. And some of them got messed up -- a lot.

*(pause, collects thoughts – doesn't want to go on with this train of thought, so changes voice tone to show turning away from it in his mind)*

I joined the Army after I finished high school here in Los Lunas. They didn't bury me here, though. I'm buried at the National Cemetery up in Santa Fe. But they named that park out on 314 after me. That was kind of cool. *(pause)* But I'd still rather have grown up and lived a life before I died.



Peter Fernandez  
[fernandezp67@yahoo.com](mailto:fernandezp67@yahoo.com)  
Brother  
1970 Cerro Crest Ct.  
Los Lunas, NM 87031 USA

**41**

**Brian Benoit (May 01, 1937 -- November 18, 2014)**

Theater was the passion of my life. My day job was just to pay the bills; theater was what I lived for. I acted in, crewed for, or directed many shows. I got some good reviews and even won a few awards.

When my wife Marie and I retired and moved to Valencia County, and found there was no theater here for us to participate in, we decided to found one. It was hard going, at first, but the Mansion Players did become a reality that I was very proud of. I'm so happy that I was a part of adding a new dimension to the cultural life here.

Now I'd like to pass on some things I learned over a lifetime spent in the theater, because I've come to think some of the basic rules of acting are also good advice on how to live your life:

- Be true to your character. Each character – whether it is a large part or a small one -- was carefully created by the Author to have a unique and necessary role in the whole production.
- Support your fellow actors. Cover for them if they forget a line and help them out when they freeze. It happens to everyone, sooner or later, and when it happens to you, you'll need their support.
- Don't steal scenes. Let everyone have their moment and be happy for them.
- Give the best of yourself to the audience in every scene, in every performance.
- Remember that the show must go on, because the show itself is more important than any individual.
- When the final curtain falls, take a nice bow, get off the stage as quickly and quietly as possible, and get ready for the after party!

*Fade light*

*(MUSIC finale)*

*Lights up*

*MC intro's actors by name, each stands in place and bows*

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**Ralph / Lana** (not sure where to put this)

I'm a minister of God and I've been a pastor in Valencia County here for decades. I believe things happen for a reason, and that God looks after us. But this ... this was such a challenge for me.

My wife, barely 50, had a stroke -- no warning at all. And it happened very early in the day, while she was driving to her job at the clinic. She was perfect for that job. She was gentle and empathetic and wanted to help everyone. She was so beloved in this community. They called her "Doctor Lana".

I suppose I should be grateful she wasn't killed when she swerved into the opposite lane. Or that she didn't kill some other innocent person.

And I should be grateful that someone saw her swerve and crash on the side of the road, and called the police. Sadly, though, the officer who responded was young and not yet fully trained. He didn't recognize the signs of a stroke, and he thought she was drunk -- at 7:30 in the morning! They called me and I rushed to the scene and we finally got her into an ambulance. But too much valuable time had been lost, and ... well, she's never been the same since.

She had to give up the job she loved, and I retired to care for her.

At least I still have some of my wonderful wife left, but I have to wonder ... why did this have to happen at all? Why are our bodies -- our God-given bodies -- so fragile? A tiny blood clot less than the head of a pin did this to my Lana.

And why wasn't it an experienced officer who responded? If an ambulance had been called immediately, maybe ... well.

And how could losing a wonderful, beloved, caring doctor possibly be anything but bad for the people of Valencia County?

Did God arrange this? Plan this? I can't believe that at all. But I can't believe that God doesn't have dominion over everything, either. And I can't believe that God doesn't care what happens. If his eye was on the sparrow, where was he when my Linda needed him?

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