

# The Crows and the Little Bighorn, 150 Years Later

## Symposium

April 9-10, 2026

Selected Quotes and Citations

**Joe Sills, Jr., “The Crow Scouts: Their Contribution in Understanding the Little Big Horn Battle.” *Fifth Annual Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association Symposium June 1991 (Hardin, Montana: CBHMA, 1992), 12.***

We are then left with a convoluted story, difficult to smooth out. As one historian noted, “...we really don’t know if we are presented with the actual response of the individual scout, for we deal always with someone’s notes of someone else’s interpretations. At this point, all we can do is remember that we may not be dealing with the answers given to the questions asked.”

**Private August Seifert, K Company, Benteen’s Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> U. S. Cavalry, interview with Walter Camp. *Camp on Custer: Transcribing the Custer Myth.* Edited by Bruce R. Liddic and Paul Harbaugh. The Arthur H. Clark Company, Spokane, Washington. 1995. 71-72.**

“I saw White Swan near the river and on the west side, in the bottom, fighting a half dozen Sioux, and he was hit several times. Some men ran down the bluff and fired and the Sioux withdrew. This was after Reno retreated out of the valley, so White Swan must have retreated after Reno’s men did. White Swan did not want to leave the bottom but wanted to stay and fight.”

**Pretty Shield, Crow medicine woman, testimony to Frank B. Linderman and published in 1932 as *Red Mother* and subsequently republished as *Pretty Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows* in 1972 by Bison Books.**

"But I know only what my man, Goes-ahead, told me after the white man's war was finished. Anyhow more than a hundred, perhaps nearly one hundred and fifty, of our young men went away with this Shoshone wolf that Three-stars had sent to our village. [Plenty-coups says one hundred and thirty.] Plenty Coups, who was then a young chief, and very brave, carried the pipe for these Crow wolves. Besides Plenty Coups, there were Flathead-woman, Medicine-crow, and Alligator-stands-up, all strong leaders and brave men, who went with the others to help Three-stars, the blue soldier chief, who was waiting for them on Goose creek.

"I cannot tell you about the fighting. I remember that they brought Bull-snake back to us badly wounded, and that many blue soldiers who had been with Three-stars were killed. I remember, too, that we moved our village to Yellow-willows [near Powell, of today] to be out of the way. There were not many young warriors left with us. There were many old men and some young boys, so that we kept rather quiet in the village at Yellow-willows until our men returned. It was here at this camp on Yellow-willows that the Crow warriors who had been with Three-stars

reached us, after the fighting. The big village that had been so quiet now became lively again. And how quickly the women looked to see if their men had come back to them."

"Yes, a Crow woman fought with Three-stars on the Rosebud, two of them did, for that matter; but one of them was neither a man nor a woman. She looked like a man, and yet she wore woman's clothing; and she had the heart of a woman. Besides, she did a woman's work. Her name was Finds-them-and-kills-them. She was not a man, and yet not a woman," Pretty-shield repeated. "She was not as strong as a man, and yet she was wiser than a woman," she said, musingly, her voice scarcely audible.

"The other woman," she went on, "was a wild one who had no man of her own. She was both bad and brave, this one. Her name was The-other-magpie; and she was pretty.

"I have said that I know nothing about the fighting on the Rosebud, except what my man, Goes-ahead, told me. When I saw the big party of Crow wolves, who had been with Three-stars, coming back from the war, they were all singing. This told us that they had been lucky. I saw the two women, Finds-them-and-kills-them, and The-other-magpie, riding and singing with them. Finds-them-and-kills-them had a gun, and The-other-magpie a long coup-stick, with one breath-feather on its small end.

"During the fight on the Rosebud both these women did brave deeds. When Bull-snake fell from his horse, badly wounded, Finds-them-and-kills-them dashed up to him, got down from her horse, and stood over him, shooting at the Lacota as rapidly as she could load her gun and fire. The-other-magpie rode round and round them, singing her war-song and waving her coup-stick, the only weapon she had. When the Lacota, seeing Bull-snake on the ground, charged to take his scalp, The-other-magpie rode straight at them, waving her coup-stick. Her medicine was so strong that the Lacota turned and rode away; and Bull-snake was saved. All the men saw these things, and yet they have never told you about them.

"Both these women expected death that day. Finds-them-and-kills-them, afraid to have the Lacota find her dead with woman-clothing on her, changed them to a man's before the fighting commenced, so that if killed the Lacota would not laugh at her, lying there with a woman's clothes on her. She did not want the Lacota to believe that she was a Crow man hiding in a woman's dress, you see.

"Yes, Sign-talker, there was a woman and a half-woman who fought on the Rosebud with Three-stars. The woman, I remember, wore a stuffed woodpecker on her head, and her forehead was painted yellow. Her coup-stick was big medicine that day, and she rode a black horse. She went to the war because her brother had lately been killed by the Lacota. She wanted to get even, and she did. Riding straight at the Lacota, with only her coup-stick, she spat at them: 'See,' she called out, 'my spit is my arrows.' She rode against a Lacota's horse, even struck the Lacota with her coup-stick, counting a coup on him, just as Finds-them-and-kills-them fired with her gun, and killed him. When the Lacota fell The-other-magpie took his scalp. She was waving it when I saw her coming into the village with the others. Yes, and I saw her cut this scalp into many pieces, so that the men might have more scalps to dance with."

"Now, after all this traveling around, I am coming to what you wished to know, the fight on the Little Bighorn. When Son-of-the-morning-star left the camp of the blue soldiers at the mouth of Tongue river he went up the Rosebud. My man, Goes-ahead, [Goes Ahead], White-swan [White Swan], Half-yellow-face [Half Yellow Face], Hairy-moccasin [Hairy Moccasin], White-man-runs-him [White Man Runs Him] and Curly [Curley] were his wolves. The country was filled with Lacota and Cheyenne. They were like ants on a freshly killed buffalo robe that is pegged to the ground. Of course the Crow wolves knew this by the sign that the enemy left, tracks, old fires, and

dead buffalo whose meat had been but half taken, many such things that told the truth. Such things tell a good deal, show that men are traveling, and that they are in a great hurry to reach some place.

"My man, Goes-ahead, White-man-runs-him, and Hairy-moccasin, were ahead of Son-of-the-morning-star and his blue horse-soldiers. Half-yellow-face, who was my uncle, and carried the pipe [commanded], and Curly were with Son-of-the-morning-star. Curly said that he was sick, and I guess he was. Maybe what he knew was ahead of him made him sick. It was enough to make anybody feel a little like lying down for a while.

"My man, Goes-ahead, told me that he felt afraid when he saw so many lodges. He, with the two others, Hairy-moccasin, and White-man-runs-him, turned here, going up the creek that white men call Reno. They met Son-of-the-morning-star coming down this creek, and told him what they had seen. They said that there were more Lacota, more enemies, than there were bullets in the soldiers' belts, that there were too many to fight.

"But Son-of-the-morning-star was going to his death, and did not know it. He was like a feather blown by the wind, and had to go."

"Reno, the little soldier chief, crossed the river and began shooting. Then he ran away, because he saw how the fight would end. Anybody would have known its end, anybody.

"My man, Goes-ahead, was with Son-of-the-morning-star when he rode down to the water of the Little Bighorn. He heard a Lacota call out to Two-bodies, who rode beside Son-of-the-morning-star, and say, 'Go back, or you will die.'

"But Son-of-the-morning-star did not go back. He went ahead, rode into the water of the Little Bighorn, with Two-bodies on one side of him, and his flag on the other -- and he died there, died in the water of the Little Bighorn, with Two-bodies, and the blue soldier carrying his flag.

"When he [Custer] fell in the water, the other blue soldiers ran back up the hill. It was now that my man, Goes-ahead, ran fast. He told me that the fighters were so many, and so crazy, that in the thick dust and powder-smoke, anybody might easily have run away. So he, White-man-runs-him, and Hairy-moccasin, ran when they saw Son-of-the-morning-star fall into the water, with Two-bodies and the blue horse-soldier that carried his flag. My man, Goes-ahead, showed me where Son-of-the-morning-star fell into the water. [Note: Mitch Boyer, or Mitch Bouyer, called Two-bodies by the Crows, was a half-breed interpreter for the Crow scouts.]

"They ran up the little creek that comes into the Little Bighorn just above the spot where Son-of-the-morning-star fell down from his horse. I will take you there, and show you. They kept running fast until they came to the packers, who had all the blue soldiers' bullets and grub. My man, Goes-ahead, said that when he got there with Hairy-moccasin and White-man-runs-him the packers had formed a circle with their pack-train, and that the mules were falling dead, that bullets were coming like rain, and that he, with the two other Crow wolves, stopped there to help the packers fight. They dug pits there, and beside these holes, the dead mules stopped many, many bullets. My man, Goes-ahead, said that, with the packers, they killed more Lacota and Cheyenne than the blue soldiers did."

