



# Characters and Plots in Jack Schaefer's Fiction

*Robert L. Gale*

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Jack Schaefer was a master story-teller. His novel *Shane* is a popular and critical success, known around the world. The movie made from it is also a classic. Schaefer followed *Shane* with short stories about western pioneers, rangers, cowboys, homesteaders, soldiers, and Native Americans. Assembled into books, all are worthy and many are memorably haunting. Then more novels, notably *Company of Cowards*, about eight battle-fatigued Civil War Union soldiers called cowards and sent far west to redeem themselves by fighting Native Americans; *The Canyon*, about a Cheyenne who tries to live alone but ultimately cannot; prize-winning *Old Ramon*, showing what a little boy learns from a wise old sheepherder; and best-selling *Monte Walsh*, whose cowboy hero's decades-long life parallels that of the Old West itself, often sadly in Schaefer's somber view. In this *Characters and Plots* book we have extended synopses of Schaefer's seven novels and 32 short stories, comments on each of their 441 characters, and frequent critical insights mostly but not always from published western critics. The book includes a Chronology outlining Schaefer's intriguing life, a Bibliography demonstrating the range of scholarship about him, and a thorough Index. Iowa-born Robert Lee Gale has degrees from Dartmouth College and Columbia University, was an officer during World War II in the Counter Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army in England, in France, and briefly in North Africa. He taught forty years at American and foreign universities and has published widely, including many reference books like this one on Schaefer and including four also published by Word Association Publishers, on western writers Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Norman Maclean, James Welch, and D Arcy McNickle. Retired from the University of Pittsburgh, Gale now lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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