

LEGACY STUDIO ORIGINALS

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Media contact: Brian Kryszewski de Ybarrondo, Legacy Studio Originals · briank@legacypublishing.agency · 281-928-1006
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A Century Later, Her Story Wins Best Screenplay in the City Where She Learned to Save Lives

Brian Kryszewski de Ybarrondo takes the top screenwriting honor at the 32nd SAFILM—San Antonio Film Festival for *They Call Me Elena*, drawn from the life of a woman in his own family, Cruz Blanca Neutral founder Elena Arizmendi Mejía

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — July 28, 2026 — Author, historian, and screenwriter **Brian Kryszewski de Ybarrondo** has won **Best Screenplay** at the 32nd annual SAFILM—San Antonio Film Festival for *They Call Me Elena*, a historical feature about Elena Arizmendi Mejía, the Mexican nurse and feminist who founded La Cruz Blanca Neutral during the Mexican Revolution. The award was presented at the festival’s awards ceremony on July 26, and Kryszewski de Ybarrondo accepted in person.

San Antonio has a direct claim on the story. In 1910, Arizmendi was a student at the School of Nursing of Santa Rosa Hospital in San Antonio — today the University of the Incarnate Word Ila Faye Miller School of Nursing and Health Professions. On April 17, 1911, weeks before her graduation, she boarded a train back to Mexico City after learning that the Mexican Red Cross was refusing to treat wounded fighters opposing the Díaz government. With her brother Carlos, she recruited medical students and nurses and founded La Cruz Blanca Neutral, an organization that would treat any wounded person regardless of which side they fought for. Within days she had raised enough to open a field hospital in Ciudad Juárez. The organization spread across 25 Mexican states during the war, and still operates in Mexico City today.

“She left this city on a train, and a hundred and fifteen years later the story came back and won here. I did not plan that. I don’t think you can plan that.”

THE WRITER IS FAMILY

Arizmendi’s maternal grandfather was **General Ignacio Mejía**, Minister of War and Navy under President Benito Juárez, and Kryszewski de Ybarrondo’s own direct ancestor, which makes Elena a collateral relative rather than a forebear. *They Call Me Elena* is part of *La Patria es Primero*, a five-part saga built from the family’s documented genealogy rather than around it.

That lineage is also part of why the screenplay exists. Arizmendi left almost no personal papers behind. For most of a century she survived in Mexican letters not under her own name but as “Adriana,” the character José Vasconcelos wrote into his memoirs after their affair ended, a portrait she never answered in print. It took historian Gabriela Cano’s 2010 biography *Se llamaba Elena Arizmendi* to reassemble the actual woman from interviews with family and contemporaries,

scattered records, and the journalism Arizmendi published in 1911. Cano has described the work as having the character of an archaeological dig.

“Elena founded a humanitarian organization that outlived her by eighty years, and the only version of her most people ever read was written by the man who left her. She didn’t get to answer it. Part of the job here is giving her the answer. The craft is in earning the distance between what the archive says and what the scene needs.”

A SECOND HONOR AND A WORKING SLATE

They Call Me Elena was also named a Finalist at the Best Script Awards, London, on July 5, 2026. *El General*, adapted from Kryszewski de Ybarrondo’s novel *El General: In the Shadow of Giants*, recipient of the International Impact Book Award for Biographic Historical Fiction, was likewise an official SAFILM 2026 selection, and was previously named an Award Winner for Best TV/Web Series at the Manhattan International Screenplay Awards by CINEVERSE in December 2025.

Both titles sit inside *La Patria es Primero*, which traces six generations of a single documented family line from Ignacio Mejía through the writer himself. Emmy-nominated actress and producer **Vannessa Vasquez** is attached as executive producer across the series.

The studio also launched *Living Worlds*, an interactive storytelling platform, on July 4, 2026. It has since drawn organic readership across more than 40 countries, led by Latin American audiences.

ABOUT LEGACY STUDIO ORIGINALS

Legacy Studio Originals (LSO) is the development brand of Legacy Publishing Agency LLC, which holds the underlying intellectual property. Legacy7 Films serves as the production arm. The studio develops screen work under founder Brian Kryszewski de Ybarrondo’s reverse-adaptation method, in which prose works are written and held as canonical upstream sources before any script is drafted. Its slate spans four IP universes: *La Patria es Primero* (historical), *All That Resonates* (speculative fiction), FIRE.APP (AI consciousness), *Zona Negra* (Sci-fi anthology), and standalone titles.

NOTES TO EDITORS — VERIFICATION AND COMMON ERRORS

Two organizations named Cruz Blanca operated during the Revolution and are frequently conflated in secondary sources. Please note the distinction:

- **La Cruz Blanca Neutral** — founded by Elena Arizmendi Mejía, formally established May 5, 1911, Mexico City. This is the subject of the screenplay.
- **La Cruz Blanca Constitucionalista** — founded by Leonor Villegas de Magnón in Laredo. Villegas de Magnón wrote the memoir THE REBEL, which went unpublished in her lifetime and was published by Arte Público Press in 1994 from her granddaughter’s copy. This manuscript history belongs to Villegas de Magnón and is often misattributed to Arizmendi.
- Arizmendi published one short autobiographical work, *Vida incompleta: Ligeros apuntes sobre mujeres en la vida real* (1927), a reflection on gender roles and her relationship with José Vasconcelos. She did not publish a memoir of the Revolution.
- Relationship to the writer: Ignacio Mejía is the direct ancestor. Elena Arizmendi Mejía is a collateral relative through that line, not a direct forebear.
- Principal sources: Gabriela Cano, *Se llamaba Elena Arizmendi* (Tusquets Editores, 2010); Texas State Historical Association, Handbook of Texas, “Arizmendi Mejía, Elena Irene”; contemporaneous coverage in *Diario del Hogar* and *El Imparcial*, 1911.

Available on request: writer headshot, festival photography, one-sheet, logline and synopsis, script excerpt, and interview availability in English or Spanish.