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SITTING BULL

THE COLLECTED SPEECHES

Compiled, Edited, Illustrated and with an Introduction by

Mark Diedrich

COYOTE BOOKS / ROCHESTER, MN

Dedicated to my old friend, Kirk P. Merchant, a Christian patriot, who died in Chicago of leukemia on July 14, 1998.

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Introduction: Sitting Bull

> *"Among other prominent Indians,.. [Sitting Bull] presents a stern and dramatic figure. He has been praised and censured, flattered and abhorred; called brave by some, cowardly by others. He is an anomaly.... [But] he presents one of the most picturesque characters among all our Indians in any period of American history." --Warren K. Moorehead*
>
> *"The man was an enigma at best." --Charles A. Eastman*

SITTING BULL *(Tatanka Iyotanka*--Buffalo Bull that Rests), of the Hunkpapa Teton Lakotas, along with Red Cloud and Crazy Horse, were among the best known American Indians of their day. Sitting Bull in particular inspired a love-hate reaction from Americans, who compared him to a wide variety of historical figures--military, political and religious. He was the Rob Roy of the Plains, The Generalissimo of the Warriors, Mohammed, a savage John the Baptist, Richelieu, The Red Napoleon, Bismarck, the Russian Schamyl, Hermann the Cheruscan, Robert Peel, the Numidian King Jugurtha and Rhoderick Dhu. Less flattering designations included, "Dark Savage," "the Great Napoleonic Bovine," *"Casus Belli,"* "Taurus Squatting" and "Recumbent Taurus." To General William T. Sherman Bull was a "humbug," and to General Philip Sheridan an "insignificant warrior." Other fantastic stories had him a West Pointer named "Bison," a disgraced English lord, a Sac and Fox Indian from Fort Garry or an Ojibway mixed-blood alumni of St. John's College named Charley Jacobs. Furthermore, some confused Sitting Bull with a chief of the same name, Sitting Bull, "The Good," or Drumpacker, of the Oglala Lakotas, who unlike his Hunkpapa counterpart signed the Treaty of 1868 and went to Washington in 1875. It was also said that Bull was the author of French and Latin poems, which were published in 1878 as *The Works of Sitting Bull!* What is particularly evident is that EuroAmericans, in their overwhelming need to feel superior to the "savage chief," had to either minimize his rights and humanity as an Indian, or account for his alleged capabilities by making him a white man, or at least a mixed-blood. As Stanley Vestal comments, "the public preferred to believe that no mere savage war-chief could have destroyed

their idol [Custer]." Joseph Manzione comments rightly, "The obvious slant in these pieces is often invidious and sometimes racist." Many Americans were greatly relieved when agent James McLaughlin spread the word that Sitting Bull was a coward after all and had run away from the Custer fight. Sitting Bull's true idealism, patriotism and heroism was stripped from him, even as the soldiers took his

horses, guns and freedom. Finally, General Sheridan was given the credit for making Sitting Bull a household name--after all it was he who had called the war of 1876, "Sitting Bull's War." All of this publicity created a mystique about Sitting Bull which accounts for his continued historical appeal but makes the real person difficult to know and characterize correctly.[1] (1914; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 190; (second quote) Charles A. Eastman, *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* (1918; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 107; Stanley Vestal, "The Works of Sitting Bull, Real or Imaginary," *Southwest Review* 19 (April 1934): 265-78; Evan S. Connell, *Son of the Morning Star* (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1991), 223-25; Joseph Manzione, *"I Am Looking to the North For My Life," Sitting Bull, 1876-1881* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1991), 10-12; *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press (SPMPP)*, August 12, 1876, October 26, 1877.

The points upon which all can agree are that Sitting Bull attained his reputation among the Lakotas and Cheyennes for his *wakan* power and his determination not to sell his lands to the U. S. government. And he attained his reputation among the whites for being the supreme leader of the Indian coalition which defeated Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. But later when it was learned that he did not participate directly in the Custer fight, he was labeled a coward and a fraud (though Bull honestly said on one occasion, **"I was not in the fight and know nothing about it save what my warriors have told me...."). ** Still, he continued to receive much press when he sought refuge in Saskatchewan, Canada, when he became an unwilling pawn in the diplomatic circles of Canada, England and the United States for five years. Finally, after years of privation and rejection by the Canadian government, he surrendered to U. S. authorities in 1881. Promises of full pardon and amnesty were immediately broken as he was held a prisoner-of-war without trial for two years at Fort Randall, before being released to the Standing Rock Reservation of North Dakota. Paradoxically, he became a North American, if not a world, celebrity when he went on tour with Alvaren Allen in 1884 and William F. Cody in 1885. His last years were spent in overseeing the affairs of his people and trying to obstruct the land sale of 1889. Through this period he was often maligned by the Standing Rock agent, James McLaughlin, who thought that he could successfully "break" the chief into an "agency Indian." McLaughlin failed and the Ghost Dance finally gave him an excuse to have Bull arrested. On December 15, 1890 Sitting Bull was killed by Indian police.[2] (West Philadelphia: West Philadelphia Publishing Co., 1891), 582; Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 191-92.

HISTORIANS ON SITTING BULL

> *"[It is my purpose]... to aid the critical historian in arriving at a truer estimate of one of the men who has achieved national fame." --Doane Robinson*
>
> *"Who will write a worthy book about Sitting Bull?... [T]here is a feeling... that 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' has not been told." --Aaron Beede*

UNFORTUNATELY, historians, like medical doctors, only "practice" history, and often their practice leaves a lot to be desired in terms of reliability and objectivity. Some subjects suffer badly at their hands--Sitting Bull more than many others. James McLaughlin could be considered as Sitting Bull's first historian, but he was an extremely biased one and he colored the world's perception of the chief for decades. McLaughlin was a proud man, who felt that Sitting Bull's recalcitrance in accepting the white man's civilization was a stain on his record. He had boasted even before taking up the agent's job: "I will not let the word 'fail' enter my mind even. I know I shall succeed with these fellows.... [I]t shall be my endeavor to gain the confidence of the worst chiefs and headmen first.... [B]y this time next summer that redoubtable chief [Sitting Bull] will have changed his desires

and have become an agency Indian...." He went on to boast: "[Y]ou see whether I don't in a few years have a peaceful agency and a well-disposed lot of wards." McLaughlin's attitude was well known: After Sitting Bull arrived at Standing Rock,

one paper said, "McLaughlin soon taught the dark savage that he was not a chief of consequence."[3] Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society 16 (1911): 187-92; (second quote) Aaron McG. Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer* (Bismarck: Bismarck Tribune Co., 1913), 39; *SPMPP*, July 24, 1881; *St. Paul Pioneer Press (SPPP)*, December 16, 1890.

While McLaughlin's biographer, Louis Pfaller, has argued cogently that McLaughlin was not pre-prejudiced against Sitting Bull, he readily admits that when Sitting Bull consistently refused to throw off his identity as a Lakota, McLaughlin gradually came to consider him the most despicable Lakota of his acquaintance. When Sitting Bull showed any evidence of obstinacy, for whatever reason, McLaughlin defamed him, making statements which made no sense whatsoever. He wrote among other things that Bull made a pretence at mysticism, yet admitted that the chief had accurately foretold the killing of Custer and his men. He also said that Bull had no noble qualities, but "was by far the most influential man of his nation for many years...." Of Bull's role as a holy man of his people, McLaughlin wrote, "Sitting Bull had all the tricks of the fake spiritualist." McLaughlin also absurdly declared Bull a physical coward, knowing that the chief had counted over sixty coups on his enemies and killed a great number of them. He even went to the extreme of saying that the chief had an "evil face and shifty eyes." And was McLaughlin a former general who might be qualified to judge someone a coward or not? No, he was a blacksmith by trade until he became an agent at Fort Totten and then Standing Rock. As Sitting Bull biographer Robert M. Utley points out, McLaughlin tried to "dupe" everyone--particularly in his book, *My Friend the Indian*.[4] (New York: Vantage Press, 1976), 89-93; James McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1926), 180-82; Utley, *Lance and Shield*, xvi, 203.

Unfortunately, South Dakota historian Doane Robinson accepted McLaughlin's views uncritically when he wrote his history of the Lakota in 1906. A few years later he offered "some sidelights" on Sitting Bull's character in which he maintained that Sitting Bull "never achieved fame as a fighting man.... [and] had no stomach for real warfare." He argued that Bull was able to achieve notice only through his conjuror's tricks and oratorical gifts. Like McLaughlin, Robinson even stooped so low as to interpret Sitting Bull's face as being "cunning, crafty [and] effeminate." (Compare the description of Bull's face by an unbiased observer, such as Lieutenant Colonel Acheson G. Irvine of the Mounted Police, who wrote: "He is a man of somewhat short stature, but with a pleasant face, a mouth showing great determination, and a fine high forehead. When he smiled, which he often did, his face brightened up wonderfully." Also, newspaperman John Finerty commented: "I can honestly say that ‘Old Sit’ has a fine aboriginal countenance. ...") In 1907 General Oliver O. Howard expressed the apparent common consensus of early twentieth-century writers: "[Sitting Bull]... had a great talent and ability.... [But he] himself was a coward, and disgraced himself even before his own people...."[5] (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1956), 452; Robinson, "Sidelights," 391-396; Lt. Col. Acheson G. Irvine to R. W. Scott, June 6, 1877, Governor-Generals Office (GGO), Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Ottawa; John F. Finerty, *War-Path and Bivouac, or, the Conquest of the Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 284; Oliver O. Howard, *Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known* (New York: The Century Company, 1922), 312.

A few, like Aaron Beede, Warren Moorehead and Charles A. Eastman, none of them professional historians, made attempts to counter some of the extremist views about Sitting Bull in 1913, 1914 and 1918 respectively. Even so, Beede, who was profoundly sympathetic to the chief, made the mistake of saying that Sitting Bull was not a warrior, only a medicine man. Moorehead was sympathetic also. He esteemed Sitting Bull a "great man," yet also described him as being "unscrupulous, crafty, and cruel," though failing to show any evidence for his criticisms. Eastman wanted to present an accurate portrait of the chief as he did not agree with McLaughlin's estimations, but strangely concluded that the chief, while being a "far-sighted statesman," was not a medicine man!?! He also criticized the chief's involvement in the Ghost Dance, calling this the "weakest thing he ever did." These opinions, so often contradictory, could not dispel the negative cloud placed by McLaughlin over

Sitting Bull's head. It was not until the 1930s that Stanley Vestal gave Sitting Bull his first in depth treatment. He published

a biography of the chief based on interviews with the chief's relatives and other acquaintances, and concluded that Sitting Bull was the "strongest, boldest, most stubborn opponent of European influence." However, for all of his invaluable labor, Vestal failed to show a man with real faults in addition to his noble qualities. Thus his work could be described as celebratory or hagiographic in nature: Sitting Bull, the depraved creature of McLaughlin's invention, was transformed into the "champion of the Sioux," but was yet a cardboard, two-dimensional figure. Raymond J. DeMallie admits as much in his foreword to the 1989 printing of Vestal's biography, commenting that the author had "idealized Sitting Bull as a heroic figure in the classic mold." Vestal has also been criticized by Utley for writing good literature but poor history.[6] 107-131; Stanley Vestal, *Sitting Bull, Champion of the Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), xviii, 315.

Not surprisingly, Vestal's biography did not entirely convince his contemporaries about who Sitting Bull really was. Writing in 1941, Usher L. Burdick, like McLaughlin, once again painted a faulty portrait of Sitting Bull as a religious extremist, burning with hatred against the whites: "He was never conquered and he never quit preaching against the whites. His last uprising was a religious one. His whole religion and his whole soul was set against the whites. He was a savage preacher to a savage people, and therein lay his power." But the facts show that the chief was a man of much more complexity than that. He actually only hated those whites--usually American soldiers--who seriously violated Lakota rights. As one trader said, "He has a great and almost immeasurable hatred toward Americans, as distinguished from Europeans or Canadians."[7] October 26, 1877. Major Walsh explained that the hostiles meant "soldiers" when they spoke of the Americans. *Chicago Daily Tribune(CDT)*, July 10, 1879.

Some historians have relished the story of Sitting Bull's stay in Canada and celebrated it in a number of books and articles. But they did not dig very deeply into the chief's life and one suspects that they rather enjoyed, not so much the chief's story, but the admirable role which the Northwest Mounted Police played during that period.8 See the works of John Peter Turner, C. Frank Turner, J. W. Grant MacEwan, Joseph Manzione, Bruce Wishart, Christopher C. Joyner and Gary Pennanen.

In 1973 Alexander Adams wrote the purportedly definitive biography of Sitting Bull, but his book was big on background and short on characterization of the chief. Reviewers commented that it really was not a biography, but rather a history which tried to cover too much and did not break new ground.

The chief's most recent biographer, Robert Utley, states that his Sitting Bull is the same as Vestal's, but that he arrived at his conclusions by historical method. One might expect that this method would yield some hard analysis of the myths surrounding the chief and his character, but we find that Utley's Sitting Bull is still very Vestal-like: He was a superlative warrior and hunter--boastful and ambitious, a holy man--in communion with *Wakan Tanka* and a good tribal citizen--generous, kind and humble. This is such a splendid characterization that even Utley can't quite believe it. He asks: "Was [Sitting Bull]... the paragon without blemish that he seems?" He guesses that Bull's relatives and friends "probably embellished" him when they gave their accounts to Vestal. Yet, while giving token recognition to this possibility, he himself emphasizes Sitting Bull as being a "paragon of Lakota life and virtue." It is not until far later in his text that he almost unwittingly hints at the chief's problematic temperament, paranoiac tendencies, depressive moods and psychological denial of the gut-wrenching realities which he faced.[9]

FOR THE SAKE of this collection of speeches, writings and sayings, which ought to unveil as starkly as possible the ‘essential’ Sitting Bull, it is necessary to somewhat analytically sketch the vital facts of his life and the controversial roles which he played among his people and to the

whites. This demands a discussion of chieftainship, war leadership, shamanism, and his role as a figurehead for freedom-loving Indians. The enigma of Sitting Bull, unfortunately, has a lot more to do with resolving the

unmercifully conflicting views presented by historians, than walking down the road toward objective truth. Firstly, it is important to recognize that there was a great amount of fluidity in Bull's roles, and he performed in multiple roles at the same time. Many contradictions will dissolve away when this is kept in mind--contradictions which Bull's contemporaries often stumbled over when trying to delineate him--the ridiculous argument usually being whether Bull was a warrior, a chief, holy man or statesman, when he was all four, with emphasis on one or the other depending upon the need.

WARRIOR

> *"He was a man of blood and iron and accustomed to scenes of bloodshed." --Warren Moorehead*
>
> *"Friends, I am a soldier and have many people jealous of me!" --Sitting Bull*
>
> *"[Sitting Bull]... is a warrior--every inch of him!" --Major James Walsh*

SITTING BULL FIRST achieved notice as a warrior when he demonstrated bravery by killing an enemy at the age of fourteen. His pictographic history reveals him to be a daring soldier, unafraid to kill his enemies, scalp them and take their horses. Hardened by the typical plains Indian warfare, he even lanced and killed several Crow women. One Cheyenne warrior was told that Sitting Bull "loved to kill," and that "in those days only one thing smelled good to him--gunpowder." This wasn't the racist "bloodthirstiness" of the white press, but rather the militaristic fever produced in a hunter-warrior society (Bull was actually just as well known for his sparing of the lives of captives and releasing them to their people.) Of Bull's reputation, Frank Grouard relates: "Some who have written of Sitting Bull, claiming that he was a medicine man and not a warrior, are unacquainted with the circumstances surrounding his life.... No man in the Sioux nation was braver." Sitting Bull counted sixty-three coups by 1870. Continued success and capability, demonstrated by coups, scalps, captured horses and battle wounds, enabled him to attain to the leadership of several soldier societies, including the Fox and Midnight Strong Hearts--the latter being the strongest of the Hunkpapa societies. At this time Sitting Bull was considered a war chief in a minor sense. About the year 1857 Sitting Bull achieved the rank of "head soldier," or war chief, of the entire Hunkpapa tribe.[10] 197; (second quote) Walsh's notes upon hearing of the death of Sitting Bull, December 16, 1890, James M. Walsh Papers (WP), Public Archives of Manitoba (PAM), Winnipeg; Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 48-49, 145, 134; Utley, *ibid*, 163-64; Joe DeBarthe, *Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 47-48. The pictographs were listed in *CDT*, July 11, 1876.

Before 1863 all of Sitting Bull's warfare was with other Indian tribes, such as the Crow, Assiniboin, Gros Ventres, Cree, Blackfeet and Flathead. When warfare broke out with the Americans, Bull became a veteran of battles or skirmishes at Dead Buffalo Lake, Killdeer Mountain, the Badlands, Fort Rice, Fort Totten, Fort Buford and the Fisk wagon train. But even with the rank of head soldier, he was still not a civil chief, nor was he one of the four premier civil leaders designated as "shirt-wearers." The shirt-wearers--Four Horns, Running Antelope, Red Horn and Loud Voiced Hawk--were chosen in 1850 to be the ranking chiefs of the tribe.[11]

CHIEF

> *"He is a smart Indian and a chief among chiefs." --Jean B. Genin*

"A chief (I-tan-chan) *was supposed to be greathearted, magnanimous, generous, and above all personal spite or selfishness." --Stanley Vestal*

THE HUNKPAPA SHIRT-WEARERS and most band leaders became chiefs through hereditary succession, their fathers having been chiefs before them. Some sources indicate that Sitting Bull's father, Jumping Bull, may have been considered a minor chief--at least Sitting Bull claimed that his father held such an office. But historians have not found much corroborative evidence for this. In fact, some have inferred that Jumping Bull was not a chief by denying that Sitting Bull was a hereditary chief. Proponents of this view include agent

McLaughlin and John Grass (or Charging Bear), who claimed that Sitting Bull "never was a chief." (Vestal and Eastman do not refer to Bull's father as a chief either.) Perhaps Bull might have said more truthfully something similar to Rain-in-the-Face's admission: "My father was not a chief; my grandfather was not a chief.... On my mother's side I had some noted ancestors, but they left me no chieftainship. I had to work for my reputation." But Sitting Bull was a favorite of his uncle and shirt-wearer Four Horns, who is thought to have encouraged him to seek chieftainship. And he had other politically-good family connections as well. His sister was married to the Miniconjou shirt-wearer, Makes Room, and he was reportedly married at one time to a sister of the Yanktonai leader, Medicine Bear. But although Utley maintains that Four Horns conferred his civil, or band, chieftainship upon Sitting Bull, this is doubtful, given Four Horns's claims in 1877 that he was still the head chief of the Hunkpapas. Furthermore, before the tribe was consolidated, Sitting Bull often camped with scarcely a dozen lodges, and often not with Four Horns. But because Four Horns was one of the last holdouts in Canada, and did not surrender until Sitting Bull did, it made it appear as though he was with Bull's band.[12]New Sources of Indian History, 1850-1891 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 71-72, 319; Hamlin Garland, *The Book of the American Indian* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing, 1923), 162; *SPMPP*, August 4, 1881; Eastman, *Indian Heroes*, 133; Utley, *ibid*, 85.

Four Horns was definitely a prime mover among the Hunkpapas of the 1860s and he had the wisdom and foresight to realize that the tribe needed a new and stronger type of leadership, particularly after the northern Tetons had become involved in war with the United States and a growing separation had occurred between the so-called "agency" Hunkpapas and the independents or hostiles. As Michael Steltenkamp has observed, "[Lakota] leadership had to be innovative..., and standards from the past were not always suitable." Four Horns decided that his nephew should be promoted into this new leadership role--an office which became the next innovation in Hunkpapa political history. Four Horns wanted his people to accept the leadership of one "supreme war chief," who would make all decisions for war and peace and overrule even the shirt-wearers (who represented the leadership innovation of the 1850s). He gained support for this proposal from most of the Hunkpapa chiefs and leaders of the Sans Arc and Miniconjou, and a ceremony was held to make it official. On this occasion Four Horns said to Sitting Bull: "For your bravery on the battlefield and as the greatest warrior of our bands, we have elected you as our war chief, leader of the entire Lakota nation. When you tell us to fight, we shall fight, when you tell us to make peace, we shall make peace." By another account Bull was called "Chief Soldier of Treaties," indicating that his decision-making specifically included whether or not treaties would be signed. According to One Bull's recollection, the shirt-wearers "gave their power to Sitting Bull when Sitting Bull was made chief of all the Tetons." This again strongly infers that Bull was supposedly given chieftainship over several Teton groups, notably the Oglalas and Brules, who were underrepresented in the proceedings. In spite of the presumptuous nature of his promotion, Bull responded wholeheartedly to the appointment. He

seems to have taken a rather radical view of the implications of his new position, singing: **"Ye tribes behold me. The chiefs are no more. Myself, [I] shall take courage."** In another song he said, **"My father gave me this nation to care for and I am trying to fulfill my duty."**[13] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 14; Garland, *ibid*, 161; M. Inez Hilger, "The Narrative of Oscar One Bull," *Mid-America, An Historical Review* 28 (July 1946): 153, 159.

Unfortunately for Sitting Bull, there was no precedent for this office, and the entire Lakota nation never gave assent to it. Furthermore, its purpose and extent was fraught with ambiguity. Even a significant faction of the Hunkpapas was not supportive. The Hunkpapa shirt-wearer, Running Antelope, and Bear's Rib (II)--Antelope's nephew, who were at the head of the agency bands, opposed Bull's militant policies. Bear's Rib told Colonel Phillipe Regis de Trobriand in 1868 that he was a friend of the whites and he believed that it was *Wakan Tanka's* will that the whites were spreading over the lands of the Lakota! Sitting Bull felt exactly the opposite: *Wakan Tanka* had made the Lakotas and gave them the land on which they lived to be theirs forever. But, as the years passed and the Americans took the land by treaty or force, many Lakotas would have probably considered that Bull's office was only a temporary aberration, or an anachronism--certainly no longer valid when the wars were over and the tribe was relegated to reservation life. Many undoubtedly wondered if Bull

had actually been functioning more as a civil or religious leader than a war leader? Or aside from this one appointment, some wondered if he was a chief at all? His power was not clearly delineated as to how long it would last. And if he was a chief, who was he chief of--the hostiles of the 1870s--the northern Tetons and Yanktonais--the non-agency Hunkpapas--or really just his relatives and diehard followers? Even old Four Horns, during his Canadian years, seems to have somewhat repudiated his nephew's position when he told officials that he was the head chief of the Hunkpapas and that Sitting Bull acted (merely?) as his head soldier. With such hard-to-answer questions about Sitting Bull's office, it became easy for ambitious leaders to refer to him as a fraud or pretender. This caused a further rift in the Hunkpapa leadership after 1881, which was exploited to the maximum by McLaughlin in his goal to subdue the traditional function of the chiefs and achieve complete mastery over the Lakotas of Standing Rock Agency.[14] translated and edited by Lucile M. Kane (St. Paul: Alvord Memorial Commission, 1951), 140-45; Major James M. Walsh to Lt. Col. J. F. MacLeod, March 15, 1877, GGO, PAC.

But at least in the late 1860s and 1870s, Bull and perhaps two-thirds of the Hunkpapas took his appointment seriously. He obviously felt that he had been made a supreme chief for the duration of his life. And it did not matter to him which way the political winds were blowing, for he believed that his chieftainship stemmed ultimately from the will of *Wakan Tanka*. He told Father Martin Marty in 1877 that *Wakan Tanka* had made him "leader of the people," and in 1883 he said: **"I have always been a chief and have been made chief of all the land.... I want to tell you that if the Great Spirit has chosen anyone to be chief of this country, it is myself."** Furthermore, Sitting Bull bolstered the belief in his calling with his more tenuous affirmation that he was a hereditary chief. For example, he said in 1881, **"I am one of the last chiefs of the independent Lakota nation and the place I hold among my people was held by my ancestors before me."** Sitting Bull's beliefs about himself were allowed to stand among the northern Tetons, as well as other groups from the Yanktonai, Santee and Cheyenne tribes (with the implication that respect for the authority of hereditary chieftainship was waning). While in Canada, Bull still retained a semblance of support from Four Horns and Black Moon (Sources are divided over which of the latter two was the premier hereditary chief of the Hunkpapas.) But by the mid-1880s both of these chiefs had died, and Gall, a chief of but six lodges in the mid-1860s, began to contend with Sitting Bull for the honor of being the new "head chief" among the Hunkpapas at the Standing Rock Agency--particularly as agent McLaughlin favored him.[15]American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity, edited by R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 157; (on Gall) Frederick W. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907) 1:482. Jean B. Genin felt that Black Moon was "the chief" of the nation in 1877, while in 1868 Father Jean P. De Smet said that Four Horns was the head chief and that Black Moon was his orator. Gall was also said to have had some hereditary status, as Black Moon was called his uncle. But McLaughlin refers to Gall as an orphan, who was brought up by his widowed mother.

