

Red Whip
Gros Ventre Warrior
Narrative and Slides
by
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Fort Belknap Consolidated Agency - 1947 - 1954

Often the valiant deeds of a brave man can, when told and retold over a period of many years, become legendary with much of the authenticity lost along the way. In the instance of Red Whip there is his own story told during "The Last Great Indian Council" described in the book "The Vanishing Race" by Dr. Joseph K. Dixon and the stories of his tribesmen which have been handed down by word of mouth for over a half century. The Red story as told by Fred Gone, Gros Ventre tribesman, is on file in the Special Collections section of the Montana State University Library. The reader when comparing the two versions will note a more personal and legendary approach in the Fred Gone manuscript. It is always possible that Red Whip's own story as told in the "Vanishing Race" would indicate that Red Whip in the presence of so many other noted contemporary Chiefs did not believe it proper to expound on all of the details of the battle; or perhaps the author, Dr. Joseph K. Dixon, could not find the time or space to relate the complete stories as told in detail by each of the individual Chiefs attending "The Last Great Indian Council". The reader will have to draw his own conclusions after reading the two versions.

Briefly: the Red Whip story (which dates between 1872-1880) involves a small party of three Gros Ventre and eleven Crow. A Crow was the leader of the party which at that time was located within a triangular area somewhere north of the Missouri river and between the Little Rocky and Bear Paw mountains. According to Red Whip, the battle was on the west slope of the Little Rockies. This is born out by Gros Ventre tribesmen who point out a rock mound considered by them to be the site of the battle and this is consistent with the location of certain coulees which fit with Red Whip's version.

According to Red Whip, as his party was ascending the Little Rockies they found and killed a buffalo. While they were cleaning and cutting up the buffalo, Red Whip went out to scout the immediate area knowing that their shooting would have been heard by anyone near. He saw a lone Sioux sneaking up to the place where the buffalo had been killed. Red Whip then returned and told the party what he had seen and suggested that there might be a Sioux party. His party went back a way and built a rough fortification and prepared to fight. Red Whip put on his war paint of yellow and red. He also had his war talisman. He climbed a little ridge and was fired on by the Sioux when he topped it. Red Whip thought there were about one hundred and thirty of the Sioux. His party then attacked the Sioux. After a short skirmish the Sioux retreated up the hill. Some of the Sioux were killed and others wounded. Red Whip followed and was the first to take a scalp and count coup. The Sioux, realizing the small size of Red Whip's party, charged; and the Gros Ventre and Crow retreated to their fortification. The Sioux surrounded them. After two of the Crow were killed, the Crow leader was scared, but Red Whip jumped out of the fort and ran the Sioux back up the mountain. When Red Whip told his friends to escape, the Sioux followed their retreat. One Sioux got close and called to Red Whip. Red Whip stopped quickly, and the Sioux shot and missed. Red Whip fired and killed the Sioux, but did not have time to take the scalp. Red Whip's party retreated toward the mountain and made another rough fortification. When they rested the Sioux surrounded them again. Red Whip, with his war talisman, rushed the Sioux again to cover the retreat of his friends. When they were retreating one of the Gros Ventre was shot in the leg, and Red Whip carried him on his

back to a washout at the head of a nearby coulee. Here his friend told Red Whip to leave him. He gave Red Whip his knife and paint and told Red Whip to tell his Mother she could have his horses. Red Whip, according to his own version, jumped out of the washout, and ran to catch up with the remainder of his party. About a quarter of a mile away he turned and looked back just in time to see the Sioux jump in the washout where his friend was. Red Whip, in history, said he heard one shot. He then continued to make his escape.

This narrative in no manner is intended to demean or deride the manuscript of Fred Gone. His is a tremendously interesting manuscript having a decided touch of one with a bilingual influence; ie, thinking in Gros Ventre and writing in English. His knowledge of Indian customs and culture are apparent throughout. This narrative is written in such a manner that the reader soon finds himself a part of the fast moving sequence of events. Still, one has to read Red Whip's own version of the event before deciding between fact and legend.