"The sun was more than half way between the middle of the sky and the world when the yelling and shooting stopped," she said, evenly. "It was now that White-man-runs-him spoke in Crow to my man, Goes-ahead, and Hairy-moccasin. 'We had better get away from here before the enemy charges this place,' he said.

"Our village was on Arrow creek [Pryor] when these Crows came to us. When our wolves saw them they signaled that the Lacota were coming. A warparty rode out to meet them, and even attacked them, by mistake. My man, Goes-ahead, had to kill two of their horses before the Crow

war-party saw its mistake and stopped its foolishness. By this you can see how nervous my people were during these days of trouble. Everybody looked exactly like a Lacota to us.

"This time the home-coming of our warriors was not a happy one. I saw my man, Goes-ahead, and felt glad; but when the men who had been to war told us that Half-yellow-face and White-swan were dead, my heart fell down to the ground. They were both good, brave men, and besides, Half-yellow-face was my uncle, my father's brother. The mourning was terrible to hear. The relatives of the two missing men gave away all their horses, and clothing, cutting themselves on their arms and legs and heads until they were bloody all over. But when my father began to mourn for his brother, Half-yellow-face, my man, Goes-ahead, stopped him. 'Wait four days,' he said, 'and then if your brother does not return I will mourn with you.'

"When Half-yellow-face and White-swan got back we heard their story, and it was like hearing the dead speak, because we thought they had been killed. They said that they had not understood, and had gone with the little chief [Reno] by mistake. They were with him until his men came to the big Lacota village, until the little chief's men got off their horses to shoot, and until one of the littler chiefs tried to get back onto his horse, and got dragged. He let his foot go clear through the stirrup, and his frightened horse ran away, dragging him. When Half-yellow-face and White-swan saw this they knew it was bad medicine. They saw how things were going to end, as anybody could; and then they ran to a hole in the hill. My man, Goes-ahead, showed me this hole, and so did my uncle, Half-yellow-face; and I will show it to you.

"It was here (Little Bighorn) that White Swan got shot in the hand. His hand was never any good after that day. He was also shot in the foot and in the shoulder. But the bullet only burned his shoulder, making a bloody mark there that was not bad. "They kept running fast until they came to the packers, who had all the blue soldiers' bullets and grub. My man, Goes Ahead, said that when he got there with Hairy-moccasin and White-man-runs-him the packers had formed a circle with their pack-train...and that he and the other two Crow wolves, stopped there to help the packers fight. They dug pits there..."

"They cut across Reno Creek, following it upstream until they reached the pine trees. Here they saw four Lacota [sic] wolves who had been sitting on the high hills to watch for more blue soldiers. They had not been in the fighting. One of those Lacota wolves was quite a way behind the others. He was riding a gray horse, leading a sorrel mule that must have gotten away from the soldiers. My man, Goes-Ahead, killed this Lacota, and scalped him."

**Elbridge Ayer Burbank Collection. Correspondence to his uncle, E. E. Ayer. Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. Crow Agency August 21, 1897, pp 1-2:** "Have painted two pictures of White Swan front view and profile he has made me several large drawings colored of the part he took in the Custer fight with Reno. All of the scouts deserted Reno except White Swan and he stuck by him. He had got some terrible wounds. White Swan made me a present of the drawings."

**Second Lieutenant Charles A. Varnum, Company A, US 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, commanding Detachment of Scouts, US 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Little Bighorn campaign in a letter to Walter M. Camp, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1909. Walter M. Camp field notes, folder 65, BYU Library. See also *On the Little Bighorn with Walter Camp: A Collection of W. M. Camp's Letters, Notes and Opinions on Custer's Last Fight* compiled and edited by Richard G. Hardorff and published by Upton &**

Sons, El Segundo, CA in 2002. See pages 50-52. Also *Custer In 76: Walter Camp's Notes on the Custer Fight* edited by Hammer and published by University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. Pages 59-60.

"I left as directed taking Boyer, Charlie Reynolds, five Crows (Half Yellow Face being still away) and eight or ten Rees...The Crows were angry mad that he (Custer) had lit fires. Boyer (Mitch Bouyer) said that White Swan, who seemed to be a sort of leader, wanted us to try and cut them (Lakota scouts) off..."

"I crawled up (the hill) and watched the valley till the sun rose. All I could see was the two lodges. The Crows tried to make me see smoke from villages behind the bluffs on the Little Big Horn and gave me a cheap spy glass but I could see nothing."

**Brave Bear's narrative is contained in a letter written by George Bent, addressed to George Hyde and dated March 8, 1906. It is collected at Brigham Young University as item MSS SC 860. See also *Indian Views of the Custer Fight: A Source Book* by Richard G. Hardorff, The Arthur Clark Co. Spokane, WA 2004, p 81 – 86.**

"Two Crow scouts of Custer came charging towards me. I also charged on them. When I got near them they both jumped off their horses and got on [the] side of their horses so they could shoot better. Just then [a] lot of warriors rushed up to count "coe" [coup] on them, but I was first to count "coe" [coup] on one. This gave me [a] big honor or big name by counting first "coe" in [the] Custer battle." **NOTE:** Brave Bear here describes his encounter with White Swan that left White Swan stunned from a glancing lance blow to his forehead. The semi-circular scar on White Swan's forehead is clearly seen in Reverend Petzholdt's portrait.

**Hairy Moccasin, *The Custer Battle Book* by Herbert Coffeen, A Reflection Book, Carlton Press, Inc., New York, 1964 p 48**

When we separated Half-Yellow-Face and White Swan were ordered to go with Reno. Goes-Ahead, White-Man-Runs-Him, Curley and myself were ordered with Custer. We came down and crossed Reno Creek. Mitch Boyer was ahead with the four scouts right behind. Custer was ahead of his command a short distance behind us. Custer yelled to us to stop, then told us to go to the high hill ahead (the high point just north of where Reno later entrenched). From here we could see the village and could see Reno fighting. He had crossed the creek. Everything was a scramble with lots of Sioux. The battle was over in a few minutes. We thought they were all killed.

**Sheridan's Report: July 20, 1877. Graham, W. A., *The Custer Myth: A Source Book of Custeriana*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1986). 373-375.**

"Lieut. Doane had kindly sent with me the Crow Indian named Curly who has claimed to be the only person who escaped from Col. Custer's party, and also Half-yellow Face, another Crow Indian who accompanied Maj. Reno in his attack on the village, in the hope that by going over the ground with them some intelligible account of the massacre might be obtained...I soon became

fully convinced that he had run away before the fight really began and that the greater portion of his tale was untrustworthy. Half-yellow Face was of no more account to me than Curly and I therefore gave up the idea of obtaining from these Indians any account of the battle." Captain Michael V. Sheridan.

***Sheridan Post (Sheridan, Wyoming), May 21, 1903, page 8, column 1, "Events of the Week."***

"'White Swan,' a Crow who fought with Custer at the time of the massacre, and 'No Flesh,' a Sioux who was with Sitting Bull in the fight, are in Sheridan this week. They are now good friends."

**Elbridge Ayer Burbank Collection. Correspondence to his uncle, E. E. Ayer. Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. Crow Agency August 15, 1897, pp 1-4.**

He (White Swan) had a picture finished where he was on a horse and has killed a Sioux who is on another horse. He has the Sioux falling from his horse dead. Shortly after the picture was finished a Sioux Indian came in the room (The Siouxs come here to visit the Crows every Summer) The Sioux had also been in the Custer fight and White Swan showed him the picture of the dead Sioux. It was laughable to see them. White Swan had the best of it in the picture but finally the Sioux reminded White Swan of his wounds. He has a terrible wound on his forehead where a Sioux had struck him with a tomahawk, but soon White Swan rolled a cigarette\* and they both smoked the same cigarette.

**Herbert Coffeen, *The Teepee Book, June 1916, (Sheridan, Wyoming: Herbert Coffeen, June 1916). 54-55. "Statement of Hairy Moccasin."***

At that time I was twenty-four years old, and was an enlisted scout under Gen. Custer's command. Mitch Boyer was our interpreter. I was sent ahead. Custer said, "You go and find that village." I went to a butte at the head of Reno Creek, from where I could see the village. I reported the camp to Custer. He asked if any were running about away from the camp. I said "No." We then came on down to the forks of Reno Creek. When we stopped there to divide up I could hear the Indians in camp shouting and whooping.