In pre-reservation days civil chiefs became powerful by gaining the support of the warrior societies, and particularly the soldiers' lodge, which was the equivalent of the camp police. Sitting Bull's chieftainship was no exception. He excelled in gaining warrior support, and in his heyday the lodge was referred to as "Sitting Bull's Soldiers." Bull also had the support and protection of the "Silent Eaters"--a society of about twenty men, including Catches-the-Bear, Black Wolf, Black Bird, Bull Ghost, Crawler and Sitting Bull's adopted brother, Little Assiniboin (or Jumping Bull II), who were dedicated to preserving their chief from all foes, within the camp or out.

But with the disappearance of the soldier societies, a chief was only influential when he had the backing of the agent; in other words, a chief largely had to become a puppet for the white authorities. As Lakota agent Valentine T. McGillycuddy commented in 1879, the power of the chiefs needed to be broken because an Indian could not "serve his chief and the agent at the same time." While on the reservation, Sitting Bull tried to maintain his old influence, but McLaughlin was against him. Gall, on the other hand, committed himself to the so-called progressives, who accommodated the acculturation policies of the government. One writer argued that Gall was a greater man than Sitting Bull because he had the foresightedness to throw "himself into a position of leadership along the path of the white man. Sitting Bull was selfish; Gall was generous and self-sacrificing.

Sitting Bull would not surrender because of selfish pride in his own power." Naturally, McLaughlin felt the same: He was the agent of acculturation and he hated Sitting Bull's obstinacy to change. No wonder that he--in Vestal's words--"idolized Gall." He wrote for example, "[Gall]... had plenty of courage and dash, and he was gifted with the qualities that Sitting Bull, diplomat and medicine man, lacked entirely." Gall's signing of the Treaty of 1889, in spite of Bull's protests, clearly demonstrated the former's ascendancy in Hunkpapa politics. But earlier it had not been so: In 1877 newspaperman John Finerty visited Bull's Canadian camp and wrote that Gall was "by repute a double-dealing skulking rascal," and Sitting Bull had told him to make a choice between remaining in Canada or going to the agencies, and this had caused Gall to remain "comparatively quiet" in his dissensions. Vestal therefore argued legitimately that the other Lakota chiefs were never "the tough-minded thinker" that Sitting Bull was and always remained. Not only so, but Sitting Bull's defense of the Ghost Dance in 1890, aside from being a noble stand for individual and religious freedom, can be seen as his last bid to recreate the old order.[16]Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 269; K. Brent Woodruff, Article on Gall, in *South Dakota Churchman,* December 1930; McLaughlin, *My Friend,* 121; Hodge, *ibid;* Finerty, *War-Path,* 275.

The retrospective arguments regarding which of the chiefs were the greatest, based on whether or not they fought to the end as patriotic martyrs or tried eventually to maintain peaceful relations through accommodation, can never be adequately solved and are likely to reflect only the authors' personal biases. But if judgements are made simply on the basis of the height of a man's personal influence on others, both white and Indian, then Sitting Bull was clearly the greatest Lakota chief of the 1870s, succeeding Red Cloud and his reign of influence during the mid-1860s. Crazy Horse was a great warrior and patriot, but he exhibited little or no interest in politics and diplomacy; he was a man of few words and maintained a personal reclusiveness, and hence did not even try to compete for spokesmanship. Gall's main claim to fame was the role that he played in the fighting at the Little Bighorn, but even he himself admitted that his ferocity that day was fueled by the deaths of his wife and children when the attack started. Even so, some later questioned whether or not Gall had arrived fairly late to the scene of the Custer fight. If Gall was Sitting Bull's match as a warrior, there is no evidence to indicate that he ever

surpassed him in personal magnetism or in the qualities which caused men to follow his lead. More importantly, Sitting Bull felt that he was largely directed by *Wakan Tanka,* and Gall, who seems to have had no reputation for being a holy man, had no way to compete, at least until acculturation and McLaughlin leveled the playing field.

HOLY MAN

> *"He was strong in religion--the Indian religion."--Wooden Leg*
>
> *"[T]here was no surface to him, he was the embodiment of depths...."--W. H. Murray*

SITTING BULL was often termed a "medicine man" by the whites, and his fellow Indians referred to him as one who "made medicine." However, the term "medicine" has always entailed some amount of confusion and needs clarification. Among the Lakotas there were three classes of practitioners, 1) shamans, priest/prophets, or holy men *(wicasa wakan)*--who had undergone the severest tortures of the sun-gazing dance and were concerned with the whole Lakota tribe and its cosmology; 2) dreamers--who had visions or prophetic dreams, but usually only having to do with themselves; and 3) herbalists *(pejuta wicasa)*--who practiced pharmacy and were in effect medical doctors. Sitting Bull was a man in the first class--a *wicasa wakan,* a status that only a few obtained. But to attain to this he had to have been a dreamer, and it is evident that he also learned the medicinal use of herbs *(pejuta).* Although he did not generally practice medicine, he seems to have treated all the wounds incurred by his relatives, and one correspondent reported that, while in Canada, Bull prepared "herbs and roots for the old and sick among his people, for he... [was] something of a medicine man...."[17] (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1931), 177-78; (second quote) William O. Taylor, *With Custer on the Little Bighorn* (New York: Viking Penquin, 1996), 128-29; Edmond G. Fechet, "The Capture of Sitting Bull,"

South Dakota Historical Collections (SDHC) 4 (1908): 185; Royal B. Hassrick, *The Sioux, Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 292-94; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 26; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 117.

When a man came into contact with *Wakan Tanka* (variously translated as the Great Mystery, Spirit, Holy, or Sacred), he was then, as many said, making medicine *(wakan kaga),* or otherwise being involved with the powers designated as *wakan. Wakan* has been defined as an adjective meaning sacred, consecrated, special and incomprehensible. Furthermore, it possessed a capability of giving a spiritual quality to a person for good or for bad. Interestingly, the word was apparently borrowed or derived from the Mayans of Middle America. The Mayan *Wac-Chan* was the name of the so-called "Vision Serpent," which was a symbol of the path of communication between the sacred and human world. This was virtually the same meaning held by the Lakotas, though without any serpent connotation. Transmission of this word could have occurred before the Siouan-speaking peoples ascended the Mississippi River Valley to the north from their as-yet-undocumented origin point in the southern Gulf Coast area.[18] (Pine Ridge, South Dakota: Red Cloud Indian School, Inc., 1983), 525-26; David Freidel, Linda Schele and Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos* (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1993), 138; Francis Haines, *The Plains Indians* (New York: Thomas W. Crowell Co., 1976), 35.

Sitting Bull took the time and effort to learn all of the sacred ceremonies and holy language *(iye wakan)* and was eventually recognized as a holy man. His reputation was not only well-known to the Lakotas, but also to the Cheyennes and other tribes and even the whites. Wooden Leg, a Cheyenne warrior, said that Sitting Bull "made medicine many times. He prayed and fasted and whipped his flesh into submission to the will of the Great Medicine." One trader inferred Sitting Bull's total involvement with *Wakan Tanka* by saying that the chief was "somewhat fanatical in the Indian creed." Howard wrote that Sitting Bull "would shut the flaps of his wigwam and stay hours, and sometimes days, inside, doing what he called ‘making

medicine.’ He told the Indians that a powerful Spirit came to him at such times and gave him knowledge and orders." It is evident that Sitting Bull habitually looked to *Wakan Tanka* for direction. He said for example that *Wakan Tanka* had told him to go to Canada in 1877. At other times Sitting Bull was enabled to discern the future, as in his prediction of victory over Custer's soldiers "falling into the camp." His power was also thought to have served him as a protective shield when in combat: Sitting Bull's mother said that her son's "wonderful skill in battle arose from his being *wakan,* or one who had power with the Great Spirit." As Steltenkamp has observed, *wakan* was the "resilience" of Lakota existence: "This resilience enabled groups to negotiate the successful exodus west, permitted individuals to sacrifice themselves for the common good, and was an intangible armament within their arsenal of subsistence. It has unbounded limits and was rooted in the belief that all Lakota had access to and could acquire, supernatural power and purpose.... [S]eeking this power and purpose remained of paramount importance in one's life." This was especially true in Sitting Bull's case. While the Santee Dakotas believed that a change to the white man's occupation and dress meant a change in religion as well, Sitting Bull continued to hold to his relationship with *Wakan Tanka* in spite of all the changes forced upon him.[19] 178; Richmond L. Clow, ed. "Autobiography of Mary C. Collins, Missionary to the Western Sioux," *SDHC* 41 (1982): 8; Howard, *Famous Indian Chiefs,* 304; Steltenkamp, *Black Elk,* 15. Charles Eastman tried to correct the confusion of these roles, in Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 121-22.

Because *Wakan Tanka* was holy, spiritual and mysterious, so too the holy man. Some have therefore admitted the difficulty of defining who Sitting Bull was, saying that he was "an enigma at best,.. never fully understood by white man or Indian." Newspaperman Finerty, though ready to cut the myths surrounding the chief to the quick, commented that he could not deny that Sitting Bull "had some great mysterious power over the Sioux, and especially over his own tribe of Hunkpapas...." Even Bull's apparent erraticism at times was thought by some to be due to his dependence on *Wakan Tanka.* Episcopal priest Aaron Beede said that Bull could do almost nothing without looking and waiting for favorable signs or omens. And Major James Walsh wrote: "Bull's confidence and belief in the Great Spirit was stronger than I ever saw in any other man. He trusted to Him implicitly." W. H. Murray tried to explain Sitting Bull's mysterious persona in this way: "This man Sitting Bull was a prophet... to his people.... [It was] a rank above all ranks won or bestowed by the tribe; an office...

connected with, and symbolic of the highest truths and deepest mysteries of their religion. Hence by virtue of his office he was the counselor of chiefs.... [He was] the oracle of mysteries and of knowledge hidden from the mass, even from the chiefs...."[20] (Aurora, Ill.: American Indian Historical Publishing Company, 1906), 495; Finerty, *War-Path,* 238; Vestal, *New Sources,* 64; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 307; Taylor, *With Custer,* 128-29.

Bull's initiation into the life of a holy man began with a typical vision quest *(hanblecheyapi*--crying for a vision) while in his early teens, or when his voice was changing. *Hanble* (vision) was a communication from *Wakan Tanka.* What Sitting Bull's visions were, we do not know with certainty, but they gave him status in various societies, including the Buffalos and *Heyokas* (Clowns). To be in the *Heyoka* group it was required that one have had a dream of the Thunderbird *(Wakinyan).* It was said that Sitting Bull painted his face with lightning, something which only dreamers of thunderbirds could do (Even after his surrender, he still on occasion applied red and yellow paint to his face, neck and hair part.) Bull continued to conduct prayer ceremonies during which he cut himself and let the blood flow as a sacrifice, or set up a red piece of cloth, tied to a stick, to represent such an offering. His vigils usually began with songs that he had learned in visions, such as, **"I have a good friend up there; I have an old friend above; On earth I speak for a nation."**[21]

Bull's visions enabled him to receive his "medicine bundle," or *wotawe,* his most

cherished possession. This signified his passage into manhood and into the mysteries of war. According to David H. Miller, the bundle which purportedly belonged to Sitting Bull was made of a yard of unbleached muslin, thirty-inches wide, dyed a deep orange-yellow and decorated with a green dragonfly in each corner and a red-spotted elk in the center. Objects used in connection with the bundle were a deer tail, a bit of calamus root, and inch-wide wristlets of buffalo hide with the brown wool intact. Previously, a *wichasha wakan* would have caused various spirit powers to inhere in these items.[22] which was in One Bull's possession after Sitting Bull's death. Although, unaccountably, One Bull later said that Sitting Bull's *wotawe* was missing after the chief's murder. Hilger, "One Bull," 155-56.

As Sitting Bull grew older he continued his *wakan* ways and was also eligible to perform the sun-gazing dance. This rite best demonstrated the Lakota belief that self-torture pleased *Wakan Tanka* and was rewarded with power, vision and prophecy. Bull's first dance was in about 1856 and it was proof positive that he was a man unafraid to suffer physical torture to maintain his *wakan* status. The chief's adopted son, One Bull, stated that Sitting Bull danced often because he "wanted to learn to love his god and his people." During his dances, Sitting Bull would have typically been secured by rope to a sacred pole by means of skewers passing under his chest muscles. This rite no doubt symbolized a reenactment of death and resurrection (as Charles Eastman believed) around the cosmic, or world, tree (which the Mayans termed *Wacah Chan).* It was seen, not only as a symbol of cosmological realities in the universe, but also as the conduit of communication between the human and supernatural worlds. A similar form of worship was practiced among the ancient Phrygians of Asia Minor. Their *Wanka Tanka* was Attis, a man-god, who by one account unmanned himself under a pine tree and bled to death as a kind of redemptive sacrifice. In festivals dedicated to Attis, a pine tree was transformed into a sacred pole to which the effigy of young Attis was attached; his worshippers gashed themselves with knives and spattered the pole with blood to show identification with their god. Furthermore, they went into ecstatic trances, and or unconsciousness, to find communion with him. (Attis has been identified with the earlier Tammuz of the post-Flood Mesopotamian civilization, who some believe was identical to the historical Nimrod. The latter, according to *Genesis,* was the first "mighty" man of the earth.) Similarly, Sitting Bull's blood sacrifice involved a long tortured dance to free himself from the pole. He eventually fell into unconsciousness and achieved a meeting with *Wakan Tanka.* Power, prognostication and otherworldly wisdom were the result. Of Sitting Bull's experience, Beede wrote: "At times his soul seemed to leave his body in part while his body became rigid, and travel far away to regions where he beheld the movements of men and heard their thoughts as if they were speaking them in words.... Besides such an experience as this, there are many other things, including the foretelling of future events...." Bull's prognostications were well-known. He predicted a battle with the Flatheads and his own suffering of a gunshot wound. He prophesied that a fellow Hunkpapa, Shell King, would be punished for defying his authority, and ten days later Shell King and his son were killed by lightning!

In another instance Bull announced that it would rain, when it hadn't rained for months. Mary Collins saw him perform a ceremony in which he waved a buffaloskin, made some signs, and placed the skin on the ground; a day or two later it rained. McLaughlin reported another prophecy in November 1890: "Bull announced some weeks ago that he would not have any snow fall or cold weather this winter so the Ghost Dance could be continued without discomfort until the Messiah appeared next spring." However, McLaughlin, and historians like Doane Robinson, downplayed the chief's authentic ability to prognosticate.[23] 64, 149-50; James McLaughlin to Herbert Welsh, November 25, 1890, roll 20, James McLaughlin Papers (MP), Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), St. Paul; Robinson, "Sidelights," 302; Charles A. Eastman, *The Soul of the Indian: An Interpretation* (1911; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 59-61. On Attis, see James G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1961), 264-69. A full account of the Sun-gazing Dance is in Joseph E. Brown, ed. *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953).

In addition to the practices already described, Sitting Bull also conducted divination

rituals with spirits associated with sacred stones. On one occasion he consulted the stone of a fellow shaman, Bear Necklace, and presented an offering of a buffalo robe; he is said to have asked that he might become famous. Another time he requested of his own stone that he might locate his nephew's lost horse. These requests were answered favorably. Bull was also noted as daily wearing a bunch of shed-buffalo hair, painted red, at the side of his head. The hair signified the time when buffalo were plenty and was also seen as a remembrance of the White Buffalo Maiden of Lakota mythology. She is credited with giving the Lakota their seven sacred ceremonies for gaining *wakan* power. These included the vision quest, the sweat bath *(inipi)* for purification, the sacred calf pipe and the sun-gazing dance. Obviously, Sitting Bull thoroughly believed in and maintained a strong adherence to the religious and shamanistic practices of the Lakota.[24] (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 218, 458; Utley, *ibid*, 30-34.

Later, after frequent contact with priests and missionaries, Sitting Bull became somewhat knowledgeable of Christianity. He found Bible stories genuinely fascinating, and he attended several masses at churches in St. Paul and Washington D. C.. He is known to have spent time with various clergymen, both Catholic and Protestant, including Jean B. Genin, Jean P. De Smet, Martin Marty, John P. Williamson, Jerome Hunt and Augustin Ravoux. He apparently began to mix the beliefs of Christianity to a slight degree with his native ones. In fact, one Captain McGarry claimed that Sitting Bull had been converted by De Smet, and Beede said that Bull was baptized; however, neither of these statements can be confirmed. It was also said that De Smet had given Bull a large crucifix, which he wore in one of his photographs. Beede heard "on good authority" that Bull sometimes prayed to Jesus and to Mary as the "mystical mother," or White Buffalo Maiden. He further stated that Bull respected other religions and feared the "occult power in the Catholic church." Indeed, Sitting Bull once told Father Marty, **"I am afraid of the cross you spoke of,"** and later, as if to evidence some belief in its power, he wore the above-mentioned crucifix. He seems to have had an overruling curiosity in the supernatural and was evidently fascinated with religious artifacts. While touring the St. Paul Cathedral, he inspected the altar and asked to be allowed to examine an image of Christ.[25]

Initially, Bull had a good attitude toward the Catholic clergymen, but by the time of the Custer fight in 1876 he had clearly become disaffected. It apparently had to do with their failure to mediate with the government on behalf of the Indians in making a suitable peace. Hence, he felt that they were religious hypocrites. When visited by Father Marty in 1877, he bitterly queried: **"Why did you wait until half my people were killed before you came?"** This disappointment was still evident in February 1884 when Sitting Bull spoke of his preference for having Episcopalians serve them on the reservation: **"[H]e had now decided to have the 'White Gowns' [the Episcopal priests] as his teachers and that as soon as spring comes he would move to the Grand River with his people and wherever he located he wanted the 'White Gowns' to sit down with him.... [H]e had wanted to be instructed by the 'Black Gowns' [the Catholics], but... they had done nothing for him and... none of the priests ever visited him or his people...."** In view of this, it is difficult to account for the fact that newspapers stated in the mid-1880s that Bull's children were members of the Catholic

church and that he too was a professed believer in the church's teachings. It was said that Bull was not a formal member because he had two wives and would not voluntarily give one up; supposedly he was "meekly waiting until a dispensation of Providence shall have cleared the way for his entering the church." This may have been McLaughlin's hype, as Sitting Bull said in one speech

that the agent had it in for him because he would not join the agent's (Catholic) church. While Herbert T. Hoover, in his 1980 essay on Sitting Bull, described the chief's beliefs as "ecumenical," according to Sitting Bull's own words, he not only refused to join the Catholic Church but never really believed in the Ghost Dance mixture of the Indian religion and Christianity. Beede commented that "Sitting Bull's Messiah was to be a reappearance of the same Holy One who had already appeared as Jesus." But if there was no appearance, Bull would have undoubtedly repudiated the Ghost Dance and maintained his traditional beliefs. Still, Bull was obviously openminded when it come to the supernatural, and he was willing to give the Ghost Dance a chance to prove its validity. He told a fellow Hunkpapa: **"It is like the white man's religion--very wonderful and very difficult to believe. I wish to try it and see. The white men are very wise, yet their preachers say that the sun stood still for Joshua, and Christ, their great medicine man, healed the lame and raised the dead.... If such wonders happened then, they can happen now."**[26]Toronto Globe, August 24, 1885; Hoover, "Sitting Bull," 167; (speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 249.

FIGUREHEAD

> *"I am satisfied that I was brought into this life for a purpose; otherwise, why am I here?" --Sitting Bull*
>
> *"Sitting Bull... [had] the magic sway of a Mohammed over the rude war-tribes that engirdled him. Everybody talks of Sitting Bull and, whether he be a figure-head, or an idea, or an incomprehensible mystery, his old time influence was undoubted. His very name was potent." --John F. Finerty*

WITH A FIRM FOUNDATION in his spiritual experiences, Sitting Bull believed that *Wakan Tanka* had specifically chosen him to be a great leader among his people, or in his own words, **"a big man to decide for them in all their ways."** When this prophecy became a reality in the 1860s, he devoted his leadership skills to the Hunkpapa national policy of maintaining independence from the Americans on the ancestral lands given them by *Wakan Tanka*. As Hoover noted: "Only a few have characterized... [Sitting Bull] properly as a person of unusual intelligence and ambition, who rose from obscurity to a position of power through dedication to a single purpose: the perpetuation of a segregated existence for traditional Teton people... ." In 1868 Sitting Bull made reference to his calling in a talk with Father Pierre Jean De Smet: **"I myself have plans for my people, and if they follow my plans they will never want."** One trader commented on Bull's resolve: "He has long cherished the conviction that he is ordained as the Indian who must wrest from the whites the country of his fathers." Beede too wrote: "[Sitting Bull]... was neither a child nor a fool and realized the odds against him.... His belief that he was divinely commissioned to maintain the old Dakota nationality overshadowed everything to the last."[27]On the Great Highway: The Wanderings and Adventures of a Special Correspondent (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Company, 1901), 298-303; (second quote), Finerty, *War-Path*, 254; *Wild Life on the Plains and Horrors of Indian Warfare* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 398-401; Hoover, ibid, 152; Burdick, *Last Days,* 15; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 42.

Therefore, Sitting Bull stood at the forefront of the anti-American Lakotas and became the most vocal patriot of his nation. His zeal was all-consuming. He said: **"My own life is dear to me, but I did not value it when I fought the Americans, but I did value the life of my nation"**--a virtual restatement of Nathan Hale's famous words, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country." But Sitting Bull's zeal caused his enemies to denigrate him and characterize him as a fanatical demagogue, agitator and warmongerer. According to Colonel Trobriand, who commanded Fort Stevenson in 1868: "[Sitting Bull's] business... is to kill whites and he will kill them as long as he and his band last." He added that Bull was the "spirit"

or "arm" of all coups against the whites, and that it was he who inspired his followers with such hatred towards the Americans. Similarly, in the 1870s Finerty believed that Bull was the Lakotas' "beau ideal of implacable hostility to the whites," akin to Daniel O'Connell the agitator, "though the latter never advocated bloodshed, whereas Sitting Bull did...." Yet Bull in his own defense consistently and justifiably maintained that it was the Americans who brought the war to him and not the other way around.[28]Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada (Toronto: William Briggs, 1896), 114.

Again, the northern Teton Lakotas had a basic policy of isolationism and Sitting Bull felt that he was born to take responsibility for carrying out this policy. "Sitting Bull arose as the sturdy advocate and defender of this old national policy," wrote Beede. Bull stated this in essence when he said: **"The life my people want is a life of freedom."** By this he meant that his people wanted their old life to continue--camping wheresoever they pleased on their ancestral lands and following the buffalo to support themselves. Bull was ready to sacrifice his life for this cause and nobody can legitimately question the fact that he was a true patriot from the Indians' standpoint.[29]

More than anyone else among his contemporaries, Bull became a living symbol and figurehead of the old Indian freedom. After being named the pre-eminent war chief of the Hunkpapas, he was backed by about 1,500 people. This support was bolstered by such leaders as Four Horns, Black Moon, Red Horn, Bear's Cap (or Bonnet), Crawler, Hairy Chin, Little Knife, Iron Dog, Pretty Bear, Crow King and Long Dog. Even the faction among the Hunkpapas, called the "Big Bellies," led by Big Nose, No Neck (or Short Neck) and Gall *(Pizi),* who sometimes opposed Sitting Bull, were united in their hostility toward the Americans. Sitting Bull also attracted followers from the Sans Arc, Miniconjou and Two Kettles, or the northern Teton Lakotas generally. Iron Hail, a Miniconjou, recalled: "We all rallied around [Sitting Bull] ... because he stood for our old way of life and the freedom we had always known." As one Hunkpapa said: "[Sitting Bull's] camp was the refuge of those who declined to obey the agents of the white man's government. The circle of his followers each year widened...." The deference shown to Sitting Bull was obvious to assistant interior secretary Benjamin R. Cowen, who wrote in 1871: "The Indians whom we met of the Tetons consider [Sitting Bull]... the leading man of their people, and their speeches at the council sufficiently indicated their fear of and respect for him.... [O]ther chiefs showed their respect for him by removing their koo *[sic]* feathers from their heads in his presence."[30] 22 (June 1971): 37; Garland, *American Indian,* 169; Utley, *ibid,* 96.

