

## On a Silver Desert

### *The Life of Ernest Haycox*

By Ernest Haycox Jr.

Foreword by Ronald L. Davis

Vocal Republican, accomplished gardener, lover of large cars, Ernest Haycox was nothing if not three-dimensional. Despite a haphazard childhood that included abandonment by his parents, Haycox (1899–1950) decided early on to be a writer. Once he began he did not stop, approaching writing with both an unparalleled passion and a keen business sense that included normal business hours in a downtown Portland office.

Until now little has been written about Haycox, the famed *Collier's* and *Saturday Evening Post* contributor who wrote twenty-four novels and more than two hundred short stories. Bridging the gap between the formula Western and the literary western novel, Haycox frequently incorporated actual historical events into his works: *Trouble Shooter* documents the building of the Union Pacific railroad, *The Border Trumpet* covers the Apache wars in Arizona, and *Bugles in the Afternoon* draws upon the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Director John Ford adapted Haycox's work for *Stagecoach* (1939, starring John Wayne), as did Cecil De Mille for *Union Pacific* (1939, starring Barbara Stanwyck).

Ernest Haycox Jr. describes his father's life, work, and views on the craft of writing. In a remarkably candid biography, original photographs of Hollywood stars and excerpts from Haycox's correspondence, including letters from the last years of his life, round out this incisive look at a literary giant.

**Ernest Haycox Jr.** is a retired journalist and public relations specialist. **Ronald L. Davis** was Professor of History at Southern Methodist University, where he was Director of both the Oral History Program on the Performing Arts and the De Golyer Institute for American Studies.

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