When we separated Half-Yellow-Face and White Swan were ordered to go with Reno. Goes-Ahead, White-Man-Runs-Him, Curley and myself were ordered with Custer. We came down and crossed Reno Creek. Mitch Boyer was ahead with the four scouts right behind. Custer was ahead of his command a short distance behind us. Custer yelled to us to stop, then told us to go to the high hill ahead (the high point just north of where Reno later entrenched). From here we could see the village and could see Reno fighting. He had crossed the creek. Everything was a scramble with lots of Sioux. The battle was over in a few minutes. We thought they were all killed.

We four scouts turned and charged north to where Custer was headed for. Three of us stopped to fire into the village. We saw no more of Curley after that. I don't know where he went. When we met Custer he asked, "How is it?" I said, "Reno's men are fighting hard." We went with the command down into a dry gulch where we could not see the village. Custer told

Mitch Boyer to tell us to go back to the pack-train, which we did. We met Benteen's command just south of where they afterward entrenched. We said to Benteen, "Do you hear that shooting back where we came from? They're fighting Custer there now."

We started to leave Benteen to join the Ree scouts, who were quite a way back up the creek, but Benteen told us to stay, and we did. We went with him and helped dig entrenchments. The firing seemed to stop where Custer was, and the Sioux came toward us. Then Reno's command came back where we were entrenched.

Just before sundown the enemy drew off. We had been fighting quite a while. We three scouts got away and rode till we came to the Bighorn, but did not cross that night. It was dark and raining. The next morning some Crow scouts of Bradley's command came along and followed us, where we had crossed the river. They joined us and we all rode to the main Crow camp, two sleeps away on Pryor Creek. This is the way it happened just as near as I can remember.

**Herbert Coffeen, *The Teepee Book, June 1916, (Sheridan, Wyoming: Herbert Coffeen, June 1916). 57-58. "Statement of Goes Ahead."***

EARLY IN THE spring of 1876 a cryer was heard throughout the camp calling for volunteer scouts for Gen. Custer's chase of the then war-like Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. Picked men were called out: I was one of the unlucky braves.

Our duty was scouting on either side of the Yellowstone, far and wide. One day a steamboat glided up the Yellowstone and launched near where Custer's junction is now. I was one of the six called out to go into the ship to Gen. Custer [Crow name - Child of the Stars.] We were under the great chieftain, Gen. Geo. A. Custer. He told us that he had sent for us, and that we were very prompt; that it was good to be there and ready; that those dark people were there to be cooks for us; that he had selected the Crows for scouts because he knew from a good source that they were very familiar with the country, and very alert.

We began our scouting for the General from the first. We found the first camp of the Cheyenne and Sioux quite a way up the Rosebud. The signs at the deserted village showed that there must be over one hundred buffalo teepees. The trail of the fleeing Indians leading up the Rosebud and to the Little Big Horn country was as clear to us as the roads are today. About the time that the Indians build their camp-fires in the morning, which is very early, we went to a high butte in the Wolf Mountains and saw with our telescopes herds of horses grazing near where Garry Owen is now. The smoke from the camp-fires seemed like a great mist hanging over the entire Indian camp.

Finally, at the main fork of Reno, Custer gave orders to his command for the last time. It was plain that he was outnumbered, but he was fearless. One division of his troops under Reno was sent to attack the Indian camp from the upper end and Gen. Custer and his division was to attack from the lower end. Custer was brave, so it was no time for him to back out. He led his men to where he was repulsed and driven to where the Custer Monument now stands.

We scouts went as far as the bluffs before the trenches of the pack-mules. Here we were told to make our escape. We took a drink of water near there and made haste to be away with our lives.

It was sunset when we got to the black horse riders at Reno's entrenchments. We journeyed all the night toward the mouth of the Little Big Horn. Before daybreak we got across

the Big Horn near the mouth of the Little Horn. My attention was called to look back from where we came. To my surprise I saw some one trailing us. We told them of the ill-fated general and his men. We pointed back in the direction of the fight, where the smoke still hung like a vast cloud. Gen. Gibbon told us through an interpreter that we could go home. The Crow camp was finally located, but we had a hard fight before we finally knew each other to be Crows. We altogether got in camp hearing nothing but joy-songs for the return of the warriors, and the weeping for the lost ones.

**Herbert Coffeen, *The Teepee Book, June 1916, (Sheridan, Wyoming: Herbert Coffeen, June 1916).* 52-53. "Statement of White Man Runs Him."**

In 1876, I was enlisted with others as a scout under Gen. Gibbon. At that time I was twenty-two or twenty-three years old. Gen. Custer was on a boat close to the mouth of the Rosebud, and asked for a detail of scouts. I was on this detail.

"I went with Custer and did scout's duty; looked for tracks and trails; went on hills and looked for smoke. At the head of Reno Creek we came to a butte from which we saw the village. We went down the creek to the forks, where we separated, the scouts going with Custer to the right, Reno going to the left.

"We followed down the creek and went on a high ridge from where we could see the village. We fired on them, then went to join Custer, who had been behind us and to the east. We went with Custer down a dry gulch to near the river. Near the mouth of the gulch some dismounted and fired into the village. There were a good many Sioux around firing at us. Mitch Boyer said that Custer had told us to go back to the pack-train and we went. As we went back lots of Sioux were around and shot at us. When we met the pack-train I told one of the officers of a good place to entrench, and we went there and built entrenchments.

"Toward sun-down we got away and rode through some sharp buttes where a good many Sioux fired at us. We killed one of them. We kept on and came to the Big Horn near the mouth of the Little Horn. It was raining and very dark and muddy. Part of Gibbon's command were coming up the east side of the river. We told them the camp was up the river, and that they were fighting hard. We told the scouts to come with us to the Crow camp to get fresh horses, so we could come back and join the command. We told them they would get killed if they went to the Sioux camp. They went with us and we traveled till we reached the Crow camp on Pryor Creek.

"Before the battle La Forge sent us down Powder River to look for Custer. We found him near the mouth of the river. I was the first Crow to shake hands with Gen. Custer. There was a packer there who talked a little Crow. Custer said that he was glad to see us Crows, that we were working to one end. That was when I was first called 'Custer's Friend.'"

**Herbert Coffeen, *The Teepee Book, June 1916, (Sheridan, Wyoming: Herbert Coffeen, June 1916).* 56. "Curley's Statement"**

What I am going to tell is just short. I don't know much about it, but I will tell you all I know. I was never where most of the □soldiers were; I was always with Custer's outfit. I knew the Chief with the long whiskers and I knew Custer's brother. I also knew the one who called the bugle.

We met the camp before ten o'clock in the morning. Just before we got to the camp, there was one band that went one way, and the other band went the other way. I don't know anything about the other band because they were away across the river.

On my side I have told you all I know. The bugler got killed in the camp. Some of them got killed in the river-. They (the Sioux) would not let the soldiers cross the river. There were too many of the Sioux.

The soldiers got down to the ground by this river but could not get across, so turned and ran back up the hill. The soldiers did not know much about fighting. Those white people know more about fighting than the soldiers did. All the soldiers were killed before ten o'clock.

"Just before they got all the soldiers killed, and there were just a few of them left, my horse was a pretty good runner and he ran off. I was just a young fellow, and Custer told me to run off, and I did run off. I was only sixteen or seventeen and didn't know much about fighting at that time. If I had been older when they had the war I might have done something and had I had been older I wouldn't have run off; I would have stayed there and got killed. I had to run away. They did not chase me. I went east of the Agency, where the big pines are, and stayed there. After I got off the high hill, I rode to where the steamboat was. I brought the letter over to where they had the fight; brought it from the big chief back to where they had the war."

**Herbert Coffeen, *The Teepee Book*, (Sheridan, Wyoming: Herbert Coffeen, November-December 1915, pages 26-29, "Recollections of a Famous Fight Told by White Swan thru an interpreter." NOTE: This interview was done in 1903 at the time of the Sheridan Fair. The interpreter was Spotted Horse.**

He says the way he go he go up there where they camp right there at the mouth of the Rosebud and there was some troops came along there and got six of them. There were five Indians and one white man live there, white man that could talk Indian. They took the six of them and took them down to the river.

He says they found where the Cheyennes were camped and then they trailed them up the creek and they all got there just about noon right where the Cheyenne Reservation is now, and they camped them there and told them that as soon as night came they were going to fight and surprise them. He said that day when they were stopping there, there was a fellow came with a message. He says he don't know the man and he don't know where the note came from. He says they told him they were fight the second night fore that come.

He said that night after they got their supper they gave them some ammunition and they told them to saddle up and him and another Indian they took the lead. (Blue Moccasins.) They went in the lead and they stop right there where they see the Cheyennes went down. See right where they were dragging their poles. They stop just about half way between the Little Horn and where the agency is. And they stop there and just as they laid down they heard dog barking and a horse snorting. He said that the man there at the head of the troops, he's a cripple. that morning just about day break they got up there and they see the Cheyenne camp.