THE INKPADUTA CONNECTION

> *"Inkpaduta knew that there could be no surrender for him.... He and his band... began to look for support and found it with the Hunkpapa warrior, Sitting Bull." --Mark Diedrich*

SITTING BULL'S prominent stand and reputation brought him further support from pro-war factions of the Santees and Yanktonais. Trobriand wrote as early as April 1868 that Sitting Bull's band was "always joined by young aspirants from other bands in search of adventure, scalps, and renown." In fact, Montana congressman Martin MacGinnis, who was widely quoted in 1876, saw Sitting Bull's war with the whites as being but a continuation of the Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857 and the Dakota War of 1862 in Minnesota; it was after these events that the hostile Santees banded together with groups of the Yanktonais and Tetons. The Hunkpapa chiefs often said that as far as they were concerned the troubles with the whites began with the Santees in Minnesota, and when the soldiers pushed the Santees back on them, they took up the war. Sitting Bull thus became connected with Inkpaduta, the hostile Santees' most famous leader other than Little Crow (who was killed in 1863).[31] (Minneapolis: Coyote Books, 1987), 54; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 265; *SPMPP,* July 11 and August 19, 1876.

Inkpaduta (whose name has been variously translated as Scarlet Point, Red Top, or Red End) was the hereditary chief of a band of Wahpekute Santees which hunted and lived off the Dakota reservation in southwestern Minnesota and western Iowa. During the winter of 1856-57 a white posse from Smithland, Iowa,

stripped the band of its guns and sent them packing. Due to extremities of hunger, bitter cold weather and deep snow, Inkpaduta's band struck back and massacred several little communities near the Minnesota-Iowa border, the so-called "Spirit Lake Massacre." The U. S. authorities never apprehended him and he and his followers found shelter among the Yanktonais of the James River region--several of whom married into Inkpaduta's family. Although they did not participate in the Dakota War of 1862, where Little Crow was the principal leader, Inkpaduta's band was among those who fought Sibley's troops in the summer of 1863. From that time forward, the Inkpaduta Wahpekutes, augmented by the White Lodge and Young Sleepy Eyes's Sissetons (who had been involved in the Lake Shetek massacres), were adamantly hostile, and by the mid-1860s were in ever more frequent contact with Sitting Bull's Hunkpapas. Furthermore, Inkpaduta's half-sister married Bull Ghost, who was one of Sitting Bull's closest friends and advisors. Thus Inkpaduta found access to Sitting Bull's inner circle, and hence the chief's mind. Inkpaduta and his sons may have even largely inspired Sitting Bull's bent in the direction for which he became so famous. No doubt they were the living representation of those who had suffered the evils perpetrated by the Americans in the previous generation. Not only so, but Sitting Bull's father was said by one source to have been with Inkpaduta's people; based upon this slight evidence one might conjecture that Four Horns and Inkpaduta, who were both about the same age, were close companions. At least it can be assuredly stated that Inkpaduta's Santees always camped near the Hunkpapa circle of lodges--which is an obvious indication of the friendly and dependent relationship between the two groups. Furthermore, Sitting Bull developed a relationship with Inkpaduta's son, He Who Makes the Ground Sound as He Walks (or Noisy Walker for short), and in early 1868 he and Inkpaduta's son joined together to raid Fort Totten. Inkpaduta and his sons remained with Sitting Bull through the Little Bighorn fight in 1876 and were the first of Bull's followers to take refuge in Canada. The bottom line is: Inkpaduta was to the Santees what Sitting Bull became to the northern Tetons, and Inkpaduta's influence on Sitting Bull should not be underestimated.[32] 182; (on Bull Ghost) Mrs. J. F. Waggoner to Frank I. Herriott, September 5, 1933, Frank I. Herriott Papers, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.

DECLINE OF RED CLOUD'S INFLUENCE

> *"... Red Cloud was rejected by the uncontrollable element among the young fighting men of his people, who blamed him for signing any treaty. It was this condition that gave Sitting Bull his opportunity." --James McLaughlin*

BY 1871 SITTING BULL'S following was further increased by southern Tetons, especially the Oglalas led by Crazy Horse, and some of the Brules, who had become dissatisfied with the leadership of peace advocates Red Cloud and Spotted Tail. Red Cloud had led the Lakota warriors effectively against the soldiers in Wyoming along the Bozeman Trail, but after the

Laramie Treaty of 1868 he tried to accommodate the government. The Indians noted that after Red Cloud went to Washington in June 1870 they could no longer rely on him for fighting. Chief Standing Buffalo of the Santees explained: "Red Cloud returned to his people with wonderful stories of what he had seen and heard while visiting the Great Father at Washington. Red Cloud saw too much. The Indians say that these things cannot be; that the white people must have put bad medicine over Red Cloud's eyes to make him see everything and anything that they please, and so Red Cloud lost his influence." Red Cloud was a strong character, and when he made war he fought until he won, and when he made peace he meant to keep it no matter what the cost. He felt in fact that he had risked his life to keep his word. But as often happened during this period of Indian-white relations, a chief would make a treaty, with no choice but to blindly trust the government to keep its side of the bargain. When the government in many cases failed to act in good faith, it undercut the chief's influence with his people and made him look like a fool for having believed the Americans. Red Cloud suffered precisely for this reason. (In some situations Red Cloud also appeared to have made decisions that were self-serving.) Admittedly, he had been involved with the whites for a longer period of time than Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapas and had the advantage of having been exposed to the extent and power of the United States, while Sitting Bull learned this only belatedly: As Red Cloud biographer Robert Larson states, Sitting Bull "exhibited an intransigence often felt toward a rival with whom one has had few contacts," due to being more "insulated

geographically." Bull's idealism therefore was not yet tempered by complete realism, and thus he could afford to stand for the traditional life in the 1870s. This stand appealed to the young men who wanted to gain war honors, and many of them took the opportunity to slip away to Sitting Bull's standard. In May and June 1876 as many as 1,500 to 2,000 people left the Red Cloud Agency to join Sitting Bull's camp, including Red Cloud's son, Jack. In addition, essentially the whole tribe of Northern Cheyennes, formerly under Oglala influence, came to Sitting Bull. Cheyenne warrior Wooden Leg said: "Sitting Bull had come into notice as the most consistent advocate of the idea of living out of all touch with white people." He further stated: "The chiefs of the different tribes met together as equals. There was only one who was considered as being above all the others. This was Sitting Bull. "Even after the Custer fight--the high tide of the Lakota-Cheyenne confederacy--Bull still retained considerable influence and authority. Major Walsh, who first met Bull in the spring of 1877, wrote, "[Sitting Bull]... has constituted himself a ruler. He is a unique power among the Indians."[33]Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 288, 203; Marquis, *ibid*, 178, 205; *Wild Life*, 395.

DECLINE OF SITTING BULL'S INFLUENCE

> *"The hierarchy of leadership showed early signs of crumbling, and Sitting Bull appeared to be losing some control over the refugees. The headman's influence had never been absolute.... But rival leaders began to compete with Sitting Bull at a time when two years of inaction had made him vulnerable. His plan for a confederacy of northwestern tribes had failed." --Robert Manzione*

AFTER THE CUSTER FIGHT, Sitting Bull's influence also slowly but steadily declined and the reasons are many. First, the scarcity of buffalo caused the bands to separate, breaking up their consolidation. Second, U. S. soldiers were attacking every village in sight. Third, Canadian officials began a policy of dealing with the Lakota chiefs on an individual basis in order to break Sitting Bull's monopoly of authority. Fourth, starvation prompted one chief after another to

surrender to the Americans, in spite of Sitting Bull's continued wish to hold out. Fifth, the hostile Hunkpapas were already divided into two factions and the above factors exacerbated tensions. One American officer reported: "[T]here appeared a spirit of dissatisfaction among. .. the hostiles proper, fostered eagerly by such chiefs as Gall and Rain-in-the-Face, who had long viewed, jealously, the power of a leader whose right to absolute command they had many times disputed." Sixth, as time passed there was confusion in the minds of the Lakotas as to the validity of Sitting Bull's chieftainship. In addition, Walsh felt that Bull's influence declined considerably after the visit of U. S. General Alfred Terry to Fort Walsh in October 1877, but does not explain why, except to say that more Hunkpapas followed Spotted Eagle from that time forward. It may very well have had to do with the fact that the warriors wanted to kill General Terry while he was at Fort Walsh, and thereby take on the Canadian police as well. But Bull stopped them by posing the question, **"Where would they go if they were at war with the whites on both sides of the boundary?"** This moderation apparently angered the younger generation and probably accounts for the estimation made by an observer in September 1879: "Sitting Bull no longer has any influence with the young men of his tribe and is considered by them as little better than a cowardly old bilk [or fraud]." Also, the cessation of military activity after the move to Canada would naturally grate on many warriors. Still, Bull's actual nadir did not come until two years later, when he was deserted by Gall and Crow King.[34]North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893 (NWMP), 2 vols. (Ottawa: Kings Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1950), 1:514, 526, 391; Cecil E. Denny, *The Law Marches West* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, LTD., 1939), 135-36; *Fort Benton Record* (Fort Benton, Montana), September 12, 1879; *SPMPP,* July 21, 1881.

In his study of Sitting Bull's leadership during the Canadian years, 1878-1881, Joseph Manzione points to other problems: "Sitting Bull... exemplified the conflicting issues and confusion that bedeviled his people. He wanted revenge but desired peace and security, and he seemed to recognize that the two were incompatible. Sitting Bull often expressed his patriotism and his longing to provide for the others, but his efforts were subverted by fear

and ignorance among his own people and in himself. Foresight failed him, his own inconsistencies made him vacillate, and his leadership suffered."[35]

Indeed, Sitting Bull was in a lot of understandable psychological denial about his situation. He stood for a just cause but the United States and Canadian governments would not give him true justice. His land had been taken away unfairly and he could never get it back or receive the recompense which he desired. His old way of life was fast disappearing. It was an unbelievable shock to see the buffalo herds decimated, depriving him of the only occupation he ever knew and the means by which he had provided for his family and tribe: He was quoted as saying, **"A cold wind blew across the prairie when the last buffalo fell.... [It was] a death wind for my people."** His proud, independent spirit was ultimately forced to beg and demand food to survive. Thereafter, Bull always felt keenly the frustration of not having been able to achieve his lifelong goal of independence, and more than any other Lakota on record he took the matter so very personally. To make matters worse, Sitting Bull's influence continued to wane until only about 300 people among the Hunkpapas still gave him their allegiance in 1890. Meanwhile, Red Cloud seems to have fared better in his standing as a chief: In an 1880 poll almost all of the Oglala headmen still backed him as their head chief, saying that they loved, respected and believed in him.[36]

The years of injustice, broken treaties and warfare also left Bull extremely paranoid, the result of which caused him to be characterized as vacillating, quirky and indecisive. He felt betrayed by almost everyone. In 1877 a present of tea was left for his band, but a number of people who drank it died a short while later--Sitting Bull thought that the poison was intended

for him. Then there was the massacre of the Sans Arc and Miniconjou chiefs by the Crows near Fort Keogh, although the U. S. military disapproved of the action of their allies. Furthermore, the fugitive Nez Perce chief, White Bird, refused to surrender because he believed that he would be hung; Bull felt the same. Also, in 1879 U. S. Colonel Joseph C. Whistler was trying to find evidence that the chief had killed two mail carriers, hoping Bull could be extradited from Canada to stand trial for murder and perhaps be hung. Understandably, Bull only came to trust a few whites, such as Major Walsh and Jean Louis Legare (and later perhaps Buffalo Bill Cody, Rudolf Cronau and Catherine Weldon). But Canada took Walsh away from him in order to promote his surrender to U. S. authorities. Instead, they gave him Captain Lief Crozier, who was ordered to break the chief's influence over the Lakotas in Canada. Crozier consequently told Oglala chief Low Dog (and others) that the Queen did not want him to suffer on account of the "selfish whims of one or two men" (namely Bull and perhaps Four Horns).[37] December 26, 1877; James M. Walsh, Typescript Notes, WP, PAM.

MCLAUGHLIN'S ANTAGONISM

> *"Then he was brought back to the agency and again humiliated and crushed by the Agent until he was both spoiled and embittered." --Charles A. Eastman*
>
> *"The one man was murdered by the nation to destroy the principle (he advocated) that no man against his will should be forced to be a beggar." --James Walsh*

AFTER SITTING BULL surrendered, the Americans--true to form--broke their promises to him and held him and his band prisoners for almost two years. To make matters worse, Sitting Bull spoke to Colonel Andrews of the apparent departure of his oracular ability: **"It is not easy for me to sit down as a prisoner and dream out the future. It is all dark to me."** And his release, when it finally came, was not to a life of freedom. Rather, he was forced to live under an authoritarian, presumptuous agent who, with the full backing of the government, was out to break him of his chieftainship and "civilize" him by turning him into a Christian farmer and stockraiser. No one can deny that McLaughlin held more than a bureaucratic grudge against Sitting Bull. He went on to develop a deep hatred for the chief, merely because he could not break his pride. He literally exhausted the dictionary in trying to find terms of deprecation to describe Bull--words like *avaricious, mendacious, crafty, disaffected, obstructionist, abject coward, libertine, pompous* and *ambitious.* This left an

already destitute man gasping, not only from loss of occupation and culture shock, but also stunning psychological warfare with a tyrannical nemesis. It is no wonder that Bull and many other traditional Lakotas grasped for the straw which eventually came in the form of the Ghost Dance of 1890. The promise of the Indian Messiah was everything that Bull had lived and fought for--a new world order, where the Indians had everything they valued and the white men were "swept away."[38] 199; (second quote) Walsh's notes.., December 16, 1890, WP; Olson, *Red Cloud*, 271. Utley condemns McLaughlin for creating "the false portrait" of Sitting Bull, and others have commented on McLaughlin's unusual "frank and persistent" animosity toward the chief. Utley, *Lance and Shield*, xvi; Edward A. Milligan, *Dakota Twilight: The Standing Rock Sioux, 1874-1890* (Hicksville, N. Y.: Exposition Press, 1976), 129; Connell, *Morning Star*, 222.

Unfortunately, McLaughlin saw in Bull's stand for religious freedom a pretext for getting rid of the troublesome old man and he would not brook any interference in accomplishing this (He seems to have been willingly aided by Lieutenant Colonel William F. Drum of Fort Yates.) He may have been provoked by a newspaper report which said that he was incompetent and had lost control of the chief and therefore needed to show his mettle. Amazingly, he singlehandedly destroyed General Nelson Miles's plan to have Buffalo Bill Cody bring Bull in (hopefully peaceably). Instead, McLaughlin promoted the use of his Indian police, or the "Metal Breasts,"

to whom he sanctioned a "dead or alive" scenario: He ordered them not to allow Sitting Bull to escape under any circumstances and offered them and their families pensions should there be any deaths in the endeavor. He also made sure that they were well supplied with whiskey before they galloped up to Sitting Bull's two cabins! In the process of making the arrest on December 15, 1890 Lieutenant Bull Head, after being shot himself, made it his last desperate act to turn and shoot Sitting Bull; at the same time Red Tomahawk fired into Bull's back, killing him.[39] 303. Cody believed that he could have succeeded in getting Bull to leave the reservation, though Bull was reportedly not to be persuaded. *SPPP*, December 4, 1890.

Sitting Bull had committed no crime up to this time other than the minor infractions of not sending his children to school and not coming in for rations--arguments which McLaughlin used to justify having the chief arrested (As early as 1885 the agent wrote: "[B]ut as... [Sitting Bull] is working against our schools and will not send any of his children and tries to influence others, and is very pompous and insolent, it may therefore be necessary for me to adopt stringent measures with him and that in the future I may be obliged to arrest him and confine him in the guardhouse.") Also, Bull had not as yet left his home and gone off the reserve without permission. David H. Miller writes: "Sitting Bull was guilty of no crime--not even that of unauthorized absence from the reservation. McLaughlin had long complained that the chief would ‘commit no overt act.’" Edward A. Milligan adds: "The move against Sitting Bull was not necessary. No hostile acts against the whites had been committed.... [McLaughlin] built up such an intense hatred for the chieftain, consciously or unconsciously, that it... culminated in the death of the great leader." Today McLaughlin would be charged with complicity in murder, but then he was looked upon as a good agent only doing his duty! To make matters even more morally outrageous, the police also murdered the chief's seventeen-year-old son, Crowfoot, who was an innocent bystander, killed for no other reason than that Bull Head wanted still further vengeance on Sitting Bull. Utley argues that the police did not intend to kill Sitting Bull--that McLaughlin did not use the police as a "murder squad," and did not want to risk the lives of the policemen. However, it seems evident that McLaughlin created, or at least accepted, a situation where in all likelihood a fight would break out and the chief killed. (Milligan claims as well that the police were ordered to bring a light wagon along to bring Bull back, and that in the parlance of the day this meant, "Bring him back dead.")[40] 133, 137, 140; Utley, *Lance and Shield*, 310.

SITTING BULL'S CHARACTER

PERSONALITY

> *"He likes to joke and is at times very droll." --Jean B. Genin*

SITTING BULL was a stocky, full-chested, broadshouldered man about five-feet-nine-or-ten-inches tall, weighing between 170 and 200 pounds. He was fun-loving, normally good-humored and loquacious, and not at all the stoic type. Colonel Trobriand, who was one of the first U. S. military men to write of the chief, commented that Sitting Bull had a "conversation abounding in good humor.... He seems to like to talk.... [H]e entertained [our couriers]... with his exploits and his plans." Newspaperman Finerty wrote similarly: "In manner [Bull]... was dignified but not stiff, and when in good humor, which occurred pretty often, he laughed with the ease of a schoolboy." He joked not only with adults, but even with youngsters. He was once observed laughing hysterically after attending a performance at the St. Paul opera house--he said

that he had not laughed so much since his surrender![41]Minneapolis Evening Journal, March 21, 1884. Bull was also very tenderhearted and spent time at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum. He wept when his father was killed. He cried when his baby daughter was dying. And he sobbed after his surrender. He also criticized the American soldiers for not showing emotion when their comrades were killed and wounded in battle as the Lakotas did.

His personality was social enough that it allowed him to become an entrepreneur. He willingly interacted with white people, signing his autograph on cards to sell for $1.50 apiece (up from the ten to fifty cents he charged from the time of his surrender), and selling pipes for forty to fifty dollars. It is testimony to his social nature that he was willing to go on display for Alvaren Allen and Bill Cody. Regrettably, in Allen's show the chief was perhaps unaware that he was not just appearing as himself but rather as a kind of buffoon "killer of General Custer." Cody was more respectful, but the chief still had to endure many boos and hisses from audiences in the states. One might question the chief's sensibilities in appearing in such an entertainment extravaganza as the Wild West Show. According to Christine Bold, the show codified white American suppression of natives as a heroic game. There is certainly great irony in the fact that Sitting Bull, who stood irreconcilably for the independence of the Lakotas his whole life, was brought to the point of becoming a sideshow attraction in a mockery of that very fight! All that can be said of Bull's rationale is that he desperately wanted to see the President and felt that joining these shows was the only way he could get to Washington; also, his curiosity about the whites needed to be satisfied. However, in retrospect he probably realized that he had gained little by seeing the President in 1885 and his appearance in these shows was often a denigrating experience (He eventually refused to go on the show's tour to England.) And while Charles Eastman felt that Bull's involvement in the Ghost Dance was the weakest thing he ever did, it would seem that his Wild West Show appearances supersedes this. Furthermore, Cody made a fortune off the chief while Bull's earnings--fifty dollars a week-were meager by comparison.[42] (1954; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), x; Moorehead, *The American Indian,* 199.

HEALTH

> *"He proved to be a robust man...." --Rudolf Cronau*

OF HIS HEALTH history and battle wounds a little is known. As a child, probably in the fall of 1837, he suffered smallpox which left his face scarred with pockmarks. (This disease virtually wiped out the nearby Missouri River tribes, particularly the Mandans. And not coincidentally, Bull's fellow chieftain, Inkpaduta, was noted for extreme facial scarring from the same epidemics.) Even so, Bull grew up physically vigorous, energetic and indefatigable. He often did the sun-gazing dance which required extreme physical tortures. More than once he ripped out the muscles in his chest and elsewhere to free himself from the sacred dance pole. He also may have slashed himself from time to time with a knife as was often done by warriors when mourning for close relatives (Chief Running Antelope for example cut fifty or sixty gashes into his flesh after his son died in 1867.) In addition, Bull was wounded several times in battle. Commentators often referred to his foot injury which caused him to limp thereafter. Other wounds healed without any apparent negative consequence in spite of their severity. Grouard claimed that Bull was once so badly wounded that the physicians despaired of saving his life, yet he recovered. This may have been the injury he incurred in the Fisk wagon train fight; a

bullet fired at close range entered his left hip and exited the small of his back. He was also wounded in the arm by a Flathead arrow.43 (Quote) Rudolf Cronau, "A Red Napoleon," p. 2, typescript, box 29, folder 3, Orin G. Libby Collection, North Dakota Historical Society, Bismarck; DeBarthe, *Grouard*, 33-34; Judson E. Walker, *Campaigns of General Custer in the North-West and the Final Surrender of Sitting Bull* (New York: Promontory Press, 1966), 90; (on Running Antelope) Trobriand, *Military Life*, 260; Utley, *Lance and Shield*, 60.

But it wasn't until the 1880s that the chief's general health suffered. This was no doubt the effect of advancing age and the prolonged periods of destitution and near-starvation which he endured when the buffalo became scarce. Perhaps he suffered like others from the "mountain fever" which came after eating diseased horseflesh during the winter of 1880-81. Also, his eyes were said to have become weak at that time, and he began to wear a pair of green wire goggles which ostensibly protected against snow blindness in the winter and alkali dust in the summer. Otherwise, Sitting Bull, said a reporter, had "as keen eagle eyes as ever was set between two high cheek bones on any red man...." Bull was able to recuperate from his Canadian hardships during his stay at Fort Randall and joined the last great Lakota buffalo hunt in September 1883. However, in 1884 he complained almost constantly of chest pain. One writer thought that this was caused by cigarettes which the chief had begun smoking at Fort Randall. But Bull himself commented that his trouble began before this: **"I suffer a good deal of pain in my chest and have had it a long time. The reason I didn't go to the Iowa State fair, or to the Cincinnati Exposition, was because of my chest."** Still, he was an "inveterate smoker" in the 1880s and still carried around a three-and-a-half-foot long pipe. In 1888, during his Washington trip, colds plagued many of the chiefs to the point that it was thought they could not attend to their treaty business. Finally, in the spring of 1889 Sitting Bull became severely ill and was even reported dead. At that time measles, influenza and whooping cough were running rampant on the reservation, resulting in many Indian deaths.[44]

DRESS

> *"Well, I suppose my people look up to me because I am poor." — Sitting Bull*
>
> *"[Sitting Bull]... was not a handsome man and was notoriously careless about his clothes." — Stanley Vestal*

SITTING BULL was notably "humble" — or plain — in appearance and dress in spite of his offices. All agreed that he was usually the "least adorned of his companions." Captain Walter Clifford wrote in 1881, "His pride is seemingly intense and yet there is no man in the camp more plainly dressed than he; I should have said more ragged." Bull's outfit in 1881 was a blue blanket sewn into pantaloons, calico shirt, beaded moccasins, brass rings on his fingers, glass goggles, and another blanket tied about his waist. One reporter said humorously that the chief's pantaloons were only "half-civilized" as they had "great gaping places at the proper location of the pockets, and when he walked [he] often displayed a brawny leg." On the occasion of his surrender Bull wore red paint on his neck, his entire face, and in the part of his hair. On his head was a foxskin cap with the entire face intact and a long bushy tail; later he wore a simple brimmed hat (size eight) which was ornamented with a monarch butterfly. He was thought to have been somewhat unique in hairstyle when he was younger for he cut his hair to shoulderlength, which was short by Lakota norms (but he may have cut it simply for a mourning observance.) By the time of his surrender, he wore it much longer, usually in braids, wrapped in skin or cloth. He usually wore only one eagle's feather — it being a symbol of his identification with *Wakan Tanka*. Only in battle and on special occasions did he wear his ostentatious, long-flowing bonnets with buffalo-horns, eagle feathers and otter tails. He gave one such headdress to Major James M.