There are a number of documentary facts: (1) Red Whip, the Gros Ventre, was a real warrior and was so considered not only by his tribesmen but among the Standing Rock Sioux. He was called Chief Red Whip during "The Last Great Indian Council" which was held in 1919 in the valley of the Little Horn near or on the Crow reservation. Red Whip was 55 years of age at the time of the Council gathering. (2) Red Whip had many relatives on the Fort Belknap reservation, including:

Many Birds Around - brother, 1840
Suns His Back - brother, 1850
Henry Dwarf - brother, 1890
Post Kill - mother,
Red Whip - Nephew, 1870-1876
Died at the Door, Cousin, 1880
Philip Shortman, son-in-law, 1936

- (3) The grandson of the Sioux Flying Cloud of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, Francis Zahn who was late Tribal Judge at the Standing Rocky agency, gave written documentation as to his grandfather's death at the hands of Red Whip.
- (4) The Medicine Bundle and War Talisman of Red Whip was given to Superintendent Wellington in 1953.

This slide set depicts the opening of the Medicine Bundle containing the War Talisman when it was given to Superintendent Wellington by Philip Shortman and Rufus Warrior of the Gros Ventre tribe of the Fort Belknap reservation.

Slide No:

1. Rufus Warrior and Philip Shortman members of the Gros Ventre tribe. Shortman points to the western slope of the Little Rocky mountains where Red Whip's party killed buffalo.
2. Shortman points to the area where the Sioux were camped.
3. Shortman shows where the Gros Ventre and Crows were on one side of a ridge and the Sioux on the other side.
4. The Gros Ventre and Crows came in from the right or south side of the ridge in the picture. The Sioux were closer to the timbered area.
5. Shortman points to where the Sioux Chief Flying Cloud was killed.
6. Sioux Chief Flying Cloud killed near edge of timber in the center of the picture.
7. Near battle site.
8. It is believed it was in this area that Red Whip's friend was killed.
9. Philip Shortman begins to unwrap the old and badly frayed cloth which & covers the Medicine Bundle containing Red Whip's War Talisman or
10. Charm. This bundle was opened approximately 78 years after Red Whip opened the Bundle at the time of the battle with the Sioux.
11. The War Talisman or Charm being taken from the Bundle.
&
- 12.
13. The War Talisman or Charm being held by Philip Shortman.
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14. The War Talisman or Charm is a small roll of red otter skin about & four feet long, and an inch and one half to two inches in diameter.
15. On one end there is a matting of fur in which there appeared to be the tails of a small animal. This fur did not appear to have been red otter but might have been. To this end is attached an old, old bell about one and one half inch in diameter. Just above the bell there are five bands of beads each one about an inch wide in alternating colors - blue, white, blue, white and blue. The beads appeared to be larger than those used by the Indian bead worker in the last forty or fifty years. Spaced at irregular intervals are five small cachets (capsules) made from buckskin. They are about an

inch long and one half inch or a little more in width. It is told that the cachets contain: (1) a powdered herb to be used to stop the flow of blood, (2) a powder made from a dried slice of a human heart, (3) kinnikinnick to be burned as a purifier, (4) a powdered herb to give the wearer of the talisman the visionary power to see the location of people and places, (5) not known. On the other end of the otter skin there are eight small bells about half to three fourths of an inch in diameter. It appeared as though there were five small claws attached to the otter skin near the small bells. The legendary whistle (the narrator is certain that there originally was one) made of a bone from an eagle's wing was not in the bundle. Rufus Warrior said that Red Whip took the whistle out of bundle. There was a braid of sweet grass about five or six inches long in the bundle. The otter skin talisman or charm was wrapped in six layers of cloth; five were of a patterned material and one solid red. The outer layer was thin and nearly disintegrated in places. It would appear that when the talisman or charm was worn that the two ends were held together by a buckskin thong. The talisman as noted in slide no. 16 goes over the right shoulder. The bell ends would rest on the left side of the wearer just above the waist line in the back. (The Fred Gone story has a detailed description of the war talisman or charm. Possibly years ago the talisman would have fitted his description. It did not when last opened. He made no mention of the medicine cachets which other tribesmen have always said were included.