The General was standing on the hill and looking over with his field glass. The man that was at the head of the troops then he had all the horses out on the flat and he told all the troops to get ready and they would make a charge on them while they were sleeping. He said there were 800 men and horses and they were going to make the charge and they had about 100 mules and they left them behind.

He says that morning when they were galloping out there toward the camp to make the charge he and another Indian were on one side and just as they were there to where two Sioux come from other side and they run right into each other and they run one way and the Sioux the other and the Sioux were hollering and waked the Sioux up and soon as they woke up they got their horses, and they went back to General Custer.

And he says that after they got them close to the river another fellow took 300 of the soldiers and took them on the other side of the river and took them this way and he took one Indian Curley, and he want to take all these Crows cross but they all slipped from him but him and run away. It was Reno who took these men along this side of the river.

There was several men along with him must have been about 300 men that went cross the river to the Sioux camp. And they fought and they fought them back and them had their mules killed and they piled them round and fought over them and they fought there a day and a night and there was only about 30 left and then he said they were sent to the brush. He said when they were camped there in the brush he was wounded in the leg and after they got into the brush there and killed all their mules they were afraid of them and would not come near. He said that night after they had their 100 mules killed they took all the mules and fixed a kind of fence round and that morning they were laying there where there couldn't any bullets get to them and they fought all that night. He stayed with them that night and that day and that night again.

There was another Crow there, Blue Moccasin, and he said there were some others to be there. He says there were three, don't know what tribe it is, there was three Indians there were killed then but of some other tribe. He got wounded and beat up there and he did not know what happened after that. They took him for dead and left him there. Two parties of them Cheyennes, there was two reservations.

He does not like to be questioned because it makes him hot when all the others were killed. He said he have mule and horse killed then and he got shot in a blood vein there and he got weak losing so much blood he said there was a fellow where they were shot there he was shooting another direction and a Sioux came on this side of him and he turned over and shot him and the Sioux shot him in this place (the hand) and he would rather have been killed right there than to lose the use of his hand. He got up that night about midnight and he could not hear. He said he didn't know when he was struck on the forehead, and did not know when they got his gun. He says that they saw he didn't have any hair and that was the reason they didn't scalp him.

He was shot in three places and he got three scars and he got six bullets in his horse and himself and was hit in the head with a club. Some soldiers found him and they carried him to the fort and they doctored him. They start out for a Crow camp and there lots of soldiers there and hurt and they die and his medicine was so good that it saved his life. He was a scout, there were about 40 scouts (Crow) and the rest of them run off and this fellow stayed with the soldiers. Lots of soldiers killed and lots of fellows killed cause they wont run.

**Reverend and Mrs. James Gregor Burgess, interview of White Swan, 1894.  
Courtesy of National Park Service, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, the  
Walter Mason Camp Collection, "Interview with Burgess, J.S. White Swan's Story", LIBI  
12966. Four of five pages of this interview are in the National Monument archives. The  
fifth page is in the Walter M. Camp Collection, BYU Library, Box 2, Folder 16, nd.**

WS/: 8 circles of Sioux camps. Sioux nearest the agency. Jno. Westly. Cheyennes at No  
Shin Bones' later allotment.

Custer told Indians that if he was killed the whites would be all around them; but if he was not killed they would have lots of buffalo, and live in the old way.

Sioux, Cheyennes & Arapahoes engaged. Arapahoes at Medicine Tail's (encamped).

Burgess/: When did you enlist as a scout---under whom /?/

WS/: 30 Indians enlisted in infantry; went down to Yellowstone /Insert: mouth of Powder River/ to wait for Custer who with his men came up on three boats. All together 37 Crows, 3 interpreters. Went to junction of Tongue & Powder Rivers. There Custer bought the 6 Crows and one interpreter as scouts. Then they moved to Rosebud; the others went on down the Yellowstone to join Terry.

Sunday of Rosebud they did nothing, but allowed the Indian scouts choose any horse they liked, and told them if they were successful in the coming battle, that they might keep them. The camp was on an old camp /i.e., the ARMY camp was on an abandoned INDIAN campsite/.

Reno had had a battle, but was still following the Indians. (3 Stars) the Indians called him. In Reno's letter to Custer he said nothing of the large encampment of Indians, probably because he had not got so far, or they had been reinforced. /Rev. Burgess misunderstood, here: it was Gen. Crook who had had the battle with the Sioux, on the Rosebud River June 17th, and whom the Crows called "Three Stars", because of his insignia./

The cartridges were given out in the evening; and the scouts were in advance about 10 mi/les/ in the morning. White Swan saw the camp with his field glass, and he then went back to Custer and asked him to wait, and send 2 scouts to Terry who was coming up the Big Horn. Terry was to make a forced march up here. The Indians would see Terry, and attack him. Then Custer and his men would take the camp and everything, while the warriors were after Terry. Custer said, "No, I will do my own way. This is my last day." Custer had 500 men with him. At the last charge 300 were sent to take the Indian ponies. 100 were left with the mule train.

Camp of Sioux at /what is now/ the big farm. Reno attacked them. The camp was broken, and they reenforced the other camps, so strengthening the camp near where Custer attacked.

Custer sent W. Swan to look again. They wanted to attack the camp before they were up. W. Swan saw the ponies had been "let loose", showing that some of the Indians were up, as the ponies were kept tied during the night. Ponies turned loose at sunrise. He went back to Custer. They then made a charge on the camp.

The third time W. Swan came up with another Crow scout, they met two Sioux warriors near Cummings' /later homestead/. The Sioux run back and warned the camp. The warriors in a very short time had their horses, and were ready by the time Custer got there.

Custer had seen a man in the meantime running back and forth on the hills. He evidently was on guard. He was telling of the soldiers coming. Custer had divided his men. The 300 were sent ahead to attack the camp. W. Swan was with them who attacked the camp at Cummings'. Custer was then near Medicine Tail's /later allotment/ with the reserves.

The 300 were routed---all scattered. The 6 scouts were cut off and surrounded in a bend in the river. They threw up earthworks /insert: with knives/ to defend themselves (there were 4 Rees and 2 Crows). They stayed there all day /"till sundown" is lined out/, and all night.

When they were separated on their run to the river, W. Swan was shot through the wrist. /"After he was entrenched he was shot through the thigh" is lined out./ He must swim the river with his horse. His horse was shot. The other 5 scouts tried to make the hill where the soldiers were. The Siouxs chased them /insert: "the 5 scouts"/ back. Then as they passed on the run, W. Swan was able to get on behind one of the others; or rather the Indian dragged him on, and together with the others they got back to their earthworks. /Burgess, with an asterisk---apparently

to ask in a subsequent interview: Did they stay?/ Here W.S. was wounded through the thigh. He fainted, and was unconscious for most of the day. Here they were surrounded 5 times, and forced from their position. The last time he was shot in the thigh, they made a final stand.

At sundown the mule train came in. The scouts were taken, and together they went to the hills, the Sioux after them. This was the 5 time they were surrounded. They dug a pit for White Swan, and over him they planted the flag. They said as long as that floated, they would not leave each other.

This mule train was surrounded for 2 1/2 days. 75 soldiers wounded. 2 Sioux Indians killed. When the Sioux heard the whistle of the steam boats at what is now Ft. Custer, they all left, making a sweep across country toward the Big Horn Mts. Terry's cavalry came up and liberated them.

There were 23 Rees (and) 6 Crows who all deserted or were captured in the first charge. The Sioux left 2 big tents near Hoop On the Forehead's later allotment. They took all their killed, which amounted to 27. These men were all laid out on their blankets. When Terry's men saw them, they filled the tent with wood, and burned the bodies. They then went to work burying the soldiers.

Curley, who is White Swan's cousin, got the credit. He became frightened when the order was given to get ready for the charge. Curley escaped into the hills among the pines. He saw nothing of the fight. He came back after Terry came—3 days in the hills.

[Now page 5]

Terry took the wounded. His Dr attended them and they were carried on beds made by stringing canvass between two mules. There was a tall slim man who was not a soldier who was with Custer. He was killed with Custer. Had Custer made a stand on the plain with his men he would have held the Indians back.

Before they made the charge all the soldiers drank and W. Swan said they were crazy from drink so they were unable to shoot. The Indians did most of their fighting with arrows and spears had no ammunition but that taken from Reno's men. The second time the Scouts were driven out W. Swan was hit in the head with a tomahawk. He was able to kill the Sioux with his small gun.

Mrs Burgess found this the end of White Swans story today so I sent it on to you. It ought to fit onto what you have.

The fact of the Sioux being short of ammunition I had forgotten.

Hope to be in Chicago in April.