Walsh in 1880 and another to Annie Oakley in 1885. (Walsh's bonnet was later purchased by a Chicagoan named Hoeingsbergerit and is now held by a Toronto museum; other items which Bull may have given to Walsh or other police leaders are in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Museum at Regina, Saskatchewan.) For weapons, Bull used bow and arrows and lance and shield (with the image of an eagle) until he acquired a revolver and a Winchester. The particular carbine he surrendered in 1881 was made in 1875, based on model

1866, caliber 44 rimfire. The initials, "SB," were carved into the stock, possibly by Major David H. Brotherton who received and kept the gun (It was donated by his heirs to the Smithsonian Institution in 1946.)[45] August 1, 1881; Paul L. Hedren, "Sitting Bull's Surrender at Fort Buford: An Episode in American History," *North Dakota History* 62 (Fall 1995): 8, 11; John C. Ewers, "When Sitting Bull Surrendered His Winchester," in *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 175-86.

GENEROSITY

> *"A great hunter, [Sitting Bull]... gave away his game freely to the poor." — Aaron Beede*
>
> *"[Sitting Bull]... always had a kind heart for old people; he always wanted to feed [them]..." — One Bull*

IN SITTING BULL'S VIEW, clothes did not make the man, but rather the qualities of one's character and the practical demonstration of these qualities, such as giving buffalo to the poor. One Hunkpapa recalled that Bull, after having a successful hunt, would go about the camp and leave buffalo meat with the sick and the aged. Bull himself stated in 1885 that **"it had always been his custom in the old days, when he had plenty, to feed any man, woman, or child who came along when he himself was ready to eat...."** Later, he heard something to the effect that Christians should love one another and live by the "Golden Rule." This concept came as no surprise to him as that is what he felt his people had always practiced. But after traveling through the United States and Canada and seeing all the impoverished people among the whites, he told a missionary, **"The Lakota were better Christians before they ever heard of Christ than the white men are now."** Walsh agreed with Sitting Bull's assessment and wrote of the chief in 1890, "This man that so many people look upon as a bloodthirsty villain would make many members of the Christian faith ashamed of their doubts and weakness in the faith of their God if they knew him in his true character." World famous sharpshooter Annie Oakley also was greatly impressed with Bull, particularly his generosity during the 1885 tour with the Wild West Show. She noted that he sent a portion of his salary home to his family every week and gave away much of the rest to the ragged children he saw around the show. She heard Bull wonder aloud, that **"if the whites treated their children so poorly, how would they treat the Indian?"** Aside from food, Bull also gave horses away quite freely. His nephew One Bull received one, as did Mrs. Harriet Clifford after his surrender. Sitting Bull also gave a pony to Ethel Ashcroft, a ten-year-old girl from a neighboring white family that supplied him with potatoes. Not only was Bull generous but it was his policy never to take presents from the Americans — at least until his surrender. Finerty wrote in 1879 that there was "one grand virtue which all must acknowledge — Sitting Bull never begged." A trader's wife in Saskatchewan told Finerty that Sitting Bull was "the nicest Indian around.., never intruding upon the privacy of the household by hanging around at meal time, as some of the others did." However, by 1885 Bill Cody disagreed with this estimation, calling Bull a "peevish beggar."[46] 162; *Toronto Globe*, August 24, 1885; Havighurst, *Annie Oakley*, 62; Hedren, ibid, 13; Sally R. Wagner, *Daughters of Dakota II: Stories from the Attic* (Carmichael, CA: Sky Carrier Press, 1990), 166, and "Sitting Bull: In Memory," http://www.dickshovel.com/sittingbull.html; Finerty, *War-Path*, 281, 284.

LOVE OF FAMILY

> *"I... was particularly impressed with his deep affection for his family." --George P. Ahern*

SITTING BULL had an intense love for his family. He demonstrated this by killing the warrior who killed his father and by providing for his mother until her death. In fact, he only surrendered in the end because his daughter, Many Horses, was, he thought, being held a prisoner in chains. On this point one Hunkpapa said, "You hear officers boast of conquering Sitting Bull, but the one who brought him to the post was his daughter. The love of the parent for the child is strong in my race." In one song Bull addressed his child: **"Only one, only one, loved by everyone; only one speaks sweet words to everyone."** Likewise, his love for his nephew prompted him to lead White Bull off a battlefield in 1876 and order him never to fight again. Furthermore, on his last day he may have resisted arrest primarily because his wives and son encouraged him to be the brave man that he was! Correspondingly, Bull's private life seems to have been quite harmonious. At least this is

indicated by Catherine Weldon, a white woman who lived with the chief and his family for a time: "As a friend [Sitting Bull was]... sincere and true, as a patriot devoted and incorruptible. As a husband and father, affectionate and considerate. As a host, courteous and hospitable to the last degree." However, Bull admitted that there had been some uncomfortable jealousy between two of his former wives. He was also notable for extending his family relationships. While the Lakotas sometimes adopted captives to replace lost loved ones, Bull made relations out of just about anyone he took a shine to--like Little Assiniboin, Frank "Grabber" Grouard and Johnny "Big Leggins" Brugiere for brothers, One Bull and Nate Salsbury (Bill Cody's business partner) for sons, and Annie "Little Sure Shot" Oakley for a daughter (He also tried to adopt missionary Mary Collins.) As for Bull's love for his people, this was demonstrated at the Little Bighorn: Iron Hawk heard him say, **"Boys, take courage, would you see these little children be taken away from me as dogs?"**[47] American Indian, 162, 197; Utley, *Lance and Shield*, 35; Trobriand, *Military Life*, 289; (quote) Raymond J. DeMallie, ed. *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 190; W. A. Graham, *The Custer Myth: A Sourcebook of Custeriana* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1953), 55; (on Brugiere and White Bull) Stanley Vestal, *Warpath: The True Story of the Fighting Sioux Told in a Biography of Chief White Bull* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 218-19, 225; Shirl Kasper, *Annie Oakley* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 55; Wagner, "Sitting Bull: In Memory."

HORSES, BIRDS AND SINGING

> *"O bird people, from this day always you shall be my relatives." --Sitting Bull*

SITTING BULL'S hobbies or pastimes included horse-raising, bird-watching, song composition and singing. When Finerty visited Sitting Bull's camp in Canada in 1879, he observed that the chief was an excellent rider who "amused himself" by breaking young horses. The chief boasted of his large pony herd and was known in his earlier days for his many horse-stealing raids. No wonder that he was greatly outraged when he heard that one of the conditions for his surrender was to give up his beloved ponies. He exclaimed to Father Marty: **"[W]hy, if I go back to the Americans, are they going to take all my stock away? Did *Wakan Tanka* or the Queen ask you to tell me to give all my stock to the Long Knives?"** It was no doubt Sitting Bull's love of horses that prompted Buffalo Bill to give the chief a gift of one in 1885.[48] As to birds, Sitting Bull believed that one had saved his life by instructing him to lie still when he was being approached by a grizzly bear. On that occasion he quickly composed a new song with the words: **"Pretty bird, you saw me and took pity on me. You wish me to survive among the people."** Bull became a bird-watcher to the point that he told stories about birds and could understand the meanings of their calls. Bull also sang very well and was a prolific songwriter, although the lyrics he composed were generally only several lines long. Vestal observed that the Lakotas

created poetry and song for the purposes of the occasion just as they would have any oration: The compositions created a mood which enabled the singer "to swim with the cosmic currents, to keep abreast of the seasons, to march with events, to walk with his gods in the pageant of unending life with dignity and comfort." The topics included war, gods, horses and family affections. In one song Bull imitated the prairie warbler and demonstrated his appreciation for the coming of spring: **"Flowers! White, white! Blue, blue! Yellow, yellow! Red, red! Flowers! Leaves! Grass!"** In regard to suffering caused by the invasion of the whites, he sang, **"The Father has given me the Bird People for mine, and with them a hard time I am having."** In another song he appealed to his horse to carry him well, whether in war or hunt: **"My horse, take dauntless courage! My horse, the tribes depend on you. So, my horse, run!"** When a relative was killed, Bull mournfully sang, **"You heralds, a Fox Soldier has not returned, did you hear? Red Boulder has not come back, did you hear?"** He warned his mother in one song that he would likely die in battle: **"No chance for me to live, mother, you might as well mourn."** He also sang for self-encouragement. During difficult years Bull composed the line, **"Friends, hardships pursue me; fearless of them, I live."** No wonder that he was in demand for ceremonial occasions when a singer was needed.[49]

BRAVERY

"That he was not afraid I know. Death held nothing appalling." --Anonymous Hunkpapa

SITTING BULL, as the above song testifies, considered himself fearless, and most others (aside from the McLaughlin and jealous chiefs crowd) considered him one of the bravest of the brave. Frank Grouard esteemed Sitting Bull the bravest man in the whole Lakota nation--ranking him above the famed Crazy Horse! Such statements were not merely a matter of opinion, but based on verified coups, for which military honors were awarded. Walsh too felt that the chief was "brave to a fault," and Finerty adds, "[Sitting Bull] had not, like Crazy Horse, the reputation of being recklessly brave, but neither was he reported a dastard... [He] was simply prudent." Yet on a number of occasions Sitting Bull tossed prudence aside and gave decided demonstrations of his courage. He did this to give an example to the young men, and also to not be outdone by such outstanding warriors as Crazy Horse and Long Dog, and even his "fighting" nephews, White Bull and One Bull. Grouard recalled that in the winter of 1870 the Hunkpapas found a war party of Crows sheltered behind a rock wall. Sitting Bull proposed to lead the attack, expecting every man to follow. Riding far in advance of his warriors, he reached the rock barricade alone and killed several men before the others came up. On another occasion (August 14, 1872), when his warriors were skirmishing with a railroad escort under Major Eugene M. Baker, Bull coolly walked out between the lines and sat down within range of the soldiers' guns; he then lit his pipe, smoked it, cleaned it, and walked back unhit.[50] 46; Vestal, *Warpath*, 137-42.

Sitting Bull also demonstrated his bravery by his many horse-stealing raids. He boasted that he had been in twenty-two such escapades. His nephew recalled one expedition: "One time ... I took my wife with me and we went out with Sitting Bull, Two Bulls, and another fellow to steal horses. We brought back twenty-three head!"[51]

CHARISMA

"He had some indefinable power which could not be resisted by his people, or even others who came in contact with him." --Mary C. Collins

BEYOND HIS GOOD HEALTH and rugged physical constitution, the greatest attribute which Sitting Bull possessed was his charisma. Even aside from his aura as a holy man, he possessed a good deal of that magical quality. Mary Collins commented that "he had some very undefinable power which could not be resisted...." Finerty called it "strong personal magnetism." An American reporter wrote: "One recognizes [Sitting Bull]... intuitively, for there is something in his aspect that lifts him above Indians who stand even higher in rank, but who bow in deference to [his]... ability...." And John G. Neihardt poetically stated:

No heroic height proclaimed him peer among the men of might,
Nor was his bearing such as makes men serve.
Bull-torsed, squat-necked, with legs that kept a curve
To fit the many ponies he had backed,
He scarcely pleased the eyes. But what he lacked
Of visible authority to mould
Men's lives was compensated manifold
By something penetrating in his gaze...

Sitting Bull's charisma was ennobled by his humility in the sense that he gave credit for his successes to *Wakan Tanka*, particularly when asked about his great victory over Custer.[52]Twilight of the Sioux (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 31-32.

INTELLIGENCE

"[Sitting Bull] is the shrewdest and most intelligent Indian living...." --Major James Walsh

"He had a big brain and a good one...." --Wooden Leg

SITTING BULL was described as a very intelligent man by friends and enemies alike. Colonel Nelson A. Miles referred to him as "a fine, powerful, intelligent, determined-looking man." Walsh went so far as to call him "the shrewdest and most intelligent Indian living," and an Indian "of unusual powers of mind...." While his high estimation is not scientifically provable, it is certainly difficult to accept McLaughlin's suggestion that the chief's intelligence was inferior to Gall's, Red Cloud's and Spotted Tail's. Even having said this, McLaughlin admitted that Bull "maintained his prestige by the acuteness of his mind and his knowledge of human nature." In an effort to counteract McLaughlin's criticisms, Vestal tried to better quantify Bull's intelligence, though perhaps inflating it to a degree: "[T]ry to find one speech--by any Sioux chief--which will compare for logic, force, and oratorical skill with the speeches of Sitting Bull. It does not exist.... [T]ry to find an instance in which he betrayed his people, or was fooled by white officials.... If Sitting Bull was not a man of brains, he was at least keen enough to get the best of every white official sent to bully, or cajole, or swindle him...."[53] Perhaps another possible yardstick of Sitting Bull's intelligence can be deduced from General Alfred Sully's report in 1865 that the Yanktonai chief, Medicine Bear, was reputedly the "smartest chief" of the Lakotas. If Medicine Bear was, he never made the mark that Sitting Bull

did in his tribe's history and therefore one might conclude that Sitting Bull was possibly the more intelligent man. In fact, Medicine Bear may have been jealous of Sitting Bull, as he informed a military officer in 1868 that he should not trust Sitting Bull because of his warlike tendencies. Bull's intelligence has been qualified in only one way: A trader remarked that the chief was clever "in the Indian fashion only," inferring that Bull did not have a complete handle on the white man's way of thinking. Yet Bull's speeches usually proved that he understood them very well. More than anything else, Sitting Bull was knowledgeable enough about one basic fact: American authorities could rarely be trusted to keep their word. Therefore his basic policy was to keep his distance from them until the last possible minute. He boasted that he had never signed a treaty with the government, knowing that it would be broken. He declared, **"What treaty that the whites ever made with us red men have they kept? Not one."** Red Cloud on the other hand attempted to believe in the good faith of the government. He sent word to Sitting Bull in July 1872, "Make no trouble for our Great Father. His heart is good. Be friends to him and he will provide for you." But the government made Red Cloud appear to be a fool, especially after it made moves to take the Black Hills in spite of the guarantees of the 1868 treaty.[54]The Odyssey of Chief Standing Buffalo and the Northern Sisseton Sioux (Minneapolis: Coyote Books, 1988), 80; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 259, 261, 265; Larson, *Red Cloud,* 150.

DIPLOMACY

> *"He is shrewd and full of diplomacy." --Jean B. Genin*

ALL CONCEDE that the chief was intelligent enough to be a shrewd diplomat and political leader. In fact, Bull's earlier achievements as a war leader took a decided second place to the great need among the independent Lakotas and Cheyennes for a single political representative. He was strong enough as a statesman to provide the backbone for unity against the Americans. As historian Jerome A. Greene has pointed out, "[Sitting Bull was] possessed of a keen acumen for unifying the objectives of his large Hunkpapa following with those of several other Teton tribes therefore serving more as a political than a war leader...." Even Bull's enemies acknowledged that the chief must have possessed certain abilities to have become such a figure. Colonel John Gibbon saw Bull's success as requiring tact, courage and ability. And one editor wrote in 1881: "[Sitting Bull's] great natural abilities of organization and leadership are abundantly proved by the influence he has long exercised over his followers." One priest observed that Sitting Bull exercised great discretion: He was very tight-lipped about some matters, and sometimes gave false impressions on purpose to disguise how he really felt so that few could know his true state of mind. He is also known to have twisted the truth at times. For example, to bolster his arguments for remaining in Canada, he told General Alfred Terry in 1877 that he had been born and raised in that country--that is, Saskatchewan. Bull's diplomatic skills were butressed by his oratorical ability. Walsh felt that in this regard the chief was superior to all in council: "[E]very word said by him carries weight, [and] is quoted and passed from camp to camp." As a political spokesman, he obviously rivaled Red Cloud, whom Larson calls "an exceptional political strategist." But both chiefs were greatly

stymied after their surrenders, as the reservation system simply undercut their traditional influence.[55]Yellowstone Command: Colonel Nelson A. Miles and the Great Sioux War, 1876-1877 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 94; Larson, *ibid*, 300.

OBSTINACY

> *"He was bull-headed." --Charles A. Eastman*
>
> *"His indomitable energy and bull-dog tenacity has drawn toward him the utmost respect of all his subordinate chiefs and warriors...." --Judson E. Walker*

IN ADDITION TO THE CHIEF'S native intelligence and well-honed diplomacy, he was gifted with a dogged obstinacy--so much so that some even thought that he had been named for a buffalo bull's natural inclination in this regard, rather than it being an honorary name given to him by his father. Writer Thomas Newson connected Bull's "stubbornness of character" with military tactics, and felt that this made him comparable to General U. S. Grant, who was then considered the "greatest warrior of modern times." In addition, Bull's obstinacy was based on principle rather than pragmatism. General Alfred H. Terry gave Sitting Bull a backhanded compliment in this regard when he said: "Sitting Bull has never entered an agency nor drawn rations from the government and never will. His conduct is consistent in this respect--a virtue few other Indians can be credited with.... He has always declined to go into the treaty-making councils--always refused to sign the treaties when made--believing that any temporizing whatever with the whites was a piece of ignoble weakness unworthy his race." Not only did Bull never make a treaty, but when asked to enter Fort Walsh to council with General Terry in 1877, he said that he had never been inside of a fort before (that is, a military post rather than a trading establishment, which was frequently called a fort)! Walsh later said that Bull's motivational stand was nothing but a plea for justice: Bull believed that if the U. S. government had honestly carried out its treaties with the Lakotas then there would have been no need of war. Walsh further commented in an excusable overstatement: "The war between the U. S. and Bull was a strange one. A nation against one man. On the U. S. side there were numbers, on Bull's side there was principle."[56] 88; Thomas M. Newson, *Thrilling Scenes Among the Indians* (Stamford, Conn.: Longmeadow Press, 1994), 196-97; *SPMPP,* November 16, 1876; James Walsh's notes.., December 16, 1890, WP.

Bull's obstinacy and principles were also reflective of and supported by his theology. He evidenced a genuine effort to live as a holy man of his people. As far as he was concerned, *Wakan Tanka* was on his side, and the war with the whites was due to the Americans' effort to thwart the intentions of *Wakan Tanka.* As he said, **"In the first place the Great Spirit provided for both the white and the red man. But... the white race has become so powerful that he defies the Great Spirit and is trying to undo all He has done."** Bull also said in 1879 that the Great Spirit was with him and would punish those who persecuted him. Not surprisingly, in 1877 he took clergyman Martin Marty to task for having the nerve to speak to him of being "God's messenger." At that time Bull declared pointedly that the Americans had probably never seen *Wakan Tanka* and this was the reason they would not listen to him! He went on to reveal that *Wakan Tanka* had warned him not to do anything wrong to the Americans, or his people would be destroyed as a consequence; therefore, he had gone to Canada to live as a "good man." If he ever expressed fear about anything it was in not doing what *Wakan Tanka* told him. He was no hypocrite. No wonder that in 1890 Bull thought that there was a possibility that, since the whites had killed the Messiah once, He was now coming back to care for the Indian race![57]

JUDGEMENT

> *"His accuracy of judgement, knowledge of men.., and a deep insight into affairs among Indians and such white people as he came into contact with, made his stock in trade...." --James McLaughlin*

"He had come now into admiration by all Indians... as a man having a kind heart and good judgement as to the best course of conduct." --Wooden Leg

ANOTHER GREAT factor in Sitting Bull's rise to leadership was that he usually exercised a careful seasoned judgement about matters. Walsh concluded from his observation that Sitting Bull's power consisted in the "universal confidence" which was placed in his judgement. Bull nurtured this by giving himself much time to deliberate an issue before making a decision. He frequently sat quietly, rehearsing in his mind what he would say before he made a reply to a question. He once stated: **"I have lived a long time, and I have seen a great deal, and I have always had a reason for everything I have done. Every act of my life has had an object in view, and no man can say that I have neglected facts or failed to think."** Colonel Miles, who was Bull's chief adversary after Custer was killed, noted the chief's careful use of words: "He was a man of few words and cautious in his expressions, evidently thinking twice before speaking." Canadian police commissioner Acheson G. Irvine also commented on this: "[Sitting Bull]... spoke as a man who knew his subject well and who had thoroughly weighed it over before speaking." Finerty heard it said that Bull's "judgement was... superior to his courage, and his cunning superior to both."[58] 178; (Sitting Bull speech) Creelman, *Great Highway,* 298-303; *Wild Life,* 395; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 189; Greene, *Yellowstone Command,* 94; Finerty, *War-Path,* 284.

However, Bull's leadership required more than good judgement on his part to keep the loyalty of the chiefs and warriors, especially in adverse situations. Walsh noted that one way in which he accomplished this was to "not assert himself over strongly": "[H]e does not interfere with the rights or duties of others." Although Bull's word essentially became law, he did not try to offend others and he allowed the war leaders the "duties appertaining to engagements." In this way he cleverly tried to avoid incurring criticism and jealousy from his fellow leaders. Long Dog, for example, who was one of the most noted warriors of the Hunkpapas and the brother of chief Pretty Bear, was allowed to take on a role of pride and respect. He was able to boast, "I am not a chief, but I am a warrior, and when I take the trail no man ever goes in front of me. Sitting Bull has ridden behind me, but never in front." Walsh also said that Bull would not even give his advice until it was asked for. Hence, he ruled by being a servant to his people.[59]

SOLDIERS' LODGE

> *"[Sitting] Bull ruled this camp with the authority of a king...." --James Walsh*

NOTWITHSTANDING the leadership pattern that Bull set, as a last resort he could use the true coercive or disciplinary power of the soldiers' lodge, or camp police. It was only they who had the real authority to enforce regulations with punishments, and as long as Bull had the support of the soldiers, he had virtual control of the camp. Bull organized a 100-man lodge, which became referred to as "Sitting Bull's Soldiers," or the White Horse Riders. The lodge seems also to have been particularly under the influence of the Silent Eaters, who were Sitting Bull's most loyal supporters. Utley feels that Bull organized the lodge to fortify his own authority. This is undoubtedly true, but it should be admitted as well that all large camps had police and in that sense there was nothing unusual about it. The lodge deliberated in an extremely large council tent, sometimes painted a striking yellow color, erected in the middle of the camp. Their disciplinary actions were prominently used during the summer of 1876. The Blackfeet Lakota

chief, Kill Eagle, complained that he and his band were subject to the lodge's ill will at the Little Bighorn--some lost lodges, others horses, and many were physically wounded. Walsh became acquainted with the lodge while Sitting Bull was in Canada: "[T]he Bull camp was governed by very strict tribal law, and the people composing it were well disciplined in them. ... [N]o man or family of the camp could withdraw from it on any excuse without the consent of the camp council. Those who attempted to escape were severally dealt with." In 1880 Low Dog, in order to secede from Sitting Bull's control, had to form a new lodge in order to counter the authority of the old one. Still, the police were instructed by Sitting Bull to serve the people: **"Keep your gun handy.... Have a fast horse that will carry you. Protect the camp, and when you hunt, remember to kill meat for the old and helpless."**60 (Quote) Walsh's notes.., December 16, 1890, and Walsh, untitled paper, and Report of Superintendent L. Crozier, December 1880, WP; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 209; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 101-2; Graham, *Custer Myth,* 50.

PEACEMAKER

> *"All my life I have been a man of peace...." --Sitting Bull*

IN SPITE of the iron hand exercised through his soldiers, Sitting Bull prided himself in being a peacemaker. This was a role which Lakota chiefs were expected to play, as feuds, particularly in cases of bloodshed, could tear families, bands and even whole tribes apart. On one occasion Bull said, **"I am always for peace. You who know me will bear witness that I take most joy in being a peacemaker. I mediate gladly."** It was said that when Bull saw two men squabbling he would say, **"Do not make war among yourselves.... Tell me your dispute."** He would go through camp, saying, **"Be cheerful now; have a holiday spirit. Do not have special friends. Be friends with everybody."** He once made the Hunkpapas return horses which they had stolen from the Oglalas; for this service the Oglalas made Bull an honorary chief of their tribe. Bull also mediated between two factions of Miniconjous in the summer of 1872: A feud over a woman caused one man to murder another, and before it was over some eighty people had been killed. Bull gave a dozen of his own ponies to the offended party and by his persuasiveness induced the two factions to make peace. After Bull entered Canada he kept thousands peaceable: The Canadian Secretary of State admitted, "[It is] only fair to Sitting Bull to say that their conduct has been of a character to which no exception can be taken."[61] 178; F. W. Seward to E. Thornton, March 11, 1879, GGO, PAC; see also, Vestal, *New Sources,* 333.

