

DAVID BRUCE BOZARTH



TEXAS PETE
LIFE AFTER THE GUN

A FORGOTTEN SECRET

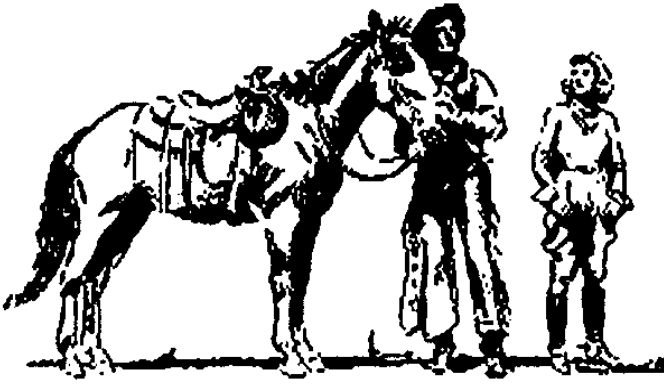
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TEXAS PETE:
LIFE AFTER
THE GUN

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Illustrations by

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There are more Forgotten Secrets than can be found in the off-world adventures by Edgar Rice Burroughs. What happened to Texas Pete? Here's one possibility...

BULL AND DIANA got along so well after gettin' married that there ol' ranch prospered quicker'n a quarter-horse running down a brindle steer. Gosh—it was good workin' for a man who knew the range! Even better was workin' for that gal of his. She swelled up darn quick with their first young'n. Never did see a prettier woman! And that chow on the table each night was fit for a king— though I never has met me any kings or such.

Ever once't awhile Bull'd mosey down to the barracks to hear me spout that drivel most folks kindly call poetry, but what I call drivel of the worst

sort. "You tell a tale in words," he'd say, sippin' a cup of coffee, which was all he'd drink these days.

*And ridin' out yonder, across the wild sage
Came a red rider spouting words from a page
That left it no doubt he had some wee learnin'
But ask't any question just left him a-squirmin'!*

I stuck around for five years afore the itchy foot got so bad I had to ask for my time and leave.

"We'll miss you, Texas Pete," Diana said, all awkward kissing my cheek 'cause she was big with their second. I blushed all stupid like and stood with hat in hand while Idaho chortled from the hitchin' bar. I shot him a look that almost shut him up since I could out-draw him seven ways from Sunday.

"Take this," Diana said, handing me a neatly tied red-checkered napkin. "half a fried chicken, a dozen biscuits, a short side of bacon, and two slices of apple pie."

I treated that bundle like it was King Solomon's treasure as I tied it to the saddle. That Diana was a mighty good cook! Bull stuck out his calloused hand. We shook grim and steady. He was a changed man and I was glad o' that, but the wild part o' me missed that once't wild part o' him.

"Keep off the rise— raise no dust," Bull said, "and sit with your back to the wall."

"I'll do all that—and maybe write a letter or two."

Bull grinned.

There was nothing for it so I jammed a dusty boot into the stirrup of the frisky gelding Bull made

me take on top o' my pay. It was a good horse with a lot of heart and I surely did appreciate the generosity. Doffing my hat to the missus, I put spurs to that animal and we streaked out of there before anyone could see the moisture in my eyes.



*He rode with no mission just glad of the days
The sun was a-shinin' on high meadow glades
And thinkin' of women in towns to be seen
He rode with a vengeance in search of a queen.*

I'm not a particularly lonesome man. I've known me a woman or two over the years, but I never did seem to hook up with one who would take me as I am. All of them wanted to change me, and I'm pretty durn set in my ways. Besides, the good ones are married and the bad 'uns don't interest me none— or much, anyways.

*Ridin' and ropin', and horsin' around
No girl will get me, I'm single bound!
No collar white, and no store-bought jeans
I'm a man who'll stay single—by any means!*

Well, that tune lasted up until I finally hit Californy down near San Francisco. Did a little sparkin', but that lasted only as long as my poke. Then she was gone. I also tried me a bit of the Barbary Coast

but it was too barb-wiry for me, who likes to avoid a tussle or muscle or using my six iron. And as much as I loved dice and poker and games of chance those dudes at the green felt tables made the Mississippi card sharks I knowed as a boy look like school marms!

*He rode south away from the dens of Gomorrah
Babbling to cactus: "I'll play no morra!
As bad as I am, I'm a dumb wee dolt
And survived that pure hell by usin' my Colt!"*



Mary Angeline Elizabeth MacKinney was her name—a woman my age, which made her tough as an old prairie hen. Her boarding house was the only one in that sleepy coastal town where for two bits a week a man could get clean sheets and a hearty sit down chow each evening.

One day that woman sniffed her sun-burned nose at my dusty clothes and down-at-the-heel boots. "You're a work-in' man," she said, "but you ain't worked in a while. What put you to loafin', Texas Pete?"

I answered truthfully. "A good woman made a good man out of my best friend and



ruin my life. I stuck it out for five years but he was gelded good and wouldn't bend back to my evil ways. So you see, I couldn't stay since paddocks and pasture is pure death to a real man."

"A *real* man, ye say?"

That blue-eyed look, topped by radish red hair shot here and there with a touch of gray, gave me the once't over so complete I felt a flush comin' on. And then she made it worse: "The barn out back needs a shovel. Ye'll do that for me, won't ye?"

Well, what could I say? "Yes'am."

There I was, on the wrong end of a shovel a-pushin' and shovin' the worst part of a horse from one stall to another. *A real man*, she says. *You'll do that for me*. Why—

I choked up somethin' fierce contemplating all the *whys* I could come up with!

*I rode against bandits, I rode in rainstorms
I rode against Indians and stayed out of harm
I rode in the army, and survived all that brass
And end pitchin' hay for some lop-eared lass!*

I don't know why I stayed. That woman irritated me no end. Never have I met a more stubborn woman—I'd know'd me some *mules* easier to get along with! And with all that fetchin' I did for that goldanged woman my name should be Rover!

Worse, that old gal made me stomp my boots clean afore comin' in the house and wouldn't let me sit to the table with my guns on! *Can you imagine that?*

Texas Pete: Life After the Gun

Ever mornin' I'd get up and somehow that wash jug and basin always had fresh hot water and there was a razor and cake o' soap handy. Being just plumb on'ry I ignored things for a while, but then that old beard got to itchin' and I just had to whack those whiskers.

The day I came down-stairs shaved blue across the chin Mary Angeline Elizabeth MacKinney put three extra eggs on my plate and piled on a dozen rashers of bacon—and five hot biscuits already buttered with a jar of honey close at hand.



*That wild Texas Pete had tore up some country
From East Coast to Texas, and then Arizony
No man did he fear, and many he'd killed
But an old woman's biscuits made his feet still.*

*Oh, Bull, if you saw him, you'd laugh out so silly
To see ol' Tex Pete corralled by a filly
The wild man is gone and his guns are hung up
I s'pose all good hearts'll make their own luck!*