Yours truly  
J. G. Burgess

**Richard Upton, ed., comp., intro., *The Battle of the Little Big Horn: Custer's Last Fight Remembered by Participants at the Tenth Anniversary, June 25, 1886, and the Fiftieth Anniversary, June 25, 1926* (El Segundo, CA: Upton & Sons, 2006), 30.**

While we (Dr. Porter and group of friends) were examining the place (the Reno-Benteen position) and wondering what each of us would have done under like circumstances, a Crow Indian rode up on his pony, and in a moment had recognized Dr. Porter.

“How! How!” he exclaimed at the same time, insisting on shaking hands with the latter. He bared his arm, showing a frightful wound and also three other places on his person where bullets had left their marks.

“Are you White Swan?” asked the doctor.

“How! How!” replied the Indian.

“Well, I declare,” remarked Dr. Porter, “What strange things sometimes happen. This Indian was shot all to pieces in the fight, and I remember that I dressed his wounds for him with little hope at the time of his recovery. I have not seen him since the day we were cooped up on the hill over yonder; and here he comes, ten years later, in perfect health, hearty and strong, to remind me of that little service, and to thank me in his [own] way for what I did.”

**Minnie Reed Williams, “White Swan (Man-nah-shah),” unpublished manuscript for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) histories of Montana, about 1939-1941. Minnie Reed Williams Collection, LBH College Archives.**

“I was ten years old (1889) the one time I saw him. He was visiting my mother Yellow Medicine Flower. There was a family connection. My mother gave a feast in his honor. My mother with all Indian graciousness gave him special attention. Cutting his meat for him. Lifting his meat to him. Now and then putting a cup of coffee to his mouth. Due to and [sic] affliction it seemed...For some how he appeared different...For he was telling about soldiers, the Sioux Indians and a battle. Child like [sic] I was interested. My mother noticing my expression of awe, rushed me out doors to play with other children. Telling me at the same time, ‘Not to listen to older peoples talk.’ I knew then what White Swan was telling was to remain a secret.

“ About fifteen years ago a half heard [sic] story was vividly awakened when I heard his name. I wondered then if it was a myth...I once more became interested to learn the reason (of the secrecy) in all its details...For now the story truly becomes a Crow Indian legend.”

**Curley, Crow Scout, 30 September 1913, with Thomas Le Forge interpreting. Interview by Walter M. Camp. See Camp MSS, field notes, unclassified envelope 71, Lilly Library, Indiana University. See *Custer in '76: Walter Camp's Notes on the Custer Fight*, edited by Kenneth Hammer, University of Oklahoma Press, page 172.**

"The reason White Swan and Half Yellow Face went with Reno was that at about the time Custer left the divide, he ordered those two Crows to go to a certain high point on a butte and take a look. They did this, and instead of coming back to Custer and reporting, they went over to Reno's battalion and remained with him."

**Curley, Crow Scout, 19 July 1910 with Fred Old Horn interpreting. Interview by Walter M. Camp. See Walter Camp field notes, folder 6, BYU Library. See *Custer in '76: Walter Camp's Notes on the Custer Fight*, edited by Kenneth Hammer, University of Oklahoma Press, page 166, 171.**

“*Why not all six Crows?*” Custer had told Half Yellow Face and White Swan to go up on hill and take a look around, and instead of doing this they went with Reno. They were afraid and did not want to do as Custer ordered them. This was some little time after we had parted from Reno.” 166.

"White Swan, who was shot in the thigh and wrist stayed at Pease Bottom and doctor with him until his folks came after him. White Swan's horse was hit three times. White Swan was shot in the retreat of the Rees out of bottom." 171.

**Goes Ahead, Crow Scout, 5 August 1909, with Russell White Bear, Interpreter. Interview by Walter M. Camp. See Walter Camp field notes, folder 59, BYU Library. See *Custer in '76: Walter Camp's Notes on the Custer Fight*, edited by Kenneth Hammer, University of Oklahoma Press, page 174.**

"Half Yellow Face and White Swan went into the valley with Reno and had not got out when we left. White Swan was wounded in Reno's valley fight. All six Crows were on Crows Nest at daylight June 25."

***The Papers of Edward S. Curtis Relating to Custer's Last Battle.* Introduced and edited by James S. Hutchins. Upton and Sons, El Segundo, California, 2000. Chapter 3, "White Man Runs Him's Story of the Custer Fight as Recorded by Edward S. Curtis. Pages 51 – 54.**

"We five Crows (White Man Runs Him, Half Yellow Face, White Swan, Hairy Moccasin, and Goes Ahead) with Boyer went ahead of the Army...While the others slept Boyer and I climbed to the top and saw the Sioux...Custer told Paints Half His Face Yellow to go up and look for a crossing for Custer, but instead of doing so this man joined Reno and did not report to Custer..."

**Plenty Coups, Crow Chief. *Plenty Coups: Chief of the Crows* by Frank B. Linderman published by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE. 1962. Pages 174-176.**

"Of all those Crows who fought with Three-stars or went as Wolves with Son of the Morning Star, but fifteen are alive today. It is not good to speak their names or I would tell them to you." [this in response to Linderman's question about all the scouts with the 1876 forces]. 174.

I have forgotten the number of days after Three-stars fought on the Rosebud that the men who gone away as Wolves with The Other One and Son of the Morning Star came back to our village. We at first believed them Sioux, and a party of young warriors went out to meet them and give them battle. Quickly we saw that Half-yellow-face and White Swan were not with them and asked about them. 175.

White Swan had been so badly wounded on the Little Bighorn that the white soldiers had taken him away on a steamboat, (is this where the St Louis stories start?) and Half-yellow-face, refusing to leave him, had gone too. When finally Half-yellow-face came back to us, I learned what he saw on the Little Bighorn...It was then that the Son-of-the-morning-star sent Half-yellow-face with that other chief (Reno)...It was Half-yellow-face and White Swan who led many of that other chief's men into a safe place among the bushes. And it was they who, when at last night came, showed these soldiers where they could creep away and cross the Little

Bighorn to reach the chief who was on the hills with the rest of his men. Half-yellow-face and White Swan, who was badly shot, stayed in those bushes with the wounded white soldiers until The-other-one (Terry) came and relieved them all."

**Thomas H. Leforge. *Memoirs of White Crow Indian* (Thomas H. Leforge). Told by Thomas B. Marquis with an introduction by Joe Medicine Crow and Herman J. Viola. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln. A Bison Book. 1974.**

250-251: "I interpreted for Lieutenant Bradley when he interviewed Curly, several days after the Custer battle had occurred. He (Curly) was spoken of then as the 'sole survivor' of the disaster. But he himself did not lay claim to that kind of distinction. On the contrary, again and again during the long examination of him by Bradley, the young scout said, 'I was not in the fight.' When gazed upon and congratulated by visitors he declared, 'I did nothing wonderful; I was not in it.'...Romantic writers seized upon Curly as a subject suited for their fanciful literary purposes. In spite of himself, he was treated as a hero. He took no special pains to deny the written stories of his unique cunning. He could not read, he could speak only a little English, and it is likely he knew of no reason why he should make any special denial. The persistent claim put forward for him by others, but as though it came direct from him, brought upon him from some the Sioux the accusation, 'Curly is a liar; nobody with Custer escaped us.' But he was not a liar. All through his subsequent life he modestly avowed from time to time what he did to Bradley, 'I did nothing wonderful; I was not in the fight.' I knew him from his early boyhood until his death in early old age. He was a good boy, an unassuming and quiet young man, a reliable scout, and at all times of his life he was held in high regard by his people."

252-254: "My three Crow scouts and myself set out the following morning (July 4) to find the tribal camp...Arriving opposite the mouth of Pryor Creek, we saw the Crow lodges across the south side of the Yellowstone...My three Crow companions had receptions like mine." Using July 4 as the date since the casualties were disembarked on July 2, Leforge and the three arrived in the camp about the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>.

**George C. Berry, Corporal, Troop K, Seventh U.S. Infantry. *Winners of the West, September 28, 1942*. St. Louis, Missouri. G. W. Webb, publisher. "Campaigning with the Seventh Infantry in 1876." Found in Greene, Jerome A. *Indian War Veterans: Memories of Army Life and Campaigns in the West, 1864-1898*. New York, Savas Beatie. 2007.**

"Things moved pretty fast from this on. General Terry, Colonel Gibbon, and Colonel Custer met and formed a plan of battle, but I do know that we gave at least five of our scouts to Custer and they were George Herendeen, Mitch Boyer, Curly, Half Yellow Face, and Fighting Lion. This last Indian is not mentioned in any of the histories I have read of this battle, at least not by that name, but I speak of him as I knew him for the further reason that he was wounded in the charge down the river with Major Marcus A. Reno." Pp. 123-124 Greene, *Indian War Veterans*.