GENERAL (?)

> *"Sitting Bull is chief of the warriors and is by all odds the biggest man in the tribe in point of influence. Black Moon is chief of the nation, but has nothing to say about Sitting Bull's dictum as general of their army." --Jean B. Genin*

WHILE WHITES knew little of Sitting Bull's role as a peacemaker, his reputation for war was too well known--actually it was mostly hype and fabrication from an ethnocentric American press. Under the assumption that Sitting Bull was the "general" of a huge Indian "army" at the Little Bighorn, they argued that he therefore must have known the tactics of Napoleon and Caesar in order to defeat such gallant opponents as Crook and Custer. As one editor said of the Battle of the Rosebud, "Sitting Bull showed himself the equal of the great Indian fighter, Crook, in the disposition and handling of his forces." Another editor's assumptions along this line caused him to complain about Bull's failure to wipe out more American forces in the fall of 1876: "Why did he not attack one column [Crooks's or Terry's] or the other? Why did he permit

them to unite? Why did he run?" Walsh tried to counteract this twisted thinking, but went to the other extreme, saying, "I believe that [Sitting Bull]... understands nothing particularly of war or military tactics...." The fact is that the chief *did* give general direction in the Indian reaction to Crook and Custer in 1876 and was certainly skilled in warfare in the Indian sense. However, older Lakota civil chiefs were traditionally not expected to take an active part in warfare, since other leaders had already been appointed as head soldiers or war chiefs to give direction to the actual fighting men. Furthermore, Sitting Bull, from the Custer fight on, was primarily interested in defensive strategies against the whites and it was definitely not his intention to kill all the soldiers he could find. He frequently pointed out that he had never carried the war to the whites.[62] 12, 21; Walker, *General Custer,* 67; (Walsh quotation) *Wild Life,* 395.

The question should be raised about whether or not Sitting Bull understood white military tactics enough to counteract their moves. The answer is certainly dubious, particularly so in his earlier years. Sitting Bull was so ethnocentric about warfare that he thought that the white soldiers did not know how to fight! He saw that the Lakotas had advantage over the soldiers in that they were excellent horsemen, good shots and unequaled scouts. But as Vestal pointed out, the Indians were disadvantaged because "they lacked entirely the discipline and organization of white soldiers. They fought as volunteers, each man to distinguish himself...." Furthermore, he explained, "their strategy was elementary. It consisted for the most part of surprise, ambush, attack and flight." One editor, in a discussion of these differences of warfare, agreed, and concluded that "whenever the

Indians caught the white men at a disadvantage they proceeded to open a fight.... And that was just the way with Sitting Bull."[63]

More specifically, the Lakotas usually attacked in a sweeping, circling line--they would fire a volley, and then pass on to circle and return fire from a different angle. When they managed to isolate, wound or kill an enemy, the warriors would rush to count coup on him. In one fight with Colonel Miles's Fifth Cavalry, the Lakota attack was described similarly. The warriors, heavily massed in front, began to press around the soldiers' flanks and rear and alternately attacked the right and left side; when the soldiers advanced in one direction or another, the warriors fell back to prevent casualties. If noncombatants needed time to get away, the warriors would continue to skirmish and perhaps burn the prairie to retard the enemy's advance. However, if the enemy panicked, or a few became isolated, the Indians took full advantage of the situation and rode up close for hand-to-hand fighting. These methods were particularly evident and effective at the Reno and Custer fights at the Little Bighorn. On the other hand, it is certainly true as the above editor wrote that by comparison Little Crow's campaign during the Dakota War of 1862 showed as "much and more military genius than was displayed by Sitting Bull." Little Crow has yet to receive the credit he deserves in his endeavors to consciously fight as a white military officer might. He mustered support for major attacks on such objectives as Fort Ridgely and New Ulm, and it is well known that he strongly urged the warriors to adopt the white custom of war to spare the lives of women and children.[64]

Anthony McGinnis, in his study of Plains Indian warfare, pointed out that only a few Lakota chiefs, primarily Crazy Horse, recognized the need to change their tactics (as Little Crow did)--to fight "in a more organized and united way like the soldiers in order to achieve more total victories." Yet even these few, he writes, "found it difficult to completely step out of their traditional ways of war." This is certainly true in Sitting Bull's case. He was relatively oblivious to out-strategizing the soldiers, not because of lack of intelligence or leadership skills, but

because firstly, his game in the 1870s was largely a defensive one, and secondly, he relied on leadings and prophecies from *Wakan Tanka* to keep him from disasters from whatever source: As he once stated, **"We resolved to camp and await the will of *Wakan Tanka,* at the time praying to *Wakan Tanka* to save us from the hands of our enemies...."** And Bull's pipe-smoking demonstration in front of U. S. soldiers in 1872 was fully in the realm of the outlandish shows of bravery usually seen only in intertribal warfare. The chief's acceptance of a man-to-man fight with a Crow army scout in 1879 again demonstrated that he was operating according to his traditional mindset. According to Walsh, Bull even viewed the soldiers in the same way as the Lakota warriors: "He thinks the soldier, like himself, has nothing but what he gains by war; and that the white warrior acts upon the motto of the red, 'No war, no heroes.'"[65] (Evergreen, CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1990), 116; (quotation) George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory,* 5 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915), 1: 965-66; (Walsh quotation) *CDT,* July 10, 1879. Utley concludes as well that Sitting Bull was still warring in Indian fashion; see *Lance and Shield,* 104.

The one thing that Bull was usually quite careful about was maintaining logistical intelligence through scouting. His Silent Eaters, serving as scouts, were posted all about the countryside and it was generally conceded that Bull could not be easily surprised, if at all. Ironically, the scouts failed to give notice of Custer's approach in 1876 at the Little Bighorn, having relaxed after the fight with Crook on the Rosebud. Yet, Custer felt that he was forced into an immediate attack on the village, feeling that his presence had early been discovered (Actually, it was a group of Cheyennes who saw them.)[66]

STRATEGIES

> *"Sitting Bull did not run away, neither was he 'making medicine' at the time." --Charles A. Eastman*

IT COULD BE ARGUED that Bull's main strategy in facing the threat of attack in 1876 was simply to consolidate as many Indians as he could into his camp in order to maintain probable superiority in numbers. After the military defeat of the Cheyennes under Two Moons, Sitting Bull sent messengers to all the hunting and agency Indians, telling them to gather for one big fight with the soldiers. Given this elementary plan, Bull's concern at the Little Bighorn, barring a parley for negotiation, was not on plans for a counter-offensive against attacking troops. Rather, this was left in the hands of war leaders like Gall, Crazy Horse, Lame White Man and Wolf Tooth, and even the so-called "suicide boys" (some twenty young men who were determined to fight and die in battle), who arose in the crisis to deal with the exigencies of warfare. One basic tactic used with effect at the Bighorn was to frighten off the horses of the soldiers, for the cavalrymen tended to panic when their means of escape was gone. The tactic of the suicide boys was also basic--they went directly into hand-to-hand combat with the soldiers, expecting to be killed, thus mixing the soldiers up enough to perhaps destroy their tactical cohesiveness and thereby promote disintegration. Again, the key to the Indian victory at the Little Bighorn was not due to adopted white strategies. Bull only gave direction from a distance and it was therefore of minimal value. As Major Walsh later said, "[Sitting Bull] is supposed to have guided the fortunes of several battles, including the fight in which Custer fell. That supposition... is partially erroneous." The Indians simply took advantage of 1) Custer's risky, and ultimately faulty, plan in dividing his smaller force in the face of overwhelmingly superior numbers, 2) the failure of Custer's subordinate officers to press their attacks hard enough to distract the warriors and gain possession of the noncombatants to the northwest, and 3) the tactical breakdown of the soldiers into a panic-stricken mob. Man to man, the Lakotas had the

edge not only in numbers, but in energy, fresh horses, courage--knowing that they had to protect their women and children and elderly--and the incentive of military glory which they could obtain in counting coups, etc..[67]Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); (Walsh quote) *Wild Life*, 395.

After superiority in numbers, Bull's second defense strategy was again quite elementary: He tried to muster protection for the women and children who were fleeing the village to the northwestern hills, notwithstanding the lack of glory to be obtained in taking a backseat to the fighting. His success in gaining a sizeable force for this purpose is doubtful, as the matter is not hardly mentioned by the participants. But Bull perhaps suspected, as Vestal contends, that Reno could not have been operating alone, given the small number of soldiers he commanded and his almost immediate stalling strategy in forming his skirmish line and retreating to the nearby timber. Vestal bases his surmises on Bull's words, **"Look out, there must be some trick about this."** Bull had knowledge of Custer's strategy at the Battle of the Washita in 1868, where Custer had divided his force to come at a Cheyenne camp in several directions, so the chief's immediate inclination was to watch out for the noncombatants. His feeling is confirmed by the arguments of archaeographer Richard A. Fox, Jr., who writes that Custer's principal, albeit last minute, strategy was to capture the noncombatants and thus force the warriors to surrender. Many Indians also thought that this was the plan of the as-yet-unknown cavalry leader whose column was proceeding to the north of their village; they generally exclaimed that the soldiers were going to kill or capture the women and children. Bull therefore unwittingly endeavored to thwart the main strategy of his opponent.[68] 60, 79, 102; see also Mildred Fielder, *Sioux Indian Leaders* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1975), 46-49.

NOTWITHSTANDING the foregoing look at Sitting Bull's character virtues and skills, he also had his foibles or raw side, demonstrating that he was indeed very human. Unfortunately, while McLaughlin went to one extreme to denigrate the chief, Vestal and Utley have gone to the other to make him a paragon of virtue. At least Charles Eastman went on record to state that, although Sitting Bull was noble in many respects, he also had "meaner traits." He wrote frankly, "I do not desire to idealize Sitting Bull...." It is certainly high time to consider a more balanced view.[69]

PRIDE

> *"I tell you the truth; since I was raised I have done nothing bad." --Sitting Bull*

"[T]here was... in his nature a superb self-hood which made it difficult for him to yield his soul to [others]... influence...." --Aaron Beede

AT THE OUTSET it is clear that Sitting Bull's visions from *Wakan Tanka* gave him a corresponding self-importance. He believed in his own greatness to the point of arrogance and conceit: He had an unmitigated egoism. Throughout the years he consistently boasted of his greatness. When the Custer fight was won by the Indians, he took the credit for having obtained *Wakan Tanka's* favor. Then he delayed his surrender in order to make sure that it would occur only because of his own free will, so that no one would ever boast of having seized him. He also wanted to be considered as the last plains Indian to give up his gun, when in fact some forty lodges under Black Bull remained in Canada. And after his ego-inflating time with the Wild West Show in 1885, he told missionary Mary Collins, **"I am a great man. White people pay**

money for my autograph.... I am the greatest chief of the Lakotas, as Grant is of the whites." Bull went even further than this to boast that President Grover Cleveland had made him head chief of all the Lakota and acknowledged him as the greatest living Indian! (McLaughlin said that even the Indians could not believe this.) Even as late as 1889, when he was among the few who would not sign a treaty, Bull commented, **"There are no Indians left now but me!"** He apparently saw himself as the unique Lakota and the standard by whom all others were measured! *Wakan Tanka* had chosen him for greatness, and he certainly was not going to deny who and what he was.[70]Across the Medicine Line: The Epic Confrontation Between Sitting Bull and the North-West Mounted Police (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973), 134-35; (second quote) Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 45; Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 112; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:581; *SPMPP,* July 21, 1881; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 214; Clow, "Mary C. Collins," 10; McLaughlin to (?), November 9, 1885, MP.

Furthermore, as Sitting Bull had been the supreme leader of his people for more than a decade, he was accustomed to being implicitly obeyed and even spoke in terms of his "reign." According to Walsh's estimation the chief's ambitions knew no bounds. He likened Bull to Napoleon, and for that reason argued that the Canadian government had better not allow him to remain in Canada. Even after his surrender Bull spoke as though he had never been conquered, and he invariably treated American officials with contempt. Captain Walter Clifford, who accompanied the chief to Fort Buford in 1881, stated that Bull seemed more sullen and insolent than any of the chiefs that he had under his management. Likewise General Howard described the chief as being "always imperious and insolent toward our generals, the Indian Agent, and others...." During the 1883 treaty negotiations, various white dignitaries found Sitting Bull displaying his arrogant pride: **"I have grown to be a very independent man, and consider myself a very great man.... [I]f a man is a chief, and has authority, he should be proud, and consider himself a great man."** On the other hand he loudly condemned all American authorities as dishonest: **"If you have one honest man in Washington, send him here and I will talk to him."** Privately, Bull defended his oratorical tirades, saying, **"If we wish to make any impression upon the paleface, it is necessary to put on his mask."** Mask or not, he seems to have enjoyed giving the white authorities verbal tongue lashings.[71]Famous Indian Chiefs, 311; Eastman, *ibid,* 117-18, 125.

Beede surmised that Sitting Bull's lack of humility among the whites "was due to his lasting determination never to become subordinate to them and to his irritation at their assumed superiority over him...." No doubt this was true. The Lakotas were proud men and Sitting Bull was perhaps the proudest of the proud. This pride was based largely on religion. The Lakota, wrote Eastman, "in his own thought... rose superior" to the white man, and also felt that his religious attitudes and beliefs were superior: "Strange as it may seem, it is true that the proud... [Lakota] in his secret soul despised the good men who came to convert and to enlighten him!" Bull was additionally proud because he epitomized the Lakota holy man, of whom Eastman said: "Every act of his life is, in a very real sense, a religious act." Bull was true to *Wakan Tanka,* yet most of the whites that he observed were hypocritical about their faith or were totally irreligious. Even after learning from Major Walsh that not all white men were the same in their practice of Christianity, it was still difficult for Bull to accept what Eastman referred to as "national bad faith." He could never fully submit to a so-called Christian government which would be party to deception and theft when it came to the Indian.[72]

TEMPER

"I never saw an Indian quite as mad as he was." --Frank Grouard

"My heart is hot that you are so cowardly." --Sitting Bull

BULL'S PRIDE, admirable to an extent, but often excessive, was made worse by an extremely hot temper which at times raged out of control. This is a factor which should not be underestimated in assessing the chief's life and character. If nothing else, it brought him close to an unnecessarily early death a few times. Bull more-or-less admitted the strength of his aroused anger when he told a Canadian official that it made his *"blood boil"* to think of the Americans, and that the very sight of them made him *"crazy with passion."* Colonel Miles saw Bull slip into an angry state during a council in 1876 and gave the following description: "His jaws were tightly closed, his lips were compressed and you could see his eyes glisten with the fire of savage hatred." Sitting Bull's biographers have been reluctant to take notice of the chief's character in this regard. Vestal states that if Bull had displayed this kind of fury with Miles, then this probably would have been the first time in his life that he had done so!?! Likewise, Eastman claimed that the chief was not "phlegmatic." But he certainly was, and this is clearly seen on many occasions. In 1865 when Bull thought that General Alfred Sully's soldiers at Fort Rice had wiped out some of the Hunkpapas, he went into such a rage that he went about the camps maniacally cutting himself with a knife in order to arouse the warriors to battle! In another case in 1868, while trading with Frederic Gerard at Fort Berthold, Bull picked up some Iroquois shells and handed over several buffalo skins; Gerard, seeing that Bull was "setting his own price" for the shells, took them back forcibly. Bull raised his double-barrelled shotgun, but Gerard grabbed him and managed to flip the percussion caps off the gun. At that point an Arickara stepped up and offered to kill Bull, but Gerard turned the chief loose, only to hear later that Bull had an "arrow in his quiver" for him. Utley sees this incident merely as a test of will and strength rather than an example of Bull's temper. But this was a typical occurrence. Bull frequently became angry and was very quick to make hostile threats against others. When told in 1876 that the Blackfeet tribe would not aid him in his wars, he sent word that he would wipe them out! Similarly, after Miles's 1879 attack on his village, he wanted to exterminate the soldiers.[73] 185; James F. MacLeod to D. Mills, March 11, 1878, GGO, PAC; Walter Camp, *Custer in '76,* edited by Kenneth Hammer (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1981), 229; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 200; Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 107; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 67-68, 73-74, 124; Wood, *Lives,* 459.

Not only so, while Bull was in Canada (1877-1881), he had several serious controversies with the Northwest Mounted Police. These incidents could have jeopardized his whole tenuous but desperately needed relationship with the Canadian government. While most of the literature concerning Bull's years in Canada stresses the good ties between the police and the fugitive Lakotas, Bull several times came to the point of threatening to exterminate the police! In one incident in 1879, after the Lakotas had stolen some horses, Bull went to the Wood Mountain post and asked for tea and tobacco; Walsh became irate over the chief's apparent unconcern about the theft and refused. Bull replied, **"Be careful,.. you are speaking to the head of the Lakota nation."** Ignoring this statement, Walsh said that he'd place the chief in irons if any more horses were stolen. Bull exclaimed, **"No man can treat me like this!"** But then to Bull's great surprise, Walsh literally threw him out the door. Outraged, Bull raised his gun, and but for restraint from a comrade, probably would have fired it. He then went so far as to get a party together to wipe the police out. Finally, he came to his senses and dropped the issue. Amazingly, the following year (June 1880) Bull quarreled with Walsh again, this time about the police having taken a Lakota prisoner. Walsh wrote that Bull, "under excitement," tried to rescue the prisoner, and only by "a determined resistance" of twenty policeman, were Bull and

his followers forced to retire from the post. Again, Bull contemplated attacking the post in force; but he delayed and after several days apologized for his conduct. Walsh suspected that Bull performed in this way "to bolster his failing leadership," rather than observing that Bull simply had an out-of-control temper. Then in early 1881, in spite of the foregoing experiences, Bull demanded that the police turn over a certain Blood prisoner to him. Again, he brought his relationship with the Canadians to a dangerous flashpoint by threatening to attack the Wood Mountain post. But Crozier threw him out of the fort a second time. If Bull had retaliated, and a

policeman was killed or worse, the government would have demanded that he either be chased from the country or made to stand trial and perhaps be hung as Louis Riel later was.[74] 1:581, 458-61, 482, 517, 570; Mounted Police Report, Sessional Paper No. 3, Canada, House of Commons *Sessional Papers*, 1880, 27. Vestal and Utley have refrained from mentioning these incidents.

To reiterate, most writers have emphasized the good relationship between Sitting Bull and Major Walsh, and in fact most Americans thought that the chief was Walsh's personal "pet." Walsh's glowing recollections of Bull's greatness have been quoted, but these were mostly written after the chief's death. At the time of his acquaintance with Bull, Walsh actually recorded a number of distinctly negative impressions of the chief. A summary of such comments paints the picture of a vengeful Indian leader who hated all whites--even Canadians, a treacherous man who incited sedition among the Crows (who were friends of the U. S. government) and the Oglalas (who had surrendered), a selfish leader whose refusal to surrender meant that others would be forced to remain in Canada because it would weaken his own position, and a weak man, who when pressed, made confession to charges against him by the police.[75]

Several other clear examples of Sitting Bull's "revengeful disposition" and vindictiveness are found in his relations with two noted frontiersmen, Mitch Bouyer and Frank Grouard. Bouyer, a French-Dakota mixed-blood who knew Sitting Bull personally, became a scout for the soldiers in 1876. Sitting Bull was deeply offended by what he viewed as betrayal and angrily offered a hundred ponies for Bouyer's "head." As it turned out, Bouyer was killed with Custer's detachment at the Little Bighorn. Grouard, who was Bull's adopted brother, also outraged the chief by lying to him about a certain matter. Grouard recalled: "My being in his sister's lodge prevented me from being killed right then and there." Grouard was later comforted by Sitting Bull's mother, who said that her son would soon get over his anger. In a less critical instance, a white man who visited Bull's camp in Canada was asked by the chief for his gun, belt and cartridges; when these were handed over, Bull gave him an old gun in return. When one Indian protested this treatment, he angrily took back the *old* gun and walked away.[76]

However, Bull's temper should be differentiated from his hatred for the Americans. His temper when set off was virtually uncontrolled and it jeopardized his own, and his people's, interests. In fact, the Lakotas considered it disgraceful for a chief to lose his temper. Bull's hatred was on the other hand a useful aspect of his temperament which sustained his opposition to the American domination of his people. It has been described as being "deep-rooted" and "undying." Furthermore, according to Trobriand, Bull had the ability to inspire his followers with this hatred. Many things had deepened Bull's hatred until it became like an unfathomable abyss. Bull frequently pointed to several factors. First, the Black Hills region, the centerpoint of the Lakota universe, was taken, although guaranteed to the Lakotas by the Treaty of 1868. Second, along with the Hills went the rich gold deposits which the white men mined there; this would have provided much wealth to his tribe, as the area yielded one of the greatest finds in America. Third, Lakota lands were reduced step by step. And fourth, Bull's people were being

hunted down like buffalo by professional soldiers: As he said, **"My people are driven like so many wild beasts toward a common center to be shot down by encircling soldiery."** His sense of betrayal was great, and he spoke of it in very personal terms: **"They took me for a son, but they have come behind me with their guns."** Bull was filled with such bitterness about these matters that he could literally talk all night about them and did so on at least one occasion: Police commissioner Irvine received a visit from Bull at his tent at eleven in the evening and recorded that the chief spoke of his grievances until an early hour of the morning. Utley writes expressively that Sitting Bull's "bitterness grew more obsessive as the magnitude of the calamity grew more unmistakable...."[77] 190; Robert A. Clark, ed. and intro. *The Killing of Chief Crazy Horse* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 50.

CRITICAL ATTITUDES

"Red Cloud and Spotted Tail are rascals." --Sitting Bull

GIVEN THE FOREGOING, it is no surprise that Sitting Bull could also be very critical and insulting, especially in adverse situations. He very much despised what he viewed as cowardice among his own people--particularly in regard to failure in standing uncompromisedly against American injustice. He especially hated the fact that Red Cloud and Spotted Tail had made treaties that most Hunkpapa chiefs had not signed. Bull called them "rascals," a term which is benign by most standards but perhaps the worst word in Sitting Bull's vocabulary, as the Lakotas did not have curse or swear words. When various chiefs began to desert the "cause" due to attacks on their villages, he often spoke denigratingly of them. He called Crazy Horse a "squaw" for surrendering, and termed Running Antelope a *witko* (fool), for making treaties. He said that Gall was not a chief of his people, and when the Brule accommodationist, Spotted Tail, was murdered, he said that it was **"a fit ending for a fool."** Of course, the Lakota chiefs were also highly critical of Sitting Bull. Gall, Low Dog and others charged him with cowardice, fraud and incompetency. Apparently some of these men either greatly disliked Sitting Bull personally or were jealous of his fame and influence. By one account Sitting Bull needed bodyguards to protect him from certain chiefs. In fact, after the entire Hunkpapa camp had gotten drunk on Metis whiskey in 1872, a fight broke out and an effort was made by some to kill Sitting Bull.[78]

Two of the most extreme criticisms of Bull on record came from Blackfeet Lakota chief John Grass and Oglala chief Red Cloud. Grass felt that Bull was just a noisy troublemaker who only sought notoriety. In 1889 his opinion echoed what the high priest Caiaphas said about Jesus. Grass declared: "It is better to send one man away than that the whole nation should suffer by being kept back." Red Cloud felt much the same even after Bull's death and said: "Sitting Bull was nothing but what the white men made him. He was a conceited man who never did anything great, but wanted to get into notice, and white men who had something to make by it, encouraged him and used him. When they had made him as great as they could, they killed him to get a name by it." Even Bill Cody agreed in essence with Red Cloud's estimation, saying that General Sheridan, by calling the war of 1876 "Sitting Bull's War," inadvertently made Sitting Bull "seem to be a great man" and a "big Indian." However, by way of comparison Red Cloud was also greatly critical of Spotted Tail. He said on one occasion: "I am no Spotted Tail to say one thing one day and be bought for a pin the next."[79]Great Documents in American Indian History (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 262; Willis F. Johnson, *Red Record of the Sioux: Life of Sitting Bull and the History of the Indian War of 1890-91* (Edgewood, S.D.: Edgewood Publishing Co., 1891), 193; Larson, *Red Cloud,* 136.

