

# MARIANNA'S KNIGHT

*Mariana's Knight, Legends of the Desert, Book One, W. Michael Farmer, Five Star, \$25.95, Cloth, Fiction.*

This novel set in 1896 New Mexico, targets the real-life mysterious disappearance of attorney Albert Fountain and his eight-year-old son, Henry. The Fountains were traveling in their wagon with indictments Albert had obtained from a grand jury, and certainly would have led to the arrest and possible convictions of a large group of shady ranchers and various outlaws for cattle rustling.

To this day the disappearance of the Fountains remains an Old West unsolved mystery, although numerous people at that time suspected who the culprits were. In any case, author W. Michael Farmer conjures up an interesting possibility in that Henry Fountain escaped and went on to not only grow into adulthood, but systematically bump off his father's killers.

Henry is only eight years old when he sees his father murdered, and he has many years and many experiences ahead. He is rescued by an Apache, and then raised by a crusty old loner living in a desolate shack. Between these two men, the boy absorbs Apache ways, self-sufficiency, independence, and sharpshooting as well as book-learning.

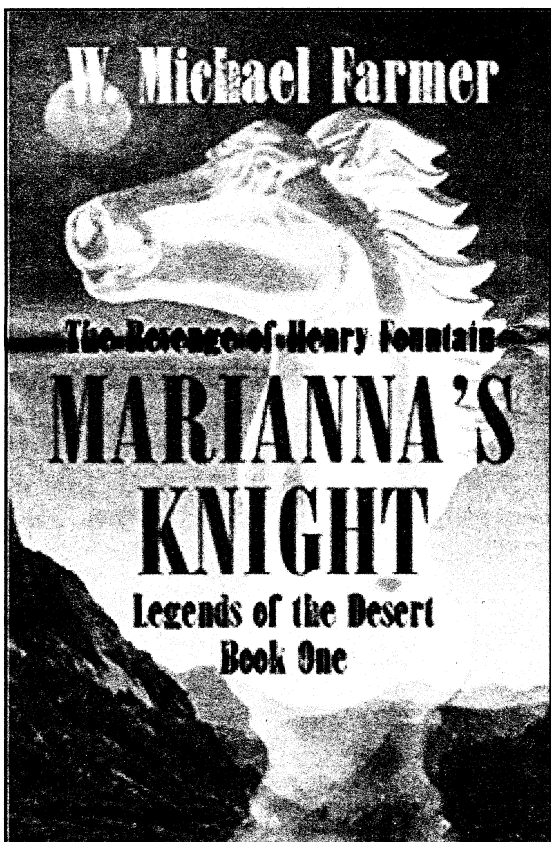
His mentors, Yellow Boy the Apache and Rufus the grizzled old-timer appear in Farmer's previous novel *Killer of Witches*. Thus we are somewhat familiar with these characters, and already know they are tough, honest and wise. They have survived many

hardships in their own lives, and now are determined to help Henry grow up so he can settle the score festering in his heart.

Farmer writes another Western story filled with original detail depicting New Mexico land, weather, horses and guns. Scenes of murder and mayhem accurately show the tough, determined attitudes these people had if they were to survive in a brutal wilderness that held no mercy for the weak and confused.

They must personally deal with bullet and knife wounds, broken bones, unpredictable horses and mules, dizzying mountain trails, sudden ambushes, bullying bad guys and always the loneliness of quick decision-making and correct reactions in a pinch. Readers will like Rufus and Yellow Boy, admiring their grit and straightforwardness. These characters have no time for confusion or

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willy-nilly plans. Everything has a purpose; time is not to be wasted.

Henry Fountain could not have fallen into better hands while he mends, and thinks about his grieving mother, Mariana who does not know her son is still alive. He does not dare send her a message for fear his entire family will then be in danger. As he grows he wonders about his father's determination to arrest bad guys while jeopardizing himself and his own little son. Henry struggles with thoughts about how he can avenge his father's murder, and if he will be able to react successfully when the time comes to meet his father's killers. During this time both Rufus and Yellow Boy

teach the boy many things, yet carefully give him the chance to make up his own mind so he learns from his mistakes.

This Western novel is a page-turner. There is hard riding, straight shooting, gun lore and all the Wild West adventure-reading one can ask for, while at the same time deeper feelings are explored. This is another good novel by W. Michael Farmer you will certainly enjoy.

*Editor's Note: The reviewer Phyllis Morreale-de la Garza is the author of numerous published books about the Old West, including the novel Lost Roundup, published by Silk Label Books, P.O. Box 700, Unionville, New York 10988. [www.silklabelbooks.com](http://www.silklabelbooks.com)*