"I next found the Crow scouts that Colonel Gibbon had loaned to Custer, that is, those who fought with Reno. I found Half Yellow Face and Fighting Lion both together in a sort of tepee. Lion was trying to string some beads with one hand on his sore arm, as he had been wounded in the other arm and was putting the beads on his sore arm, while Half Yellow Face was outside of the tepee rounding up some ponies that he had captured." P. 127. Greene, *Indian War Veterans*.

**Major General Hugh L. Scott. Hugh L. Scott Papers. National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. "Joint Interview with White Man Runs Him and Curley by Major General Hugh L. Scott, U.S.A., Retired, August 1919."**

Curley: "We also met two groups of soldiers on the ridge just north of where Reno made his stand. We came back past the Arapahoe (note here that translation mistook Arikara for Arapahoe!) scouts but do not know what became of them afterwards. The Sioux did not follow Reno across the river at first. Their attention was turned to where some Crow and Arapahoe scouts were surrounded in the woods on the west side of the river. We stopped while they were doing this."

**Hagen, Barry J. "Exactly in the Right Place:" A History of Fort C. F. Smith, Montana Territory, 1866-1868. El Segundo, California: Upton & Sons, Publishers, 1999.**

143: "Long Horse brought him back the very next day, adding, for good measure, Pvt. Bernard Bravo of Co. E, who had deserted on 30 July and was now being returned from his third desertion.<sup>28</sup> Bravo had for some time been living in the Crow camp. He must have been a man of singular persistence, for even this was not his last desertion."

231: "One, however, Pvt. Bernard Bravo, was alive and could congratulate himself that on his fourth flight he had found the freedom from military life which he had craved. He did not run far, however, for the southeastern lands of Montana had put their stamp on Bravo's heart. Twenty years old when he deserted for the fourth and last time, this German-born lad won the heart of an Indian woman whom he later married."

***Goes Ahead, "Later Supplemental," The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign against the Hostile Dakotas, June 1876, edited by Orin Grant Libby, North Dakota Historical Collections, Volume 6, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismark, ND, 1920 p 157 – 160.***

He put his name down with the others. The soldiers were encamped where still water flows into the Yellowstone. They went on to where Powder River joins the Yellowstone. The Crows were on the north side of the Yellowstone and the soldiers wanted to cross but it was too high. General Terry had a canoe. Then a steamboat came up the Yellowstone, opposite the mouth of the Rosebud. Some of the Crow scouts got on this boat and went across. The roll was called at the bank at the boat for these Crow scouts. Six of them were called to go on board, Hairy Moccasin, White-Man-Runs-Him, Goes-Ahead, Curley, Half-Yellow-Face, White Swan. The boat went up a little way and landed the scouts. Their interpreter was Mitch Bouyer (Ka-pesh), a half-breed Dakota. He told them that when they went down below the mouth of the Rosebud they would see Arikara scouts.

When they came to this camp there was a big tent with a flag, and in it they met Custer. He shook hands with them and said, "We are glad to have you, we sent for you and you came

right away." Custer told them he was going to fight the Dakotas and Cheyennes and that he understood that the Crows were good scouts. "If we win the fight, everything belonging to the enemy you can take home, for my boys have no use for these things."

The next day they broke camp and went up the Rosebud until night. Next day they found where the Dakotas had their first camp, a very big one. They had had a sun dance, they could see the frame of the dance lodge. The third day they camped at what is now Busby School, the second camp on the Rosebud.

Just at dawn they reached Wolf Mountains, the sun was just coming up. Custer always warned them to look out for themselves, for every squad of soldiers had scouts and they might be mistaken for the enemy. Custer said to the six Crow scouts: "If nothing happens to me I will look after you in the future." From Wolf Mountains the Crow scouts were ahead but stopped a moment at the lone tepee. At White Rocks, Mitch Bouyer told them to go with Custer.

As Custer swung off from the trail after Reno left him to cross the upper ford there was an Arikara scout and four Crow scouts with him. Custer rode to the edge of the high bank and looked over to the place where Reno's men were, as though planning the next move. When they (Reno's column) had arrived at about the point where Lieutenant Hodgson's headstone was placed later, the three Crow scouts saw the soldiers under Reno dismounting in front of the Dakota camp and thought that the enemy were "too many."

Close to where Reno and Benteen later in the day were attacked by the Dakotas, on the ridge of hills above the river, the three Crow scouts were left behind and Custer's command went down the draw toward the lower ford on the run. Custer had told the Crow scouts to stay out of the fight and they went to the left along the ridge overlooking the river while he took his command to the right (Goes-Ahead is sure Curley, the Crow scout, was not with him).

At this point both Curley and Black Fox, Arikara scout, disappeared. Black Fox rode a bay horse and Curley rode a bald-faced pony with front white stockings and a D brand on the rump.

The three Crow scouts rode along the high ridge, keeping back from the view of the Dakotas till they came to the end of the ridge and to the bluff just above the lower ford. There they dismounted and fired across into the Dakota camp, the circle of tents they could see over the tree-tops below them. They heard two volleys fired and saw the soldiers' horses standing back of the line in groups.

Then in accordance with orders Custer had given them about staying out of the fight, they rode back along the ridge and met the Arikara scouts and packmules. They then rode away around the point of the highest hill, and along the ridge. After riding all night they reached the mouth of the Little Bighorn by daylight. Here Terry met them. He asked about Custer and they told him Custer had been wiped out. He asked them four times.

**“White Man Runs Him's Story of the Battle. A Crow scout's account of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.” As told to Col. Tim McCoy on the Custer Battlefield in 1919. Found in W. A. Graham, Colonel, *The Custer Myth: A Source Book of Custerania*, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Stackpole Co., 1953), p 20 – 24.**

I am an old man, and soon my spirit must leave this earth to join the spirits of my fathers. Therefore, I shall speak only the truth in telling what I know of the fight on the Little

Bighorn where General Custer was killed. Curley, who was with us, will tell you I do not lie. The scouts with General Custer were all Crows and Arikaras. Mitch Boyer, a half-breed Sioux, was Chief of Scouts. The Crow Scouts were Half Yellow Face, White Swan, Goes Ahead, Hairy Moccasin, Curley and I, White Man Runs Him.

On June 24th we were camped just below Busby, and Hairy Moccasin, Goes Ahead and I took some soldiers' horses and rode to a high point on the Divide between the Rosebud and the Little Horn. This place was used by the Crows as a look-out during campaigns, and from it you could see for miles around. In this hill was a pocket where horses could be hidden. We knew the trail and the way the Sioux were moving, but were not sure which way they went. When we reached the Crow look-out the light was not good and we could not see much, so we returned to camp and reported.

Just after sun-down Mitch Boyer and an army officer with a long mustache and large nose [Captain Varnum] left the camp with me and started back for the look-out. I know this country well, so I acted as guide. We followed down the Lodge Pole trail, which was the regular trail from the Rosebud across to the Little Horn, and reached the look-out about two o'clock in the morning. Our horses were led into the pocket where they were hidden, and we lay down to wait for daylight. As soon as it became light enough to see, we could make out smoke from the Sioux camp down in the Little Horn Valley and could see some white horses on the other side of the Little Horn River. We also saw two Sioux about one mile and a half west moving down Davis Creek toward the soldiers' camp and six other Sioux to the northeast over on Tullock Fork.

The soldiers had marched during the night and were now camped a little below us on Davis Creek. We could see the smoke of their camp-fires as they cooked breakfast. In a little while we saw the soldiers marching up Davis Creek, and Custer stopped opposite to our look-out. I went down and told him about the smoke we had seen from the Sioux camp. This was about six o'clock in the morning. Custer came up the hill far enough to see over and down the valley. When he saw the Sioux village, he said: "These people are very troublesome and bother the Crows and white people. I am going to teach them a lesson today. I will whip them and will build a fort at the junction where the Little Horn flows into the Bighorn, and you Crows may then live in peace." He said he would finish the Sioux trouble.

We scouts thought there were too many Indians for Custer to fight. There were camps and camps and camps. One big camp was in a circle near the west hills. I would say there were between four thousand and five thousand warriors, maybe more, I do not know. It was the biggest Indian camp I have ever seen. If we had not seen the two Sioux scouts earlier in the morning, I would have advised Custer to hide at this point all day, and then surprise the camp at night, but since these scouts had seen the soldiers it was no use to wait longer. I was one of the oldest of the scouts and did most of the advance scouting. I knew this country very well, so I told Custer he had better go down Ash Creek (Reno Creek), then he could wait this side of the Divide before going into the Little Horn Valley.