PARANOIA

> *"He is so suspicious of everything that he cannot be approached or talked to and reasoned with as could be done with any other Indian I know of...." --James McLaughlin*
>
> *"[Sitting Bull] is the most suspicious Indian I have ever met; he is in constant terror of some unseen plan being laid to entrap him across the line. This one idea haunts him night and day." --Edwin Allen*

SITTING BULL was also troubled by extreme paranoia. Beede commented that Bull was "one of the most suspicious men in existence"--that Canadian Indians had told him "humorous anecdotes of [Bull's]... intense suspicions while they were befriending him in his exile." Walsh told a reporter: "[The chief is] extremely suspicious and... rarely places much reliance in anything a white man says...." Bull himself recalled, **"It was very hard to place any faith in the word of Americans. Ever since I knew them my experience with them has proved that they [are] continually cheat[ing] the Indians, over-reaching upon their lands with big promises never fulfilled, and at last find[ing] some pretext to kill them."** Much of his paranoia was justified. Certainly the U. S. military wanted him dead! American authorities commonly referred to him, not only as a "hostile" and "seceder," but also as an "outlaw"--hence fit for killing. No less a personage than General William T. Sherman of Civil War fame wrote in 1876, "I hope General Miles will crown his success by capturing or killing Sitting Bull and his remnant of outlaws." When Miles could not effect this result, Colonel J. C. Whistler wanted to have Bull tried and hung for the murder of two mail carriers. No wonder that Mounted Police commissioner MacLeod was forced to object to a proposal by Canadian officials in 1878 to send Sitting

Bull to Washington: He wrote, "An offer to Sitting Bull... would not be entertained by him for a moment; he would look upon it with the greatest suspicion and would imagine that we wanted to place him within the power of his enemies." Among other things, Bull also said that he was afraid some "toughs" at the agencies might assassinate him, or that the Americans would try to kidnap him. Again, these fears were not entirely misplaced. Bear's Rib (I) and Spotted Tail, both major Lakota leaders, were assassinated by fellow Lakotas. And a precedent for kidnapping had occurred in 1863, when the Santee leaders, Little Six and Medicine Bottle, were drugged and transported from Canadian territory and delivered across the line to American troops; the two leaders were subsequently tried and hung in spite of the violation of international law. As Walsh said, "Bull experienced so much treachery that he did not know who to trust.. .," though "he was glad to give his hand in friendship to any man who he believed was not his enemy and [who was] honest with him."[80] 102; (second quote) Gary Pennanen, "Sitting Bull, Indian Without a Country," *Canadian Historical Review* 51 (June 1970): 135-36; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 41-42; (Sherman quotation) Charles M. Robinson, III, *A Good Year to Die: The Story of the Great Sioux War* (New York: Random House, 1995), 280; Walsh's notes.., December 16, 1890, Undated newspaper clipping, circa **1881,** Interview with James Walsh, and Typescript Notes, WP.

On top of Bull's legitimate concerns, various people greatly heightened his fears. By 1880 he thought that the American authorities were going to make him responsible for every depredation committed on the prairies for the previous twenty years! Montanans apparently offered a $1,000 bounty for his killing, and so Bull said that the Americans wanted "gold for his carcass." Crozier felt that certain American scouts were "one of the greatest drawbacks" to Sitting Bull's surrender, as they were suspected of only wanting the reward on his head. Also, Bull developed an antipathy for newspapermen after he saw a cartoon from Frank Leslie's newspaper which pictured him as an actual bull with a rope through his nose being pulled by "Uncle Sam," while soldiers were emptying a bag of beans for him to eat. Being unfamiliar with cartoons, Bull probably thought that this was a literal representation of what his fate was to be

if he surrendered. It also upset him that the papers were printing absurd stories about him being a West Point cadet named Bison, or the mixed-blood, Charley Jacobs. Aside from the Americans, Bull also was paranoid about the mixed-bloods; he felt that they had betrayed their Indian relatives for the whites; for that reason he is said to have opposed the marriage of whites with Lakota women. Not surprisingly, Bull was not always good company. Bill Cody criticized him for being "a peevish Indian," who was always saying something bad in council.[81]Life of Sitting Bull, 193.

DENIAL

> *"In his mysticism there was a certain careless philosophy which inclined him to lie down lazily, while nature's eternal rivers glide past him." --Aaron Beede*
>
> *"[T]he old chief will have to resign himself into insignificance...." --Judson E. Walker*

THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION but that Sitting Bull faced terrible mental and emotional agony when in spite of all his efforts he could not maintain an independent existence as a Lakota. It is evident that denial in the psychological sense came into play as a protective shield for his psyche to keep this catastrophic reality out until his psychic wounds had begun to heal. His denial then should have dissipated. However, it would seem that it persisted and as a result he became dysfunctional to a degree. This was apparently evidenced by his defensiveness, isolation, fear, bitterness and depression. Sitting Bull's problem in this regard was particularly evident when he surrendered. Captain Walter Clifford, who rode with Sitting Bull's surrender party, commented that the chief seemed to be "more sullen and insolent than any of the [other] chiefs." Then, while Bull exhibited his great loathing of the Americans, he also acted as though he could dictate to the government the terms of his choice. The paradox was noted by the *New York Post:* "Sitting Bull... inquires what the government has to give him, and asks that it be given him without delay. He wants a waiter to attend to his person. He wants to have traders on this as well as the other side of the British line who may accommodate him on his hunting

excursions. He seems to be entirely oblivious of all the mischief he has done and instigated, and that he may consider himself fortunate if he escapes indictments and trials for various crimes."

Recognition of Sitting Bull's denial was also expressed quite simply by Warren Moorehead when he wrote: "Sitting Bull... lived in the past." Beede commented more explicitly: "[Bull's]... hopes of the Dakota nationality did not perish when everything human showed that their realization was impossible." However, this is not to say that the chief did not gradually come out of his denial to some extent. Lieutenant Davies of Fort Randall said that he spent much time in trying to bring the chief to acceptance of the new reality. He advised Bull: "Submit to all that the White Father demands, for so it is ordered in the world." While on the reservation Sitting Bull gave some evidence of his change of mind as he tried his hand at farming and stockraising, though largely he had no choice but to do this. One Hunkpapa described the old chief as being "like a chained eagle who sits and dreams of the wide landscape over which he once floated in freedom."[82] July 21, 22, 1881; Moorehead, *The American Indian,* 197; Garland, *American Indian,* 202-3.

DEPRESSION

> *"He brooded much and there were days when he spoke no word to anyone...." --Anonymous Hunkpapa*

SITTING BULL seems to have had periodic bouts with depression. One indication of this came from Colonel Miles, who noticed in 1876 that the chief "appeared much depressed." He ascribed the condition to "nervous excitement and loss of power," but it may have simply been depression. The following year, when the chief learned that the Lakotas could find safety in Canada, his camp was filled with jubilation; but a policeman noted: "In the midst of all this rejoicing one Indian only seemed unable to shake off a feeling of sadness--Sitting Bull." During Bull's captivity at Fort Randall in 1881-82 one Hunkpapa recalled that the chief went for days without speaking to anyone. Beede heard similar testimony and concluded that the chief was "almost, but not quite, a fatalist." The overwhelming superiority of the whites was the apparent catalyst for Bull's depressed or sullen states, and this led to thoughts of death. During an argument over the Ghost Dance, Bull told Catherine Weldon, **"If the soldiers kill me, I will be glad. Our old way of life is almost gone. Now I want to die."**[83] 40; David H. Miller, "Sitting Bull's White Squaw," in *The Red Man's West,* edited by Michael S. Kennedy (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1965), 232.

WOMANIZER (?)

> *"[H]e took what looked good to him, whether it was a woman or property of other sort...." --James McLaughlin*

> *"I do not take lands or anything else that does not belong to me." --Sitting Bull*

WAS SITTING BULL a womanizer? According to McLaughlin he was. He wrote: "Sitting Bull had two wives at the end, though the roll of his list of wives would undoubtedly have been largely increased had any one ever gone to the trouble of looking them up. He was not a nice character...." After making these charges, however, he admitted that he had never heard of Sitting Bull having had "a love-affair." He obviously approached this topic from his cultural viewpoint which only accepted monogamy rather than polygamy. Vestal said that Bull had had nine wives, not all simultaneously, and that Bull sometimes successfully "stole" a woman according to the custom among the warrior societies. One unbiased look at the chief's private life was given by mixed-blood trader Joseph Gardipee (or Gardepie), who said: "Of course [Bull]... is a polygamist, having three squaws in his tepee who are his wives according to the Indian code, but he has more constancy than Bear Spirit [Medicine Bear], his brother-in-law, chief of the Yankton[ai]s, and other associate chiefs. His 'private life' is described by... hunters who have long been acquainted with him to be excellent according to the Indian code." Details are sketchy, but Bull's first wife, Light Hair, died in childbirth, and he later had two wives whom he divorced (Red Woman and Snow on Her). Finally, he took two sisters of Gray Eagle--Four Robes and Seen by the Nation. Of his marital relations Bull claimed that he had never beaten his wives. On the contrary he seems

to have enjoyed the company of the opposite sex-even that of white women. After he crossed the line to surrender, he said that the first white person he spoke to was Mrs. Jack Culbertson; at Bismarck he invited Lakota mixed-blood Mrs. Lulu Harmon to visit him on the steamer. Furthermore, during his travels through the East in 1884, he was greatly amused by seeing dancing white women (and even imitated them).[84] October 26, 1877; Undated newspaper clipping, circa 1881, and Interview with James Walsh, WP; Walker, *General Custer,* 92.

WHISKEY DRINKER (?)

> *"[The Red River Metis]... came with five sleighloads of whiskey.... The orgies continued for about a week .... The women were drunk, as well as the men." --Frank Grouard*

WHILE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION has not been asked by biographers about the chief, it might as well be asked here: Was Sitting Bull a whiskey drinker as some contend? One unidentified trader, who claimed to have known Sitting Bull well, said that the chief had a "powerful appetite" for whiskey and would get drunk whenever an opportunity offered. This is given some credence by the fact that Sitting Bull, in an effort to secure arms and ammunition through the Metis traders, allowed them to bring whiskey into the Hunkpapa camp. This decision proved almost fatal to the chief on one occasion in 1872 when the Hunkpapas generally became drunken and fights broke out (Another general drunk was sponsored by the Metis in 1867.) But after going to Canada, Bull, with the encouragement of the Mounted Police, enforced sanctions against whiskey in his camp. When he finally arrived on the reservation, he had apparently given up the inclination to drink for the most part. In 1884 McLaughlin gave a reporter enough information to write: "Since reaching civilization, [Sitting Bull]... has not asked for firewater, and in fact is strictly temperate in the drink line...." This supports Beede's contention that the chief at least in later life was a teetotaler, who may have believed that whiskey was detrimental to his occult vision. Bull later questioned, **"What white man has ever seen me drunk?"** He may have refrained from drink too because he knew that while under its influence he might do foolish things. When McLaughlin purportedly offered him a drink of something, Bull, assuming that it was whiskey, became extremely upset and said, **"Don't you ever offer me anything like that to make a fool of me!"** (He afterwards commented, **"I don't want to go in to a white man's house. Under a white man's roof are lies and intrigue. The air outside is pure...."**) But the chief may have fallen off the "wagon" at times: In his 1884 visit to New York he overheard someone ask a friend to try a whiskey cocktail--"Sitting Bull solemnly arose and unanimously accepted the invitation for himself."[85] March 15, 1884; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 139; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 117; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 50; Vestal, *New Sources,* 308; Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 201; *New York Times,* September 12, 1884; Miller, *Ghost Dance,* 300.

CHARGES OF COWARDICE

> *"It is a calumny to say he was a coward...." --Major James Walsh*
>
> *"Most certainly I agree with you that he was no coward...." --Charles A. Eastman*

THE MOST DAMAGING CHARGE against Sitting Bull's character was that of cowardice. McLaughlin claimed that Gall, Crow King and Rain-in-the-Face had found Sitting Bull to be a fraud and coward. He therefore wrote, "I have contended always that Sitting Bull was a physical coward." Because of this, the whites who had once considered Sitting Bull the actual field commander at the Custer fight also began to say that he was coward. Stories became rife that he had fled from the fight, that he "took to the hills to make medicine," or "galloped to the west till he reached a place of safety." McLaughlin went so far as to say that the chief had gone eight or ten miles before he was stopped by messengers who brought him news of the victory! A St. Paul editor wrote: "[Sitting Bull] was neither the leader nor the hero of the battle in which Custer and his brave band perished, but was recalled from an ignominious flight by the chief who led that attack." General Howard wrote that the chief had disgraced himself. It was also said: "[T]he singular fact remains that no one has ever known of a well authenticated instance of this chief being in the thick of a fight when hard knocks might be expected.

His forte has ever been to steal horses and ponies, raid defenseless ranches and carry off such stores... he could conveniently lay hands on." Unfortunately, even the writer of a recent study states the

assumption that the chief entered Canada partly due to cowardice: "He was a political and religious figure first of all, and a warrior's death evidently did not appeal to him." What Sitting Bull was seeking to avoid at that point in time was an ignoble execution by American oppressors, not a warrior's death in battle.[86] 199; McLaughlin, *My Friend,* 141, 182; Howard, *Indian Chiefs,* 306; *SPMPP,* July 21, 1881; Manzione, *ibid,* 31.

It is true that Sitting Bull's actions sometimes alternated between reckless bravery and prudence — which some apparently interpreted as cowardice. The worst case of apparent cowardice was during an attack on Fort Rice in 1865. Bull led a charge but then, after running off two horses, he left the contest; his followers were so angered that they "soldier-killed" him, that is, they whipped him and killed his horses. But this did not erase the fact that he had sixty or so coups. On the other hand Bull frequently demonstrated extreme bravery. In a desperate fight with the Red River Metis in 1873, he risked almost certain death to rescue a wounded comrade from the battlefield. White Bull did not think his uncle would survive the attempt and was amazed when the chief was successful: "It was wonderful, with all of those bullets kicking up the dust and whining around him." As late as 1879 Bull was challenged to single combat by a prominent Crow named Magpie, who was scouting for Colonel Miles. The two charged each other on horseback, but Magpie's gun misfired and Bull hit his opponent in the head. The fact is that there were only a few incidents in which Bull's actions could have been construed as cowardice. If it can be said that Bull's behavior was erratic at times, this was undoubtedly due to the fact, according to Beede, that his temperament was normally timid. As a boy he was nicknamed "Slow" because of his pronounced deliberation. Furthermore, Beede also said that it took strong religious incentive to arouse Bull to action. At times, due to premonitions of death, the chief would not act unless he had had a favorable dream or omen.[87] 182; Vestal, *Warpath,* 158-59; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 3; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 41.

For the most part, charges of cowardice did not occur until after the decline of Bull's fortunes. One of the accusers, Gall, was said to have become angry with Bull for taking credit for the victory over Custer, claiming that Bull only "made medicine," but did not fight; Rain-in-the-Face admitted that after this incident the two chiefs' hearts were "bad toward each other." Gall also said that Bull's heart was no bigger than the space between a fingertip and the base of the fingernail, and furthermore, was but a "big wind." Yet he followed Sitting Bull into Canada and remained with him for several more years. In seeming contradiction to his negative attitude, Gall said in later years that at the Custer fight, "Sitting Bull [himself] *was* big medicine." Another accuser was the Oglala war chief, Low Dog, who was quoted as saying that ‘Bull couldn't fight unless someone loaned him a heart.’ Scout Edwin H. Allison added to these charges, saying that Bull was a "constitutional coward," but his opinion might be explained by the fact that Sitting Bull had refused to surrender at his urging. The Cheyenne warrior, Wooden Leg, also gave an explanation for these discrepancies: "I have no ears for hearing anybody say [Bull]... was not a brave man.... In the old times I never heard of any Indian having spoken otherwise of him. If any of them changed their talk in later days, the change must have been brought about by lies of the agents and soldier chiefs who scheme to make themselves appear as good men by making him appear as a bad man." Walsh also defended the chief on this count and cited the plain fact that for a number of years Bull had held the allegiance of the "most influential and greatest chiefs" of the Lakota nation and had ruled with the authority of a king![88] 383; Graham, *Custer Myth,* 88; Edward H. Allison, "Surrender of Sitting Bull," *SDHC* 6, edited by Doane Robinson (1910-12): 248-50; Walker, *General Custer,* 102; Walsh's notes.., December 16, 1890, WP.

In answer to the criticism of supposed cowardice at the Little Bighorn, there is no question but that Bull was performing the well-accepted and respectable duty of a chief--caring for

the noncombatants. Wooden Leg stated, "I supposed he was helping the women and children and old people, where he belonged." He also said that Sitting Bull had a son (no doubt referring to adopted son One Bull) in the fight and "any man having a son serving as a warrior was expected to stay out of battles and give his son a chance to get warrior honors." Bull's brother-in-law, Makes Room, the Miniconjou chief, also took no part in

the battle. The reason, said White Bull: "[I]t was the duty of a chief to look out for the women and children in such a defensive fight." In fact, Makes Room's fellow chiefs had instructed him to give up warfare and devote himself to caring for his people.[89]

Furthermore, Sitting Bull did not run off during the fight. After dropping his mother and sister to a presumed place of safety, he returned to the perimeter of the fight with Reno's battalion. As the soldiers retreated (to Reno Hill), he advanced up the battlefield and attempted to save the life of a wounded black soldier, Isaiah Dorman. Then, when the warriors were alerted to more soldiers to the north, Sitting Bull went up and down the line, encouraging them to make a brave fight. He apparently followed after this last contingent of warriors, traveling north along the ridge on the east side of the river and descending into Medicine Tail Coulee. He rode across the river to the far side of the Cheyenne circle where the women and children had stampeded and then went back to the southern end of the village where others were. He was about to order the women to strike the lodges when word was brought that the soldiers had been wiped out. Bull then went back to the Miniconjou circle to treat his nephew's ankle wound.[90] 73; see also Joseph K. Dixon, *The Vanishing Race* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1975), 174-75.

Vestal points out that the "accusation" that Bull made "medicine" during the battle was false because there was no ritual to serve the purpose, that this was Gall's story to discredit Bull. On this question Charles Eastman agrees: "What is called by whites ‘making medicine’ in war time is again a wrong conception. Every warrior carries a bag of sacred or lucky charms, supposed to protect the warrior alone, but it has nothing to do with the success or safety of the party as a whole. No one can make any ‘medicine’ to affect the result of a battle, although it has been said that Sitting Bull did this at the battle of the Little Bighorn."[91]

SITTING BULL'S ORATORY

> *"His speech showed him to be a man of wonderful capability."--Lt. Col. Acheson G. Irvine*
>
> *"He is unequaled in council.... He speaks, they listen and they obey."--Major Walsh.*

SITTING BULL was not given laurels for being the greatest orator among the Hunkpapas. Some say that Running Antelope, the shirt-wearer, ranked foremost, and that John Grass, the Blackfeet chief, was a close rival. Pretty Bear (of the Hunkpapas) and Spotted Eagle (of the Sans Arcs) were also quite gifted. But there is no doubt that Sitting Bull's oratory, while perhaps not superior in style, was probably more effective, given his character, and this helped him maintain his influence. In fact, Doane Robinson credits Bull's fervent and impressive oratory with being a significant factor in his rise to leadership. DeBarthe, who assessed Sitting Bull's abilities based on Frank Grouard, writes: "Sitting Bull was not a great orator, but what he lacked in this particular he made up for in diplomacy. He was as shrewd as he was cunning. His speeches in council were always blunt but convincing...." Vestal felt that Sitting Bull knew how to reach the hearts of his people: "The more one knows of the Sioux, the cleverer his remarks appear.

How brief, how direct!" As to the chief's style, Lieutenant George Ahern commented in 1882: "He looked squarely into your eyes and spoke deliberately and forcefully." His voice was "deep and guttural," according to Finerty, "but at the same time melodious." He connected his words with corresponding body movements and had a particularly graceful style of gesticulation. One reporter commented that Bull's oration alternated between animation and moodily toying with his pipe, and that he was "very prolific with expressions and graceful gestures." Another observer said in 1877: "As I watched the swaying body of the Indian and saw his mobile face light up as he spoke of the great wrongs of his people.., I could not but admire the natural oratory which enabled him to speak to strongly. Every thought was expressed in a gesture more powerful than his words could possibly be framed to read."[92] 16; Robinson, "Sidelights," 392; DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 35; Vestal, *ibid,* 237; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 391; *SPMPP,* October 25, 1877, August 4, 1881.

Sarcasm, according to Eastman, was Bull's verbal weapon of choice. Helen H. Jackson agreed when she considered Sitting Bull's speeches to General Terry: "His replies and those of his chiefs were full of scathing sarcasm. Secure on British soil, for once they had freedom of speech as well as of action, and they gave the United States Commissioners very conclusive reasons why they chose to remain in Canada, where they could 'trade with the traders and make a living,' and where their women had 'time to raise their children.'" Bull's sarcasm was also sometimes united with his brand of dry humor. When asked whether the murderer of President James Garfield was justified in his action, he said: **"He might have shot the Great Father because he was not treating the Indians right. If that was so, it was not a bad thing to do."** In another case Sitting Bull told agent McLaughlin that he could not give up one of his two wives because he liked both of them; when McLaughlin reminded the chief that he had promised to live like the whites, Bull said, **"Yes, I agreed to do that and I will do it. I will live just like a white man: you give me a white wife and you can have both my Indian wives."** He also joked with a reporter in 1877 when he said, **"Oh, I used to be a kind of a chief, but the Americans made me go away from my father's hunting ground."**[93] (1881; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 180; (quote) *Wild Life,* 396; Burdick, *Last Days,* 21.

Sitting Bull was also very clever in making epigrammatic statements. One example was his oft-quoted line: **"I would rather die an Indian than live a white man."** Another of his famous sayings is: **"No Lakota that ever lived loved the paleface, and no paleface that ever lived loved the Lakota."** Eastman also recounted another rhythmic line that Bull spoke at the opening of the Custer fight: **"Warriors, we have everything to fight for and if we are defeated we shall have nothing to live for; therefore let us fight like brave men."**[94] 199; (third quote), Graham, *Custer Myth,* 96.

Interestingly, Bull was able to speak with some amount of mastery in several languages. Aside from his native Lakota, he learned French from the mixed-bloods and traders (though McGarry implausibly claimed that De Smet taught Bull how to read and write French). Not surprisingly, one writer described Bull's language as "a compound of pure Sioux, mongrel English, bespattered here and there with a word or two of French." For example he referred to himself as "Seeda Boo," and was frequently quoted as saying, "Hello," and "You bet!" Jack Culbertson said that Bull could speak excellent English, and it is generally thought that the chief understood more English than he spoke. A New York reporter noted in 1884 that while Bull was supposedly ignorant of English, the chief was apparently comprehending what was being said around him. Perhaps he was like Rain-in-the-Face of whom it was said, "His [speaking] knowledge of English is confined to about thirty words.... though he can understand almost anything that is said in English." But Bull disliked Americans so much that he would not often use English; Bill Cody commented that the chief "refused to talk English even if he could." Yet

Sitting Bull had a natural fascination for language and even made an effort to learn German.[95] June 12, 1877; *Wild Life,* 384; *New York Times,* September 12, 1884; Cyrus T. Brady, *Indian Fights and Fighters* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 291; Cronau, "A Red Napoleon," 6.

IN SPITE OF THE ATTENTION that Sitting Bull has received over the years from historians and biographers, none have allowed anything more than partial inclusion of the great body of his recorded speeches, including his interviews, letters, prayers, songs (25+) and miscellaneous statements. This is because the material has remained so scattered in the historical records (some included here are presented for the first time), and because there is no space for so much verbiage. (Utley's biography, for example, uses only about ten indented quotations, compared to the 150 or so included in this volume.) Obviously, without access to these many orations, it is difficult to penetrate the complexities of the man. Not only so, but the world has been cheated of handy reference to some of the most effective examples of American Indian oration. While Bull was not as intellectual as Ojibway chiefs Hole-in-the-Day and White Cloud, or did not have the flair of Little Crow, the Santee, he fares very well when comparing elements of spirituality, idealism and pointedness; and few can match his memorable epigrams.[96]Dakota Oratory: Great Moments in the Recorded Speeches of the Eastern Sioux, 1695-1874 (Rochester, Minn.: Coyote Books, 1989), and Mark Diedrich, compiler and illustrator,

Ojibway Oratory: Great Moments in the Recorded Speech of the Chippewa, 1695-1889 (Rochester, Minn.: Coyote Books, 1990).

