

What HISTORY HAS TAUGHT ME

Tiger Woods and Buffalo Bill Cody are men who thought monogamy was a type of wood. They were legendary talents with flaws who were eager to entertain the numerous women who threw themselves at the men, regardless of the fact that they were married.

Elizabeth Custer's extramarital affairs were emotional entanglements and not sexual.

Divorce in the Old West was much like it is today with regards to the rate it occurred. Between 1870 and 1900 there were more divorces in the West than in other parts of the U.S.

My favorite classic Western character is lawman Bill Tilghman. As Bat Masterson said, "He truly was the best of them all."

Best movie line by a woman is said by Madeline Kahn as Lili Von Shtupp in *Blazing Saddles*. "Is that a 10-gallon hat, or are you just enjoying the show?"

Never cross a woman like Charley Hatfield, because she'll shoot you where you stand, then load your brazen carcass onto her freight wagon and haul you away to parts unknown.

Growing up an army brat, I acquired a great respect for the brave men and women who serve our country.

My favorite joke: Four cowboys were at an old saloon in Tombstone playing poker. A lot of money was at stake as the cards were dealt, and each was keeping a sharp eye on the other. As one of the players called the hand and laid out his cards, another one stood up in amazement. "Hey, George is cheatin'. He ain't playin' the cards I dealt him!"

Working as a stuntwoman at Old Tucson Studios was the best job I've had in my entire life.

Greatest misconception about women in the Old West is that they were either prostitutes like Miss Kitty or homesteaders like Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Writing for TV's *Designing Women* and *The Carol Burnett Show* was a valuable lesson in comedy writing from some of the funniest women in the industry.

The quirkiest story I've come across involves Calamity Jane. At her funeral held in Deadwood, South Dakota, mourners took pieces of her dress and hair as they passed by her body to pay their respects. The undertaker eventually had to



CHRIS ENSS, AUTHOR

Born in Missouri, Enss is a screenwriter and author whose love for the Old West has translated into more than two dozen books on the subject. She is currently working on a biography of Elizabeth Custer and a novel about the Sand Creek Massacre for Globe Pequot Press.

cover Calamity with special wire to keep people from further disturbing her remains.

The most notorious woman of the West is Lola Montez. The Irish-born entertainer was known worldwide for her Spider Dance. She was eccentric and daring, and had lovers everywhere. The most famous of which was King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Montez is reputed to be the inspiration for the saying "Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets."

The last Old West locale I visited was the Little Bighorn Battlefield.

My book *Thunder Over the Prairie* is rumored to become a motion picture written and directed by Emmy award-winning director and Western enthusiast Walter Hill. (Keep your eye on that rumor too, it's got a future.)

My dad always said, "If you want to be a writer, shut up and write."

What history has taught me is once you get past the heroics, the people who blazed a trail across the frontier were no different than people today. They wanted better for their families, struggled economically and fought hard for a better way of life.