Custer moved forward, the soldiers going at a fast trot down Ash Creek. Our ponies were much smaller than the horses ridden by the soldiers, so we had to gallop most of the time to keep up. Custer followed down the Lodge Pole Trail, which goes down the North Fork of Upper Ash Creek. This trail comes from the Rosebud up Davis Creek through a pass to the North Fork of Upper Ash Creek, then down Ash Creek to the Little Horn River and is fairly smooth.

About nine miles down the Upper Fork of Ash Creek, we found a lodge with a dead Indian inside. He had probably died from wounds received in the battle with General Crook on the Rosebud June 17th.

Custer halted his command on a small flat about a mile and a quarter from the mouth of Ash Creek, and ordered Major Reno to swing out to the left, cross the Little Horn and attack the upper end of the Sioux village. He saw some dust rising near the mouth of the Creek and called Half Yellow Face, the leader of the Crows, to him and asked what the dust was. Half Yellow Face said: "The Sioux must be running away." But Custer said: "I will throw my left wing [Reno] south in case the Sioux should go that way." Then Reno moved out and crossed the Creek just below the flat. Custer then called White Swan and told him and Half Yellow Face to go over to the ridge and see what was going on in the Sioux camp. They started, but instead of going over to the ridge as they were told, they followed Reno, and that was the last we saw of them until the trouble was over.

Then Custer started moving toward the ridge. Mitch Boyer (Chief of Scouts) noticed the scouts whom Custer had sent to look over the ridge, had followed Reno, so he called Curley, Goes Ahead, Hairy Moccasin and me and said: "Let us go over to the ridge and look at the lodges." When we reached there, we saw that the lodges were over in the valley quite a ways down the river, so we moved on ahead, Custer following. This was about nine o'clock in the morning. Custer moved slowly, taking lots of time and stopping occasionally. He did not leave that place until Reno had started fighting.

Before Reno left Custer on the flat, another body of soldiers had been ordered away towards the left, but we were far in advance at that time, so I do not know where they went (This was Captain Benteen). Custer and his brother went to the right of us and halted on a small hill. His troops were moving forward below him. Custer turned around as he reached the top of the hill and waved his hat, and the soldiers at the bottom of the hill waved their hats and shouted. Custer then proceeded on up the ridge and his men followed. They were moving rapidly, and the scouts were forced to gallop their ponies sometimes to keep up with them.

At a certain point on the ridge they turned to the right and rode down a coulee in a northern direction. The scouts took up a position on the high bluffs where we could look down into the Sioux camp. As we followed along on the high ground, Custer had come down Medicine Tail Creek and was moving toward the river. The Indians saw him there, and all began running that way. There were thousands of them. Custer tried to cross the river at the mouth of Medicine Tail Creek, but was unable to do so. This was the last we saw Custer.

Mitch Boyer said to us: "You scouts need go no farther. You have guided Custer here, and your work is finished, so you had better go back to the pack-train and let the soldiers do the fighting." He (Mitch Boyer) said that he was going down to join Custer, and turning his horse galloped away. That is the last time we saw Mitch Boyer. He was killed with Custer over on the ridge. We went back along the ridge and found Reno's men entrenched there. We stayed there all afternoon.

It was very hot and the soldiers had no water. When they got very thirsty, some would volunteer to go to the river and fill the canteens. Many soldiers were killed trying to get water. After sun-down that night I slipped through the Indian line and swung around towards the north, and the next morning at day-break I was down where the Little Horn flows into the Bighorn River. There were some soldiers there (General Terry's) and their leader was an officer whom the Indians called "Man Without Hip" or "Lame Hip" (General Terry) and another officer whom the Indians called "White Whiskers" (General Gibbon). I told them all I knew about the fight, and that my clothes were worn out. I had no moccasins, so I was going home. The officers said all right and I rode on. I went to Pryor where the Crows were camped. When I came into camp, some of the Crows thought I was a Sioux and commenced shooting at me.

I have heard many people say that Curley was the only survivor of this battle, but Curley was not in the battle. Just about the time Reno attacked the village, Curley with some Arikara scouts ran off a big band of Sioux ponies and rode away with them. Some of the Arikaras, whom I met afterwards, told me that Curley went with them as far as the Junction (where the Rosebud joins the Yellowstone River). I did not see Curley again until the next fall, when I met him up on the Yellowstone in the camp of the Mountain Crows, so Curley did not see much of the battle.

I cannot remember every detail of the fight because there were so many things happening during the day and so much excitement that it is hard to remember little things, but I have tried to give a general outline of the campaign and have told only the things that I saw. I remember Custer well. The Indians called him the "Son of the Morning Star." He had long yellow hair, and at the time of the battle was dressed entirely in buckskin. If it were not for Mitch Boyer, who sent us back, Hairy Moccasin, Goes Ahead; and I too would be buried over on that ridge with Custer and his men. I have told you only the truth without trying to claim any credit myself, and Curley, who was with us, cannot deny the truth of my story."

**"White Man Runs Him and Curley's Battlefield Interview With General H.L. Scott: Two Crow scouts' account of the Battle of the Little Bighorn." From Gen. H.L. Scott's interview with White Man Runs Him and Curley on the Little Bighorn Battlefield on August 24, 1919. Found in W. A. Graham, Colonel, *The Custer Myth: A Source Book of Custeriana*, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Stackpole Co., 1953), 14 – 18.**

ON THE NORTH FORK OF UPPER RENO CREEK - White Man Runs Him: Custer followed down the Lodge Pole Trail which goes down the north fork of Upper Reno Creek, then down Reno Creek to the Little Horn River. The lodge where the dead Sioux was found was near where we saw the pack train. The trail often crossed the creek down the valley. Custer was led into the pocket near the last point north of the Wolf Mountains. It heads up near the lookout. Crook fought the Sioux village on the Rosebud and Custer followed the Sioux from the Rosebud. Custer came in a southwesterly direction through a pass to the head of the north fork of Upper Reno Creek. This pass follows up Davis Creek from the Rosebud and is fairly smooth. *Cha tish*: Crow word for the Wolf Mountains, or Wolf Hair Mountains.

AT THE POCKET BELOW CUSTER LOOKOUT - White Man Runs Him:

Q. Did Custer come in here himself? Show me where he came in.

A. Custer came up the valley from the other side but did not come in with the horses. The soldiers stopped this side of the creek north of the point. Custer did not climb clear to the top. He came up far enough to see over and down the valley.

ON THE RIDGE, THE POINT TO THE RIGHT WHERE THE SCOUTS FIRST CAME - White Man Runs Him:

Q. Who led the horses into the pocket? A. An Army officer (Varnum), Mitch Boyer and myself.

Q. Who was the guide? A. I was the guide.

Q. How did you know the place; is it such a good hiding place? A. I am acquainted with all the country here.

Q. How did you know you could see the Little Horn? A. The Crows often hid their horses here during the campaigns and I had been here many times before.

Q. There was water here? A. Not to speak of; just a little.

Q. What did you see when it became light? A. We could see the smoke from the camp of the Sioux in the Little Horn Valley. We also saw two Sioux out there by the lone tree. (Due west IV, miles. From this point we moved to a point to the left and by that time the Sioux had gone down Davis Creek toward the soldiers camp. The soldiers and the Sioux met.

Q. Where did Custer come? A. He came up Davis Creek and stopped opposite the point. We went down and told him about the smoke, and Custer came up part way, far enough to see the smoke.

Q. What time was that? A. The sun was just up; a little after 6:00.

ON THE POINT TO THE LEFT: CUSTER'S LOOKOUT - White Man Runs Him: The officer who led us into the pocket had a large nose and a long moustache.

Q. Could you see any horses? A. Yes, we could see some white horses on the other side of the Little Horn River. The horses were on the hills.

Q. Was it a clear day? A. Yes; nice and clear. We also saw 6 Sioux to the northeast over on the other side of Tullocks Creek.

Q. Any buffalo in the country then? A. Yes; the Sioux were hunting them and they were going ahead of the Sioux.

Q. Where were the buffalo? A. Over to the north and northeast on Tullocks Creek.

Q. Did you come up on the point with Custer? A. I went down and reported to Custer what we saw, and Custer came up to see.

Q. What did they call Mitch Boyer? A. Ca pay.

Q. What did the scouts say to each other up here on the point? A. I told Mitch Boyer it would be a good thing if they would hide here until night and then surprise the camp. Then the two Sioux appeared over there and I said we had better hurry and get over there just as soon as possible. We did not know whether Custer would listen, but if we hadn't seen the two Sioux we would have suggested to him to stay here all day and make a night march. I was judging from the Indian campaigns and warfare. Custer always advised them not to bother anyone and to keep out of sight if possible, but if the enemy saw them to go ahead and fire into them. If the Indians came up on them here, they could do nothing with them.

Q. What brought them here in the first place? A. We decided to come here when we were below Busby. We know this place. We knew we could see very far from up here. Night was coming on when we were at Busby. We reached here about 2:00 in the morning.