16. Rufus Warrior shows how the war talisman or charm was worn in battle.
17. In a matter of a few minutes Philip Shortman relates the story of Red Whip and the fight in sign language. Rufus Warrior starts in sign language "Now tell me...".
18. Philip Shortman in reply begins with "It was a great moment..."
- 19-26. Shortman continues in sign language.
27. sign language - buffalo.
28. " " - small pieces
29. " " - they come on now.
30. " " - man.
31. " " - beginning of sign wrap (pertaining to Medicine Bundle)
32. " " - beginning of sign brave...
33. incomplete sign - eat.
34. Philip Shortman holding Red Whip's famous and far famed war talisman or charm. Its story was told among the Standing Rock Sioux and Crow tribes as well as among the Gros Ventre.

Red Whip's battle against the Sioux Indians at the west end of the Little Rocky Mountains.

The Gros Ventres were camped on the White river also known as Judith river. There were some Crow Indians also camped with the Gros Ventre tribe; the camp was just about half way between the mountains and the Missouri river which the Gros Ventres call Big River, from this encampment a small party of Crow Indians struck out on a war party and three young Gros Ventres joined this war party, Gros Ventres names were Red Whip, Good Strike & Turtle, Red Whip & Good Strike were bosom friends.

The first night out they camped on the south banks of the Missouri river, next day they followed down the Missouri then crossed over to the north side at the mouth of Cow Creek also known by Gros Ventres as Big Coulee, this creek heads up near Bird Tail Butte on the southern end of the Bear's Paw Mountains, so they camped there at the mouth of Cow Creek that night, now it was at this particular night that Red Whip had a dream. The nature of the dream concerned directly with the foretelling of what confronted this war party.

In Red Whip's dream he was told to look up toward the Little Rocky Mountains, in so doing, he saw from the foot of the mountains the whole country right around the foot of mountains as if red with blood, he was told that bad luck would sure to overtake them, then he was told to look down along the Missouri river and in doing so he saw a large herd of horses just a stringing up river, which ment that good luck and a successful trip would be theirs. So the next morning after they ate their breakfast, he told the leader of his vision, after the man heard him out he started to condemn the dream and began to ridicule Red Whip with such remarks as - if you are afraid why don't you go back and after you get back, put on a dress and stay home with the women,

and who shall thus have influence at Washington, which he has many times visited and where he is always welcome. The smile of Chief Plenty Coups is worth crossing many miles of prairie to see. It was eminently fitting that this great chief on the grounds of his own Indian tribe should receive the chiefs attending the last Great Indian Council.

CHIEF RED WHIP*

Chief Red Whip is considered by his tribe as one of the greatest of the old hunters and warriors. The varying fortunes of the Gros Ventres, the strenuous war career of this noted chief, have ploughed deep furrows and written serious lines in his face. He is too old a man at fifty-five, but wounds and scars and battle rush age upon any man. Chief Red Whip said to me: "The greatest event in my life was my fight with the Sioux in the Little Rocky Mountains. There were eleven Crows and three Gros Ventres in our band; our leader was a Crow. There were about one hundred and thirty Sioux. We were making the ascent of the Little Rockies, and my friends went down into the ravine to shoot some buffalo. While they were down there shooting the buffalo and cutting them up the leader sent me to do scout work. While I was up on the hills I saw the Sioux sneaking up to where we had killed the buffalo. I ran down at once to