The collected speeches of Sitting Bull are presented here for the most part in their entirety and in chronological order, though some of his newspaper interviews have been divided up by subject matter, and some reminiscences have been placed so as to aid the narrative aspect of this work. I have chosen to use the well-accepted spelling of words like "Hunkpapa" and "Oglala" throughout. "Lakota" is used in Bull's speeches instead of the historically derogatory term, "Sioux." *"Wakan Tanka"* is used for the interpreters' common rendering of "God." And, following Utley, I have changed Sitting Bull's apparent use of "White Mother" for the Queen to the more probable use of "Grandmother."

1 (First quote) Warren K. Moorehead, *The American Indian in **the** United States, Period 1850-1914*

2 (Quote) J. W. Buel, *Heroes of the Plains*

3 (First quote) Doane Robinson, "Some Sidelights on the Character of Sitting Bull,"

4 Louis Pfaller, *James McLaughlin, The Man With an Indian Heart*

5 Doane Robinson, *A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians*

6 Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 39-50; Moorehead, *The American Indian,* 190-99; Eastman, *Indian Heroes,*

7 Usher L. Burdick, *The Last Days of Sitting Bull* (Baltimore: Wirth Brothers, 1941), 16-17; *SPMPP,*

9 Utley, *Lance and Shield*, 36, 124, 174, 221, 224, 230, 233, 240.

10 (First quote) Moorehead, *The American Indian,*

11 Utley, *ibid,* 5-6, 21, 342.

12 (First quote) *SPMPP,* June 10, 1878; (second quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 83; Stanley Vestal,

13 Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 91-95; Utley, *ibid*, 85-87; Michael F. Steltenkamp, *Black Elk, Holy Man of the Oglala*

14 Phillipe Regis de Trobriand, *Military Life in Dakota: The Journal of Phillipe Regis de Trobriand,*

15 Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 241; Vestal, *New Sources*, 318-19; Herbert T. Hoover, "Sitting Bull," in

16 Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 243, 289; Vestal, *New Sources,* 318-19, 326; James C. Olson,

17 (First quote) Thomas B. Marquis, *Wooden Leg, A Warrior who fought Custer*

18 Eugene Buechel, comp. *A Dictionary -Oie Wowapi Wan of Teton Sioux*

19 Marquis, *Wooden Leg,*

20 Eastman, *ibid,* 107; Norman B. Wood, *Lives of Famous Indian Chiefs*

21 Utley, *ibid,* 28-29; David H. Miller, *Ghost Dance* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1959), 297-98.

22 Miller, *ibid.* Miller examined Sitting Bull's *wotawe*

23 Utley, *Lance and Shield*, 32-33; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 43; Vestal, *New Sources,*

24 *Washington Post,* October 14, 1888; Frances Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music and Culture*

25 *CDT,* July 15, 1876; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 44-46; *SPMPP,* March 16, 1884.

26 McLaughlin to Martin Marty, February 10, 1884, roll 20, MP; *Washington Post,* October 14, 1888;

27 (First quote) James Creelman,

28 (Quote) Finerty, *War-Path,* 254, 276, 283; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 289-90; John Maclean,

29 Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 48; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 247; Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 121; Wood, *Lives,* 495.

30 DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 48, 63, 78; David H. Miller, "Echoes of the Little Bighorn," *American Heritage*

31 (First quote) Mark Diedrich, *Famous Chiefs of the Eastern Sioux*

32 Diedrich, *ibid,* 42-60; Marquis, *Wooden Leg,*

33 (Quote) McLaughlin, *My Friend,* 21; Olson, *Red Cloud,* 131; Robert W. Larson,

34 (Quote) Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 117-18; John Peter Turner,

35 Manzione, *ibid,* 4, 117.

36 Olson, *Red Cloud,* 271; (quotation) David A. Dary, *The Buffalo Book* (New York: Avon Books, 1975).

37 Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 262; Turner, *NWMP* 1:526, 547; *St. Cloud Daily Times,*

38 (First quote) Moorehead, *The American Indian,*

39 Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 281-82, 273, 301; *St. Cloud Daily Times,* November 22, 1890; Miller, *Ghost Dance,*

40 McLaughlin to (?), November 9, 1885, roll 32, MP; Miller, *Ghost Dance,* 175; Milligan, *Dakota Twilight,*

41 (Quote) *SPMPP,* June 10, 1878; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 48; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 289;

42 Walter Havighurst, *Annie Oakley of the Wild West*

44 Vestal, *New Sources,* 93; *SPMPP,* August 1, 4, 1881; *Minneapolis Evening Journal,* March 15, 1884.

45 (First quote) *Wild Life,* 396; *SPMPP,*

46 (First quote) Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 50; (second quote) Hilger, "One Bull," 152; Garland, *American Indian,*

47 (Quote) *SPPP,* December 24, 1890; *SPMPP,* August 1, 3, 1881; Vestal, *New Sources,* 283; Garland,

48 (Quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 21; Finerty, *War-Path,* 281.

49 Vestal, *ibid,* 21, 20-22; Vestal, "The Works of Sitting Bull," 272-78.

50 (Quote) Garland, *American Indian,* 266; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 113; Finerty, *War-Path,* 284; DeBarthe, *Grouard,*

51 Hilger, "One Bull," 154.

52 *CDT,* July 5, 1879; Finerty, *War-Path,* 284; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 305, 64; John G. Neihardt,

53 (Quote) Walsh's notes, December 16, 1890, WP; (second quote) Marquis, *Wooden Leg,* 383; Vestal, *ibid,* 195.

54 Connell, *Morning Star,* 222; Mark Diedrich,

55 Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 214; *SPMPP,* June 10, 1878, July 21, 1881; Jerome A. Greene,

56 (First quote) Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 112; (second quote) Walker, *General Custer,*

57 Irvine to Scott (with enclosure of speeches), June 6, 1877, GGO, PAC; *CDT,* July 5, 1879.

58 (First quote) McLaughlin, *My Friend,* 181; (second quote) Marquis, *Wooden Leg,*

59 *Wild Life,* 395; (Long Dog quotation) *CDT,* July 5, 1879.

61 Garland, *American Indian,* 162; DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 78-79; Marquis, *Wooden Leg,*

62 (Quote) *SPMPP,* June 10, 1878; *CDT,* July 7, 15, 1876; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"*

63 Vestal, *New Sources,* 322-23; *SPMPP,* August 26, 1876.

64 *SPMPP,* August 26 and November 16, 1876.

65 Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern Plains, 1738-1889*

66 See the testimony of Jean B. Genin and James Walsh in *SPMPP,* June 10, 1876, and *CDT,* July 10, 1879.

67 (Quote) Moorehead, *The American Indian,* 199; Richard A. Fox, Jr.,

68 Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 208; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 163-65; Fox, *ibid,* 311-12; Graham, *Custer Myth,*

69 Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 112; (Eastman quotation) Moorehead, *The American Indian,* 199.

70 (First quote) C. Frank Turner,

71 Vestal, *New Sources,* 271; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 247; *New York Post,* July 21, 1881; Howard,

72 Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 46; Eastman, *Soul of the Indian,* 18-23, 47.

73 (First quote) DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 51; (second quote) Garland, *American Indian,*

74 Turner, *NWMP,*

75 Some of these complaints were in Walsh to Irvine, January 25, 1879, GGO, PAC.

76 Camp, *Custer in '76,* 99-100; DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 51-52; *Fort Benton Record,* September 12, 1879.

77 Lakota Speeches to James F. MacLeod, October 21, 1877, GGO, PAC; Utley, *Lance and Shield,*

78 *SPMPP,* August 4, 11, 1881; Garland, *American Indian,* 170; DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 48-49.

79 Kingsbury, *Dakota Territory,* 2:1278; Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren, eds.

80 (First quote) Pfaller, *McLaughlin,*

81 Kingsbury, *Dakota Territory,* 1:965-66; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:548; *SPMPP,* August 1, 1881; Johnson,

82 (First quote) Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 42; (second quote) Walker, *General Custer,* 112; *New York Post,*

83 (Quote) Garland, *ibid,* 202; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:329; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 173, 35; Beede, *ibid,*

84 (Quote) McLaughlin, *My Friend,* 65; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 23; (Gardipee quote) *SPMPP,*

85 (Quote) DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 48-49; *SPMPP,* August 26, 1876; *Minneapolis Evening Journal,*

86 (First quote) Walsh's notes.., December 16, 1890, WP; (second quote) Moorehead, *The American Indian,*

87 Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 67-68, 208; Howard, *ibid,* 312; *SPMPP,* July 21, 1881; McLaughlin, *ibid,*

88 Wood, *Lives,* 485; *SPMPP,* August 4, 1881; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 145; Marquis, *Wooden Leg,*

89 Marquis, *ibid,* 383; Vestal, *Warpath,* 201.

90 Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 150-155; Moorehead, *The American Indian,* 199; Graham, *ibid,*

91 Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 156; Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 121-22.

92 (Quote) Irvine to Scott, June 6, 1877, GGO, PAC; Burdick, *Last Days,*

93 Eastman, *Indian Heroes,* 107; Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor*

94 (First quote) Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 269; (second quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,*

95 Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 193, 52; Walker, *General Custer,* 107; *CDT,* July 15, 1876; *SPMPP,*

96 Compare speeches from the author's previous works: Mark Diedrich, compiler,

I) I was born a warrior. I have followed the warpath ever since I was able to draw a bow. --Sitting Bull

II) When I was a boy the Lakota owned the world. The sun rose and set in their lands. They sent 10,000 horsemen to battle. --Sitting Bull

III) I was not a white man, for the Great Spirit did not make me a white skin. --Sitting Bull

IV) The Father to earth He has sent me; Along with the buffalo He has sent me. My mother to earth she was sent; With offspring with her, she was sent. --Sitting Bull

V) Young men, help me, do help me! I love my country so; That is why I am fighting. --Sitting Bull

Sources: (First quote) Vestal, *New Sources,* 309-10; (second quote) Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 201; (third quote) *SPMPP,* August 4, 1881; (fourth and fifth quotes) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 208, 97.

2) I Began to See When I Was Not Yet Born....

SITTING BULL had several mystical experiences which became a governing factor in his life. Bull once was attracted to a particular eagle he saw in the Black Hills; he crept up near it, listened and learned its song. Thereafter, he felt that he had been divinely appointed to lead his people. One of the songs he sang was:

> **My Father has given me this nation;**
> **In protecting them I have a hard time.**

"This sober conviction," according to Vestal, was the "driving, guiding force" which sparked Bull's whole career. Aaron M. Beede, an Episcopal priest, wrote similarly: "[Sitting Bull's belief that]... he was divinely commissioned to maintain the old Dakota nationality overshadowed everything to the last."

In addition, Bull looked back to an earlier call of destiny from *Wakan Tanka* while he was yet in his mother's womb:

> **I am a man. I see. I know. I began to see when I was not yet born; when I was not in my mother's arms. It was then I began to study about my people.**
>
> **I studied about many things. I studied about the smallpox that was killing my people--the great sickness that was killing the women and children. I was so interested that I turned over on my side. *Wakan Tanka* must have told me at that time that I would be the man to be the judge of all the other Indians--a big man to decide for them in all their ways.**

Sitting Bull's mother, Her Holy Door, was evidently a very spiritually-minded woman, who took her role as caretaker for her boy very seriously. The noted Oglala holy man, Black Elk, stated that in Lakota society the mother was to sacrifice everything for her children and develop in them a great love for *Wakan Tanka*--"... [I]n time these children will become holy people and leaders of the nation and will have the power to make others *wakan.*" Sitting Bull was deemed *wakan,* and honored by *Wakan Tanka* because he dreamed of Thunderbird deities. This was made evident by his practice of painting his face with lightning streaks. Bull used his *wakan* power to perform many miraculous things, including ending droughts.

Sources: (First song) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 73; (speech) *Wild Life*, 398-401; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 42; Brown, *The Sacred Pipe,* 10-11.

3) I Desire to Be the Chief Soldier.... --Circa 1857

DURING THE 1840-50s Sitting Bull took readily to inter-tribal warfare and rapidly attained honors which enabled him to ascend the steps of leadership of the Strong Heart warrior society. He was then made responsible for the tribal hunting. Bull once gave the following summary:

> **At the age of fourteen I killed an enemy and began to make myself great in battle and became a chief. Before this, from [age] ten to fourteen, my people called me the Sacred Stand Shot. After killing an enemy they called me *Tatanka Iyotanka,* or Sitting Bull. An Indian may be a hereditary chief, but he must make himself a chief by his bravery. I have killed sixteen enemies. ... I have made raids upon the Crees, Gros Ventres, and Northern Blackfeet and have stolen horses twenty-two times.**

Before one of his horse-stealing raids, Bull vowed to perform a sun-gazing dance if he was successful. The "scarlet blanket" he offered was a reference to the blood he would shed:

> ***Wakan Tanka,* take pity on me, blameless as I am. Give me some horses to take home with me, and I will give You a scarlet blanket and a filled pipe next summer.**

In about 1857 the Hunkpapa Tetons, numbering some 700 lodges, listened to the prophecy of one of their leading chiefs, Loud-Voiced Hawk. He said that in a dream he saw food and blankets being given to the Indians, but then there was a great fight which filled him with fear. He said that the dream was a warning to them to beware of those who gave gifts, for they would betray and work sorrow among the people. Bull arose and said:

> **My father, I am a young man. I have seen only twenty-two winters and perhaps you will not listen to me, but I intend to speak nevertheless. I have always listened when my elders have spoken, and especially have I opened my ears when strangers from the east came to our lodges. Your decision is wise. It is well to have nothing to do with these deceitful ones.**
>
> **Listen to my request. I desire to be the chief soldier in this matter. If you wish to oppose the givers of gifts and the policy which goes with their refusal, place the matter in my hands and**

I will see that your desires are carried out.

The chiefs deliberated for a time and then said that it was well--Sitting Bull would be the chief soldier of the tribe. Bull was also said to have been made an honorary chief of the Oglalas when he returned some horses that his tribe had stolen from them.

Sources: (First speech) *SPMPP,* August 4, 1881; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 31, 135; (second speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 161-62. Hamlin Garland's book has been overlooked by most historians, but his presentation of a firsthand account about the chief from a member of Sitting Bull's band is credible.

4) Here Is Where I Got Wounded in the Leg....

SITTING BULL gave an account of his intertribal war experiences to Lieutenant W. Tear in 1882 on the occasion of his doing some pictographic artwork related to his history. In one drawing he depicted himself on horseback with a buffalo-horned headdress, killing a Crow opponent. This was the fight during which Sitting Bull was wounded in the foot. According to the story given by Frank Grouard, Crow and Lakota war parties met each other on the Porcupine River. Wanting to set an example to the younger men, Bull challenged the Crow leader to single combat. The Crow, figuring that he was overmatched, took a rifle and shot at Sitting Bull. The ball hit Bull beneath his toes and furrowed its way through to the sole of his foot. Bull meanwhile plunged a knife into his opponent's chest (or shot him by another account). Bull's wound did not heal properly, as the bottom of the foot contracted; this resulted in his having a slight limp for the remainder of his life. Before the fight Bull sang a song which he made up on the spot to bolster his courage:

Friends, whoever runs away,
He is a woman, they say.
Therefore, through many trials
My life is short.

He later said of this fight:

[It] took [a] long time to kill these people. Here is where I got wounded in [the] leg and got off of [my] horse and killed this man. [There were] no prisoners in that fight.

This is "Stand and Kill," [a] Crow chief. [We] had guns in this fight. The Lakota used to take the Crows prisoners and give them good clothes and feed them up and give them good ponies and then send them back so they could tell a good story of the Lakota to their people.

As he said, it was often his practice to take captives, treat them well and then send them back to their people; he did this especially for chiefs. He also aided in the restoration of white captive Fanny Kelly to the Americans in 1864.

Sitting Bull drew fifty-five pictures of his autobiographical exploits on captured muster roll blanks of the 31st U. S. infantry. This was later stolen or found by an Indian who brought it to Fort Buford in 1870. It ended up in the hands of army physician Dr. James C. Kimball and later was given to the Smithsonian Institution.

Sources: (Speech) Matthew W. Stirling, "Three Pictographic Autobiographies of Sitting Bull," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 97 (July 22, 1938): 44; (song) Vestal, "Works of Sitting Bull," 274; DeBarthe, *Grouard,* 33; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 21, 63; *SPMPP,* July 11, 1876.

5) Friends, the Black Hills Belongs to Me. --Summer 1857

SITTING BULL knew little about the Americans, or the "Long Knives," who in the 1840-50s began to settle in the land of the Santee Dakotas in Minnesota, while others crossed through the lands of the southern Tetons on the Oregon Trail. He speculated on the whites' move westward:

> **I do not understand why the white man leaves his own land to invade ours. It must be a sad country with little game, and if he came here only to hunt or trade we would make him welcome--but I fear he comes to steal our hunting grounds away. If he is in need and comes peaceably, let him share our buffalo. There is enough to feed all the world.**

But in 1857 the Americans tampered with Lakota polity. General William "White Beard" Harney, after defeating the Brule Tetons on the Bluewater River in Nebraska, unilaterally appointed head chiefs for all the Lakota tribes. He named Bear's Rib chief of the Hunkpapas--a chief so bold that he executed anyone who broke his laws. But although the chief favored dependency on the Americans, many rejected his politics in favor of segregation.

Sitting Bull was a segregationist and felt that the Black Hills, the *Paha Sapa*, was the sacred center of their land. When Lieutenant G. K. Warren and his party surveyed the Hills in 1857, the Lakotas detained them for a time. Bull went to that Lakota camp and said:

> **Friends! The Black Hills belongs to me! Look at me and look at the earth. Which is the oldest do you think? The earth, and I was born on it. How old is it? I do not know. I will tell you what I think: It is far older than we are. It does not belong to us alone: It was our fathers' and should be our children's after us. When I received it, it was all in one piece, and so I hold it. If the white men take my country, where can I go? I have nowhere to go. I cannot spare it and love it very much. Let us alone. That is what they promised in their treaty [of 1851 at Fort Laramie]--to let us alone.**
>
> **What is this white soldier doing here? What did he come for? To spy out the land, and to find a good place for a fort, and a road, and to dig out gold. He is thinking about the next war after telling us to make peace with all nations and go to war no more. The white men tell us to make peace but our enemies will not keep the peace. We have to make war, and besides it is our pastime.**
>
> **This white soldier chief, this White Beard [General Harney], came out here and told us to make peace, to shake all nations by the hand and smoke together. But after he left here he went to war himself, first in the south [Florida] and now against the Mormons. He says one thing and does another.**
>
> **Friends, the Black Hills belongs to me. This white man must stop here. He must go back.**

Sources: (First quote) Garland, *American Indian*, 165; (speech) Stanley Vestal, "Sitting Bull's Maiden Speech," *The Frontier, Magazine of the Northwest* 12 (March 1932): 269-71.

I) His business, [Sitting Bull]... says, is to kill whites, and he will kill them as long as he and his band last. He boasts that war is more profitable to him than peace; that it brings him arms, ammunition, clothing, and especially great numbers of horses and mules.... To judge by appearances one would believe him to be the most harmless of redskins. In reality, he is a ferocious beast who seems to be laughing when he is showing his teeth.... It is he in particular who inspires the others with his hate and who keeps on the warpath the unsubdued band of Hunkpapas, which is always joined by young aspirants from other bands....

--Colonel Phillipe Regis de Trobriand, 1868

II) My friend, out there is our land, a big open space covered with game. Go back to your friends, the white men, and say that The Sitting Bull is Hunkpapa and free to do as he wills. He chooses to live as his fathers lived. As the Great Spirit made him, so he is, and shall remain. --Sitting Bull

III) Friends, what are you talking about?

The Black Hills belong to me.

Saying this, I take fresh courage.

--Sitting Bull

IV) There never was a wilder grab for gold than the succeeding dash into the Black Hills in the face of solemn treaties.

--Colonel H. B. Carrington

Sources: (First quote) Trobriand, *Military Life,* 265, 289-90; (second quote) Garland, *American Indian,* 168; (third quote) Vestal, "Works of Sitting Bull," 277; (fourth quote) Turner, *NWMP* 1:290.

2) The White Soldiers Do Not Know How to Fight. --Circa 1864

IN THE SUMMER OF 1863 General Sibley renewed his offensive against the Santees. While he and his army traversed Dakota Territory from the east, Little Crow, having failed to secure British backing for the war, went back to Minnesota to steal horses. On July 3 this great leader and orator was killed by a farmer and his son. Meanwhile, Sibley attacked a large camp of Santees and Yanktonais under Standing Buffalo at Big Mound. Many of the Yanktonais had been neutral or uninvolved in the war previously, but now it had been precipitated upon them. Not only so, but as they fled before Sibley's troops, they encountered Sitting Bull's people. In the following days of skirmishing, some of the Hunkpapas became involved in the fighting. Sitting Bull ran off a mule from Sibley's wagon train and counted coup on a muledriver.

During the summer of 1864 the Hunkpapas were encamped at Killdeer Mountain (North Dakota). Here they were joined by Yanktonais under Medicine Bear and Santees under Inkpaduta (the notorious instigator of the "Spirit Lake Massacre" of 1857). With little warning they were attacked by an army under General Alfred Sully. The Lakotas looked to the more-experienced Inkpaduta for battle leadership, and he advised them to take up positions on Killdeer Mountain to safeguard against a cavalry attack. He and his Santees defended the Indian left flank, where he lost some thirty men; Medicine Bear also lost about thirty men. Sitting Bull fought until his uncle, Four Horns, was wounded, and then led him to shelter and bandaged the chief's wound. He then helped cover the retreat of his people into the badlands.

Sitting Bull was surprised to see the difference in fighting style between the Indians and the soldiers. Indians fought primarily to show courage and bravery, often by counting coup on-or touching--a live enemy; killing was only of secondary importance to them. But as the white soldiers seemed to care only for killing, Bull denigrated them:

> **The white soldiers do not know how to fight. They are not lively enough. They stand still and run straight; it is easy to shoot them. They do not try to save themselves.**
>
> **Also, they seem to have no hearts. When an Indian gets killed, the other Indians feel very sorry and cry, and sometimes stop fighting. But when a white soldier gets killed, nobody cries, nobody cares, they go right on shooting and let him lie there. Sometimes they even go off and leave their wounded behind them.**

Because the government was originally only trying to punish the Santees, the Hunkpapa chiefs felt that they had been dragged into the war reluctantly: "All insist that they did not intend to fight the whites, but the Santees commenced the trouble some years ago; that the whites had crowded them back on to them, and so they took it up."

Sources: Louis Pfaller, "Sully's Expedition of 1864," *North Dakota History* 31 (January 1964), 42, 73-74; Diedrich, *Famous Chiefs,* 42-60; (speech) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 61; *SPMPP,* August 19, 1876; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 56-57; Diedrich, *Chief Standing Buffalo,* 40-53.

3) Sully Simply... Wants to Rub Us Out. --1865

AFTER THE FIGHT at Killdeer Mountain, Sitting Bull joined the warriors in skirmishes with Sully's army in the badlands from August 7-10, 1864. During one engagement he had a dialogue with Sully's Indian scouts and scolded them: **"You have no business with the soldiers. The Indians here have no fight with the whites. Why is it the whites come to fight with the Indians? Now, we have to kill you and you dry [thirst] to death."** Following this, Sitting Bull joined in a September attack on two isolated wagons with the Captain James Fisk wagon train (near Marmath, North Dakota). Bull rode up toward one of the soldier escorts, but was shot in the left hip, the ball exiting through his back; although badly wounded, he made his escape. After his recovery he was once again aroused for war by Cheyenne messengers. They brought him a war pipe and related the unprovoked attack and massacre of many of Black Kettle's southern Cheyennes in Colorado on November 19, 1864. In the summer of 1865, when the Lakotas were contacted by General Sully in regard to a peace treaty to be signed at Fort Rice, Sitting Bull objected:

> **Right now the Cheyennes and Lakota are fighting white men on the Platte [River]; this very day the soldiers are marching from the south into our hunting grounds on the Powder [River]. Sully simply wants to get us all together at Rice and then rub us out. Wait! Don't be in a hurry; take your time.**

However, 250 lodges of Hunkpapa, Blackfeet and Yanktonai decided to go in. They approached the fort on July 13, just as Sully arrived by steamer. The soldiers inadvertently fired a cannon salute to their commander, causing the flight of about half of the Indians, who feared treachery. Sully described what happened next: "[A] chief (who wishes to lead the war party) called Sitting Bull... went through the different villages cutting himself with a knife and crying out that he was just from Fort Rice; that all those that had come in and given themselves up I had killed, and calling on the nation to avenge the murder." On July 28 Bull and Shaved Head raised a war party of some 1,000 warriors and led the charge on the fort. One soldier reported: "They went yelling like barking dogs. As they whipped across the creek they struck their ponies with their leather whips fastened around their wrists. Their horses went with the swiftest kind of a run into the fight." After capturing two horses, Bull left the field early. His action so angered the war party that they whipped him and killed the two horses. As Bull was no coward, he must have had warning from *Wakan Tanka* to leave the fight.