Q. Were you following any trail? A. We were trailing the Indians down the Lodge Pole trail and horse trail. This was the regular trail from the Rosebud over on to the Little Horn. On June 24, Hairy Moccasin, Goes Ahead and I rode some soldiers' horses and came to that peak and then rode back. The soldiers were just below Busby.

Q. What did you see? A. We were not sure whether the Sioux were camping there. It was late and we could not see so well. We knew the trail and the way the Sioux were moving, but were not sure which way they went. Mitch Boyer and the officer and I left Custer at Busby about sundown on the 24th. I was one of the oldest scouts and I did most of the advance scouting. I was very familiar with this country, so I knew the country well and I told Custer he had better go down Reno Creek and then he could wait this side of the divide before going into the Little Horn Valley. The soldiers moved fast down Reno Creek, their horses trotting all the time. Our ponies were loping most of the time.

The Sioux tell the story that the soldiers made their first appearance when the laziest were just getting up, about 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning. I do not know how long Custer left with his outfit, but I was with Reno and stayed there quite late; about 7 or 8, near sundown. Then I came

toward the east. The first time we stopped on the bluff when Mitch Bouyer left us to go to Custer, and before we returned to Reno those nearest began to run. Custer's men did not fire at all on this side. Custer believed that Reno's command was all killed because they were retreating into the bluff and the dust was flying. The scouts believed that Reno's outfit was all killed. It was hard to tell because the dust was flying and they were retreating so fast.

I know for sure that Custer went right to the river bank. I saw him go that far. The Sioux were right across the river. Then Custer fired. That was the first firing Custer did. If it wasn't for Mitch Boyer most likely I would be there with Custer buried, but Mitch Boyer told us to go back. There were only three of us, Hairy Moccasin, Goes Ahead and myself. We did not see Curley. Mitch Boyer told us to go back. He said "You go back to the pack train and let the soldiers fight."

We went back and met some soldiers and soon after that the pack train was there. If those soldiers hadn't turned back and been reinforced by the pack train they would all have been killed. The Sioux were coming up fast. Curley would have been one of the live ones because he was with the Arikarees and the horses. There were older men with me and they all said my story was true as much as they could remember in all the excitement; but I did not see Curley at all when he went back to the pack train. The Arikaras said they took the horses and went on to the Rosebud junction (near Lame Deer). When they left with the horses they hurried and by evening they were where the Rosebud flows into the Yellowstone. They said Curley was with them.

After the Sioux had killed all of Custer's men they had better guns and they came back and killed more of us than they did before. Hairy Moccasin and Goes Ahead say the same story as I tell. I tell the story from the scout's standpoint. While there were many things happened during the day, I try to tell a general outline of the campaign, but I cannot remember every detail. When we were fortified with Reno and the soldiers got real thirsty they would volunteer to get water and many were killed while getting the water. I left Reno and went down where the Little Horn flows into the Big Horn. The next morning I was there. It was just daybreak. I could see the soldiers just across there -- Terry's outfit. I was on the east side of the river and I saw the soldiers in a boat on this side of the river. We call General Terry, "Man without Hip," or "Lame Hip"; another officer we called "White Whiskers." I told them I had no more clothes and I had done lots and scouted and was going home. The officers said "All right" and I went on. I went to Pryor. They had another fight when I came into camp. The Crows thought I was a Sioux and commenced firing.

Q. When did you see Curley? A. I did not see Curley until next fall. That fall I saw Curley.

Q. Where? A. Up the Yellowstone in the camp of the Mountain Crows. Very soon after reaching home others and myself left the Crows again on a scouting trip. That was the reason I did not see Curley until in the fall.

Q. What did the Indians call Custer? A. They called him "Son of the Morning Star."

Q. How was Custer dressed? A. His hair was down to his shoulders. His hair was yellow. He wore buckskin. [Note this disagrees with what others like Lt. William Edgerly said, which was that he had his hair cut short before the expedition began.]

Q. What would you do if you had the troops and were going to fight the fight? A. That depends. If I wanted to surprise them I would attack by night, but if anyone saw me I -would hurry and get there and get an even fight, with them.

Q. Would you go all with Reno or all with Custer; or would you do just as Custer did? A. I would not split the command. Custer should have held his men together.

Q. You think he could have whipped them that way? A. He would have had a better chance. Some would have been killed, but not all. Custer was reckless. Instead of Custer going ahead and starting at the same time as Reno, Custer held back and did not start until he saw Reno fighting. That was poor generalship. We do not cut up our command when we fight and say "While you wait I will fight, and while I wait you will fight." If he had gone right down, there were plenty of places to ford just as well as at Reno Junction. I have been with other officers of the Army and they attacked differently than Custer did. It did not look right. It was just as if he said, "Reno, you go ahead and let them whip you and then I will go ahead and they will whip me." Only seven who crossed the river with Reno came out alive.

Q. What did Custer say when he saw the village? A. He looked over and said, "These people are troublesome and bother the Crows and the white people. I am going to teach them a lesson today. I am going to whip them and I will build a fort at the junction where the Little Horn flows into the Big Horn and you Crows may live in peace." He said he would finish the Sioux trouble.

Q. Did the Scouts think there were too many Indians for Custer to fight? A. Yes; from Garryowen down the valley were camps and camps and camps. There was a big camp in a circle near the west hills.

Q. How many warriors? A. I would say between 4000 and 5000, maybe more. You can ask Curley about that if you care to do so.

Q. Why did you leave Reno? A. Because I could get no water and I wanted to go down and get some water.

Q. Were the Sioux on this side? A. No; north, west and south. Only a few were on the east and I had a chance to get away.

Q. Who was with you? A. Hairy Moccasin and Goes Ahead.

Q. Did you walk? A. No; we were on horseback.

Q. Was it light or dark? A. It was just about sundown. It must have been about 8:00 o'clock.

Q. Where did Curley go? A. I do not know. The Arapahoes told me Curley went as far as the Junction (Rosebud and Yellowstone).

AT THE SITE OF THE LODGE WHERE THE SIOUX WAS BURIED - (Note: Located 9 miles down the north fork of Upper Reno from Custer's point. On a flat near where Upper Reno forks into the south and north streams.) White Man Runs Him: says "the lodge was not burned by the scouts but by the soldiers."

AT RENO'S BATTLEFIELD - White Man Runs Him:

Q. Where did the Sioux go when General Terry came up? A. They went up the Little Horn River.

Q. Did you find any dead bodies and evidence? A. I was not here then.

Q. Where did you last see Custer here? A. Over there when he was going down the draw where he made his first charge.

Q. Where did Reno go around the flat at the left of the divide? A. Out across the river at the mouth of Reno Creek near the present Spear Camp.

Q. Where did he dismount first? A. Just over the divide near the woods in the valley.

Q. Where did he cross coming back? A. No particular place. The soldiers stampeded and they scattered coming back. They crossed at the foot of the bluffs.

Q. Can you see where he fortified himself? A. Yes.

Curley: Q. Where was Custer when you saw Reno come across? A. Over the divide to the right of the first entrenchment. Custer saw the camp from the highest point on the ridge to the right of the first intrenchment. He just saw Reno going down the valley but did not see him come back.

Q. How far down the valley did Reno get? A. The Sioux met Reno's command where Garryowen now is.

Q. Where did he cross coming back? A. I do not know. I was not there to see them.

Q. Did you see a negro with them? [Isaiah Dorman] A. He was killed on the other side of the river.

White Man Runs Him: Curley left us up on Reno Creek. I do not like to quarrel with Curley, but that is the truth.

AT THE MOUTH OF CUSTER CREEK OR MEDICINE TAIL CREEK, 4 MILES FROM RENO'S INTRENCHMENT - White Man Runs Him:

Q. How far down here did Custer get? A. Right down to the river

Q. How far did they come? A. They came down the ravine to the river here and started back.

Q. What did the scouts do then? Where was Mitch Boyer? A. He was on that point there.

Q. Where was Curley? A. He was back on the ridge.

Q. Where did you go then? A. I went back.

Q. Why? A. Mitch Boyer said "You go back; I am going down to Custer."

Q. Did you see Reno go up on the bluffs then? A. No. I saw him fighting across the river but didn't know he had retreated back to the bluffs.

Q. When Custer came down here could he hear the shooting over there? A. Didn't pay much attention; everybody around us was shooting and no one could tell the place where most of the firing was done.

Crow Agency, Mont., August 25, 1919. I hereby certify that the foregoing account is correct as told by the two scouts on August 24, 1919. (Sig.) Russell White Bear

I hereby certify that the foregoing account in sixteen pages is as interpreted by Russell White Bear on August 24, 1919 (Sig.) Angela Buell