* Since deceased

my friends and told them. We went back a little ways and made a fort and got ready to fight. I was painted yellow and red and was naked. When the fort was finished I went myself, taking two others with me, to find out the location of the Sioux. We went right up to where I saw them last. I could tell by their tracks that there were a great many of them. I went up a little ridge that divided our band from the Sioux, and just as I stuck my head up above the grass they all fired at me, about a hundred guns, but they did not hit me. When my friends heard the firing they came to where I was, and we went right down on the Sioux, and the Sioux came at us, and we had a fight for a few minutes at close quarters. After we had a short fight we rushed right on to the Sioux and they retreated. The Sioux had to go up a hill and we wounded some and killed others. After the Sioux had got up the hill I was the first one to get to a man who was killed. I scalped him and claimed everything he had. After the Sioux found out that we were only a small band they rushed down upon us and we retreated to where we had made the fort. Inside this fort there were two Crows killed with one bullet. The leader of the Sioux band was Chief Flying Cloud. I found out afterward who he was. It was Flying Cloud that we killed coming up the hill; he was trying to protect his band. When we were in the fort the Sioux people surrounded us. After

the two Crows were killed the leader of our band became scared. I jumped out of the fort and led the way for my band. We ran the Sioux back to the Little Rockies, and then I told my friends to escape. As we retreated the Sioux pursued us. One Sioux was in advance and called upon me to stop, and as I stopped he fired at me but missed me, and then I fired and killed him. The Sioux then rushed on me so that I could not scalp the Sioux I had killed. We ran on into the mountains and escaped into another fort. In this last fort one of the Gros Ventres was shot and wounded. After we had rested a while the Sioux surrounded us again, and I rushed out at the Sioux so that my friends might escape again. While we were retreating again the Sioux shot one of the Gros Ventres through the leg, and he had to crawl on his hands and knees. I stayed with this wounded man, and the rest made their escape. I took this man on my back and carried him to some water at the head of a coulee. This Gros Ventre told me to go on and make my escape and leave him alone to die. While we were resting in the weeds at the washout the Sioux surrounded us again and waited for us to show ourselves. While we were waiting my wounded friend gave me his knife and paint and told me to tell his mother that she might have all his horses; then I jumped out and ran to catch up with my friends. After I had left my wounded friend about a quarter

of a mile I looked back to see how the Sioux would treat him. There was one shot fired, and they all jumped into the wash-out, and then I made my escape. This gave me a great name in my tribe and among the Sioux and the Crows.

“Once on Tongue River there was a white soldier of the United States troops whom the Indians called Bear Shirt; he wore long hair like Custer. I was with him scouting for him. We called him Bear Shirt because he used to wear a bear coat. We came upon a band of Sioux, and there was a fight. This was a long fight, and there were many killed on both sides. In this fight when the Sioux got the best of the soldiers and the soldiers retreated, I stayed behind to protect them. The soldiers were so tired they could not run, and the Sioux killed off those who were too tired to run. I remained in the rear to protect them until they came to the main body of troops. When we were rested we went back to the main body of the Sioux and had another long fight and fought until sundown. There were a great many killed on both sides. We camped right where we quit fighting. The next morning we started to fight again and fought all day; again many were killed on both sides. The next day we went over the two battlefields and gathered up the dead soldiers and buried them. These battles were on Tongue River. After we had buried the soldiers I came back with the rest

of the troops as far as the Yellowstone, and then went home." And yet such heroisms wrought out in lonely mountain fastnesses or on sun-parched plains will go unhonoured and unsung.

CHIEF TIMBO

Chief Timbo, known as Tah-cha-chi, or Hairless, ranks as one of the leading chiefs of the Comanche Indians. With his stature of more than six feet, he is a commanding figure among any Indians. The portrait of Timbo reveals the striking difference to be found in the physiognomy of the southern tribes as compared with the northern tribes of the Plains Indians. In the photogravure presented Chief Timbo holds a long steel-headed spear, girdled with varicoloured beads, ornamented with great tufts of eagle feathers, and at the end of its ten feet of length bearing a picturesque plume. This staff descended to Timbo from Quannah Parker, once the leading chief of the Comanches. Chief Timbo brought this insignia of office from the southland to the council of the chiefs. In his own tribe the possession of such a mace answers among the Indians for the sceptre of a monarch. It is a coup stick with manifold emphasis. Chief Timbo accompanied the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Apache chiefs to the council. They came as brothers, but no fierce fighting among these warlike tribes found a stronger or more