The Hunkpapas moved west to Powder River where they fought another military force on September 5, 1865. When Sully later made another peace initiative, they felt that the whites must have grown tired of the war. This strengthened Bull's stand for independence. He was also bolstered by the Santee leaders, Inkpaduta and White Lodge, who camped near Turtle Mountain and were characterized as "breathing war to the knife!"

Sources: (Speech) Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 62-69, 72; Utley, *Lance and Shield*, (first quote) 59, 66-70; *SPPP*, October 1 and 24, 1865; Dee Brown, *The Galvanized Yankees* (New York: Curtis Books, 1963), 140-47.

4) I Had Rather Die on the Field of Battle. --Summer 1867

IN THE SPRING OF 1866 Sitting Bull made further raids on Fort Rice, until he was distracted by the new "soldier house," Fort Buford, being built at the mouth of the Yellowstone. That winter, while Red Cloud's southern Tetons battled the soldiers for control of the Bozeman Trail, Bull attacked Buford and sent the message that **"at no distant day [it]... was to be destroyed from the face of the earth."** Bull also told Fort Union trader David Pease that **"he proposed to kill every soldier at Fort Buford."** Audaciously, he asked Pease to give him a red shirt so that **"the next time he came they would all know him by it, and... he would throw off his robe so all would know him."** In spring 1867, while Long Dog and Running Antelope met with Sully at Fort Rice, Sitting Bull was near Fort Union telling trader Charles Larpenteur:

> **I have killed, robbed and injured too many white men to believe in a good peace. They are [bad] medicine, and I would eventually die a lingering death. I had rather die on the field of battle or have my skin pierced with bullet holes. And for another thing I don't want to have**

> **anything to do with people who... [make] one carry water on the shoulders and haul manure.**

He also told various Indian spectators that **'they should not stick so close to the whites, getting as poor as snakes, eating nothing but bacon and hardtack. They had better leave and do as he did--go into the buffalo country, eat plenty of meat, and when they wanted a good horse, go to some fort and steal one':': "Look at me; see if I am poor, or my people either. The whites may get me at last, as you say, but I will have good times till then. You are fools to make yourselves slaves to a piece of fat bacon, some hardtack and a little sugar and coffee."**

During the winter of 1867-68 Colonel Trobriand reported: "Great discussions took place about [war or peace]..., the tribes of Hunkpapas and Yanktonais dividing into friendly and hostile bands." It was eventually decided that one leader should be named to represent all the independents in deciding for peace or war. Four Horns nominated Sitting Bull; Crazy Horse was suggested for second. When the matter was agreed, Black Moon told Bull: "First, you are to think always of *Wakan Tanka.* Second, you are to use all your powers to care for your people, and especially for the poor." Afterward Bull declared that he would establish himself on the Fort Totten--Fort Stevenson road and stay there **"as long as he could find evil deeds to do."** This prompted Yanktonai leader Medicine Bear to tell Trobriand in April 1868 that he should not trust the Hunkpapas, "the only ones who still... [had] evil intentions and say that they want to stay 'on the warpath.'" Major General Alfred H. Terry soon found himself itemizing to his superiors the numerous deeds of Sitting Bull and the other hostiles.

Sources: (First quote) Charles W. Hoffman, Affidavit, John B. Hubbell Papers, MHS; (speech) Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader,* vol. 2, edited by Eliot Coues (New York: F. P. Harper, 1898), 429-30; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 257, 261; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 91-95; James P. Kimball, "Fort Buford," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 4 (1929-1930), 75-76; Gen. A. H. Terry to Gen. W. A. Nichols, October 5, 1868, in *House Executive Document,* Vol. 1, 40 Cong., 3 sess., 1868-69 (serial 1367), 34-35. There were rumors that the Lakotas had wiped out the soldiers of Fort Buford, thus attracting national attention for Sitting Bull. See Robert G. Athearn, "The Fort Buford Massacre," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41 (March 1955): 675-84.

5) [I]t Is My Will That the Captive Shall Not Die. --January 1868

DURING THE WINTER of 1867-68 Sitting Bull and his followers were hunting buffalo on the Milk River when they happened to sight a U. S. mail carrier in a big buffalo overcoat. One Lakota jumped the man--Frank Grouard, but Sitting Bull rode up and knocked down the Indian who held the captive, thus claiming ownership of Grouard. Sitting Bull then introduced himself by sign language and brought Grouard, a mixed-blood Sandwich Islander, to his village on the Missouri. Grouard described Bull as being about thirty-six-years-old and in his prime: "His head was crowned with a profusion of long, black hair, which he wore brushed from a low forehead. His face was massive and swarthy. His eyes were large and expressive.... His wearing apparel consisted of breechclout and leggins, a buffalo robe doing service as an overcoat."

As it turned out, one faction of the Hunkpapas, which was led by No Neck (or Short Neck) and Gall, wanted to kill Grouard, but Sitting Bull had decided to adopt him as a brother. Sitting Bull told the chiefs of his decision, reminding them of his present adopted brother, Little Assiniboin, who had been raised by his sister, White Cow, and who had become a powerful warrior for the Lakotas:

> **The coups of Sitting Bull are like the stars, shining and almost numberless. I look; I act; I talk afterwards. That which I will is so. The captive in the Lakota lodge is resting on the robes that Sitting Bull has taken with his own hand from the buffalo, and it is my will that the captive shall not die. When Little Assiniboin was taken from his people, it was Sitting Bull who bore him to his lodge and made him his brother--so [too] with the paleface within**

the lodge of Sitting Bull this night. He is Standing Bear, the brother of Sitting Bull. My will is spoken.

Grouard was kept under close guard for about two years. Afterward Bull presented him with a gun and gave him his freedom to live and hunt as he chose. However, in 1872 the chief became irate with Grouard after the latter lied to him. Grouard thought that the chief would have killed him, but for the protection he received from Bull's sister. Bull's anger was apparently so strong as to eclipse the fact that Grouard was possibly married to his sister. Grouard soon left the Hunkpapas and lived with Crazy Horse and the Oglalas for a time.

Sources: (Speech) DeBarthe, *Grouard*, 35, 49-52. Frank Huston heard that Grouard had married the chief's daughter, but perhaps it was a sister. Utley assumes that Bull had but one sister, Pretty Plume or Good Feather, but there were apparently several. One sister was said to have died in the summer of 1876. Graham, *Custer Myth*, 80, 55; Utley, *Lance and Shield*, 352.

6) The Whites Provoked the War. --June 19-20, 1868

SITTING BULL spent the spring of 1868 raiding the upper Missouri river forts in conjunction with the Santees under Inkpaduta. Then he and a war party of thirty-five men including "Young Inkpaduta" set out from Turtle Mountain to raid Fort Totten. They made a passing attack at the fort and ambushed a nearby wagon train, capturing one wagon and killing the driver. Not long afterward, General Sully sent word that he wanted the Hunkpapas to come to Fort Rice to sign the Laramie Treaty, which had already been signed by the southern Tetons to end the "Red Cloud War." About 500 agency Hunkpapas under Bear's Rib (II) and Running Antelope agreed to do so, but Sitting Bull refused. Yet Bull expressed willingness to receive a visit from a wellknown Catholic peace promoter, the "Black Robe," Father Pierre Jean De Smet. He sent word: **"Tell the Black Robe, we shall meet him and his friends with arms stretched out, ready to embrace him. No man living can remember that I ever treated a peace commissioner with contempt, or gave them hard words, or did them any harm."**

De Smet came to the Hunkpapa camp on the Yellowstone River with a delegation which included Running Antelope, Bear's Rib and various Santee and Yanktonai leaders. They met with the leading Hunkpapa chiefs, Black Moon, Four Horns and Red Horn, and war leaders Sitting Bull, No Neck, Crawler and Gall. In answer to De Smet's plea for peace, Bull said:

Blackrobe, I hardly sustain myself beneath the weight of white men's blood that I have shed. The whites provoked the war; their injustices, their indignities to our families, the cruel, unheard of, and unprovoked massacre at Fort Lyon [Sand Creek] of hundreds of Cheyenne women, children, and old men, shook all the veins which bind and support me. I rose, tomahawk in hand, and I have done all the hurt to the whites that I could.

Today you are among us, and in your presence my arms stretch to the ground as if dead. I will listen to your good words. And as bad as I have been to the whites, just so good am I ready to become toward them....

Listen my friend. I have a message for the Grandfather. I do not want anyone to bother my people. I want them to live in peace. I myself have plans for my people, and if they follow my plans, they will never want. They will never hunger. I wish for traders only, and no soldiers on my reservation. *Wakan Tanka* gave us this land, and we are at home here. I will not have my people robbed. We can live if we can keep our Black Hills. We do not want to eat from the hand of the Grandfather. We can feed ourselves.

The next day, June 20, Bull followed Black Moon and said:

Father, you pray to the Great Spirit for us. I thank you. I have often besought the kindness of the Great Spirit, but never had I done so more earnestly than today, that our words may

> **be heard above and all over the earth. When I first saw you coming with that flag, my heart beat fast, and I had evil thoughts, caused by the remembrance of the past. I bade my heart be quiet: It was so! And when on the prairie I shook hands with you, and my**

cousin and sister, I felt changed and hardly knew what to say. But my heart was glad and quickly scouted deception.

I am, and always have been, a fool and a warrior; my people caused me to be so. They have been troubled and confused by the past: they looked upon their troubles as caused by the whites, and became crazy, and pushed me forward. For the last four years I have led them in bad deeds; the fault is theirs, not mine.

I will now say in their presence, Welcome, Father--the messenger of peace. I hope quiet will again be restored to our country.... My people will return to meet the chiefs of the Grandfather, who wants to make peace with us. I hope it will be done and whatever is done by others I will submit to and, for all time to come, remain a friend of the whites.

In a second speech he added his terms for "being good" to the whites:

> **Friends, I have forgotten two things. I wish all to know that I do not propose to sell any part of my country, nor will I have the whites cutting our timber along the rivers, more especially the oak. I am particularly fond of the little groves of oak trees. I love to look at them and feel a reverence for them, because they endure the wintry storm and the summer's heat and, not unlike ourselves, seem to thrive and flourish by them. One more thing: Those forts filled with white soldiers must be abandoned; there is no greater source of trouble and grievance to my people.**

Bull suggested that Gall go to hear the terms of the treaty, as he refused to go himself, saying, **"I will sit here on the prairie and listen. Everybody knows my terms."** He advised Gall, **"You go down there and see what they have to say. Take no presents: We don't want them. Tell them to move the soldiers out and stop the steamboats; then we can have peace."** But although the terms were not what Bull wanted, Gall signed the treaty on July 2. When the soldiers were not removed, Bull felt justified in continuing the war. Colonel Trobriand, the commander of Fort Stevenson, therefore ridiculed the agreement, saying that the government made peace with Indians who were already peaceful. He also wrote of Sitting Bull in particular: "Sitting Bull is one of the most dangerous and evil Indians in Dakota. A price was put on his head.... Now, Dakota [Territory] has become the theater of his depredations and killings.... [He is] bent on vengeance, he has always done us every harm in his power and is the spirit or arm of all the coups attempted or accomplished against us."

Sources: *SPPP,* April 17, 30, June 2, 1868; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 99, 102-106; Vestal, *New Sources,* 228; (speeches) Hiram M. Chittenden and Alfred T. Richardson, eds. *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre Jean De Smet, 1801-73.* 4 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 3:881-86; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 79; Trobriand, *Military Life,* 265. It was said that at the time of De Smet's visit in 1868, Gall pointed a rifle at De Smet, but Bull distracted him and raised a gun to Gall. Bull said, **"Stir hand or foot and I will shoot you down."** Then, addressing the warriors around, he added, **"You can attack me if you will, but I will kill some of you and no one can die better than in defending this good man."***Toronto Globe,* August 24, 1885.

7) Let the White Men Keep to Their Own. --Circa 1874

IN 1869 SITTING BULL and his warriors maintained their watchful presence around the upper Missouri forts. Fort Buford commander Henry A. Morrow called them the scourge of the Missouri and added: "[T]heir numbers permit them to encroach with impunity on their neighbors.... "Due to these complaints, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Jaspar A. Viall directed Andrew Simmons in 1871 to bring the hostile chiefs to Washington to make a treaty. Simmons succeeded in bringing the Santee leader, Standing Buffalo, to the Milk River Agency

and visited the Hunkpapa camp on November 4. Black Moon said that he and Sitting Bull (who was absent) wanted the railroad stopped and the forts abandoned, but no deal for a Washington trip was made. The following August 1872 Bull attacked Major Eugene M. Baker's soldiers at Arrow Creek and another force led by General David S. Stanley on August 22. Bull told them during the latter fight that if the railroad came through, the Indians would be no more, and so he had sent for other tribes and they would come to wipe out the soldiers.

Later, assistant interior secretary Benjamin R. Cowen met Bull's brother-in-law, His Horse Looking at Fort Peck. But Bull only sent a message which was both a challenge and an insult: **"Tell them at Washington if they have one man who speaks the truth to send him to me, and I will listen to what he has to say."** Cowen reported that although the agency chiefs spoke of Bull as "a mean-spirited sort of fellow, with but little or no influence," the Indians he had lately met considered him "the leading man of their people." Sitting Bull felt the same:

> **I have a good friend up there.**
> **I have a good friend up there.**
> **I have an elk-friend above;**
> **On earth I speak for a nation.**

In 1873 Bull's followers confronted Lieutenant Colonel George Custer's Seventh Cavalry, which was protecting railroad workers. He later confided to a close friend:

> **Why should we go to a reservation and plow the hard ground when the buffalo are waiting for us in the wild lands? We owe the white man nothing. We can take care of ourselves. We buy our guns and ammunition; we pay well for them. We are on the earth which the Great Spirit gave to us in the beginning. Its fruit is ours, its wood and pasturage are ours. Let the white men keep to their own. Why do they trouble us? Do they think the Great Spirit is a fool, that He creates people without reason?**

To make matters worse, Custer and his cavalry were sent into the Black Hills in July 1874. By late August he reported that there was ‘gold in the grassroots,’ sparking an illegal invasion.

Sources: (Song) Miller, *Ghost Dance,* 298; (speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 170-71; Jackson, *Century of Dishonor,* 179; Kingsbury, *Dakota Territory,* 1:767; *Minneapolis Tribune(MT),* June 9, 1872; McGinnis, *Counting Coup,* 121; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 110-11; Andrew J. Simmons to Jasper A. Viall, December 5, 1871, *House Executive Documents,* 42 Congress, 2 sess., No. 102, 1871-72 (serial 1511), 5-9.

8) I Have No Land to Sell. --Fall 1875

AFTER CUSTER'S ("Thieves' Road") Expedition, thousands of whites invaded the Black Hills to dig for gold. Sitting Bull foresaw war and sought an alliance with the Northern Cheyenne tribe. On a Rosebud River campground he performed a sun-gazing dance, calling out, **"I wish my friends to fill one pipe and I wish my people to fill one pipe."** Later, as he danced he prophesied: **"The Great Spirit has given our enemies to us. We are to destroy them. We do not know who they are. They may be soldiers."**

Meanwhile, the government decided to secure ownership of the Black Hills and sent Senator William B. Allison to call upon the Lakotas to cede title to this and all other unceded land. As the treaty proposal required three-quarters of the Lakota males to sign in order to be ratified, messengers were sent to Bull and Crazy Horse to tell them to come to Red Cloud Agency for councils. Bull replied:

> **Are you the Great Spirit that made me? Or was it the Great Spirit that made me, who sent you? If He asks me to come see Him, I will go, but the Big Chief of the white men must come see me. I will not go to the reservation. I have no land to sell. There is plenty of game here for us. We have enough ammunition. We don't want white men here.**

Also present was Frank Grouard, who reported Bull as saying:

> **... [H]e would not sell his land. He said he had never been to an agency and was not going in. He was no agency Indian. He told me to go out and tell the white men at Red Cloud that he declared open war and would fight whoever he met from that time on.**

But other sources indicate that some of the reports of Bull's words gave the wrong impression of his intentions. By one account Bull told the scout that he simply wanted his freedom, adding, **"When you come for me you need bring no guides. You will easily find me. I shall be right here. I shall not run away."**

The treaty councils began on September 20, but because Red Cloud demanded seven generations of support for the Hills, the treaty failed. Even so, the Miniconjou shirt-wearer, One Horn (or Lone Horn), upbraided Red Cloud and Spotted Tail for displaying any intention at all of selling the Hills. When he reported this to Bull, the latter was elated and replied:

> **How! Brother, it is well that you have said that. These hills are a treasure to us Indians. That is the food pack of the people and when the poor have nothing to eat we can all go there and have something to eat. It is well that you have said this.**

Sources: (First and third quotes) Utley, Lance and Shield, 122-25; (second quote) Robinson, *A Good Year to Die,* 38-39; Garland, *American Indian,* 168-69; Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 69; (fourth quote) DeMallie, *The Sixth Grandfather,* 172-73.

9) Let Us Go Deep into the West.... --Spring 1876

BECAUSE OF THE REFUSAL of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and their followers to treat for the Black Hills, the government unilaterally ordered them to come into the reservations or be subject to military action. Secretary of the Interior Zachariah Chandler wrote on December 3, 1875 that Sitting Bull's Indians "must remove to the reservations before January 31, 1876." But Sitting Bull had no intention of going in, and in early 1876 he heard news that many soldiers had begun to march against him. General George "Three Stars" Crook left Fort Fetterman with a large army and headed north for Montana. On March 17 some of his soldiers under Colonel Joseph J. Reynolds captured a Cheyenne camp on the Powder River. Most of the Cheyennes escaped and found succor with Crazy Horse's Oglalas. Crazy Horse then led the people to where Sitting Bull was encamped. Bull listened to their stories, fed and reequipped them. Meanwhile, the soldiers went back to Fort Fetterman due to extremely cold weather, and Bull, in a talk with his closest associates, said:

> **Why do they do this? I am not at war with them. They are not good to eat. I kill only game--the beasts that we need for food.**
>
> **I am always for peace. You who know me will bear witness that I take most joy in being a peacemaker. I mediate gladly.**
>
> **Now I will make a sign: To show them that we do not care to fight I will move camp. Let us go deep into the west where the soil is too hard for the plow, far from the white man, and there live in peace. It is a land for hunters; those who plant the earth will never come to dispossess us.**

But knowing that the soldiers would follow them anywhere, Bull decided that the best defensive strategy would be to accumulate as many people as possible into one large camp for mutual protection. He immediately sent messengers to all the hunting bands to come and join him for a council on the Tongue River. He also sent messengers to the neighboring tribes, asking for their help. In May Crowfoot of the Blackfeet tribe received tobacco from a messenger, who said that Sitting Bull would give them plenty of horses and mules and white women captives if they would assist in fighting the Americans; furthermore, the Lakotas would then go to

Canada and help the Blackfeet destroy the forts of the Northwest Mounted Police. However, Crowfoot was determined to stand by the whites of Canada.

Sources: (Speech) Garland, *American Indian*, 173; Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 88-89; Vestal, *Warpath*, 177, 182-83.

10) My Brothers, Shall We Submit? --Spring 1876

ABOUT APRIL 1876 Sitting Bull was encamped on Tongue River with many Hunkpapas under Four Horns, Black Moon, Pretty Bear, Bear's Cap, Little Knife, Iron Dog, Crow King and Gall. In addition to the Hunkpapas, there were some Santees and Yanktonais under Inkpaduta, White Lodge and White Face, Oglalas under Crazy Horse, Black Twin, Little Hawk, Big Road, Stone Dog, He Dog and Low Dog, Miniconjous under Lame Deer, Hump, Flying By, Bull Eagle and Makes Room, Blackfeet under Scabby Head, Sans Arc under Red Bear, Spotted Eagle and Fast Bear, Brules under Flying Chaser and Crow Dog, Two Kettles under Runs the Enemy, and many Cheyennes under "old man" chiefs, White Bull (or Ice Bear) and Dirty Moccasins, and warrior chiefs, Crazy Head and Lame White Man.

During one council Sitting Bull criticized the American culture, in particular farming, materialism and the prerogatives of the rich over the poor (His speech appears here, evidently polished to some degree by Charles Eastman, who recorded it):

> **Behold, my brothers, the spring has come; the earth has received the embraces of the sun and we shall soon see the results of that love! Every seed is awakened and so has all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this vast land.**
>
> **Yet hear me, friends! We have now to deal with another people, small and feeble when our forefathers first met with them, but now great and overbearing. Strangely enough, they have a mind to till the soil, and the love of possessions is a disease in them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break, but the poor may not! They have a religion in which the poor worship, but the rich will not! They even take tithes of the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own use, and fence their neighbors away from here and deface her with their buildings and their refuse. They compel her to produce out of season, and when sterile she is made to take medicine in order to produce again. All this is sacrilege.**
>
> **This nation is like a spring freshet; it overruns its banks and destroys all who are in its path. We cannot dwell side by side. Only seven years ago we made a treaty by which we were assured that the buffalo country should be left to us forever. Now they threaten to take that from us also. My brothers, shall we submit? Or shall we say to them: "First kill me before you can take possession of my fatherland"?**

Sources: (Speech) Eastman, *Indian Heroes*, 119-21; *New York Tribune*, July 10, 1876.

11) [The] Whites Kill Themselves.... --June 15, 1876

IN MAY 1876 a Brule Lakota, Bear that Stands Up, traveled from the Spotted Tail Agency to Sitting Bull's camp, intending to bring some of his relations back to the reserve. Before departing, Bull told Bear that he was strongly opposed to the Lakota sellout of the Black Hills:

> **... [H]e does not intend to molest any one south of the Black Hills, but will fight the whites in that country as long as the question is unsettled, and if not settled [he will fight] as long as he lives.**

> **As soon as the Black Hills question is settled he wants my agent to send him word and tell him what to do. He... finds a great many guns and other things about the hills where white men have killed each other and left them on the prairies.... [He] does not want to fight the whites, only steal from them, as they have done. White men steal, and the Indians won't come to settlements. Whites kill themselves, make Black Hills stink--[there were] so many dead men.**

Bull went on to say:

> **I heard that the Indians coming from the agency wouldn't be allowed to return. I have made a law that no visitors shall pass between the agency and my camp, either Indians or whites. When the rascality about the Black Hills is settled, then I will stop my rascality. The government had promised much to the agency people that never was fulfilled and it wants to move the agencies again. If moved, who will occupy the land? It belongs to you. If you remain where you are, won't you send me word? If good white people want to listen to the Great Father no more, your young men will listen to their chief. If the troops come out to me, I must fight them, but if they do not come out I intend to visit the agency, and I will counsel my people for peace.**

Bull later explained the situation regarding the Black Hills to J. W. Buel:

> **I need not tell you how we have been deceived by the white people.... The Black Hills country was set aside for us by the government; it was ours by solemn agreement, and we made the country our home; we realized how our lands had been taken, our reservations circumscribed, my people driven like so many wild beasts toward a common center to be shot down by encircling soldiery. Our homes in the Black Hills were invaded when gold was discovered there; we asked for protection, which was promised, but with all our importunities, the government refused to come to our aid. White thieves committed depredations and then accused my people of perpetrating the acts.**

Sources: (First and second speeches) *SPMPP,* July 15, 1876; (third speech) Buel, *Heroes of the Plains,* 582-83.

I) There was a Great Spirit who guided and controlled that battle. I could do nothing. I was sustained by the great Mysterious One. --Sitting Bull, 1881

II) At last we resisted.... We fought as brave men fight, with no advantages but courage to defend against usurpers, we met our enemies and honorably defeated them. --Sitting Bull, 1881

III) [H]e had killed many soldiers and one damned general, but he did not know who he was. --Sitting Bull, 1876

IV) They attacked our village and we killed them all. What would you do if your home was attacked? You would stand up like a brave man and defend it. --Sitting Bull, 1881

V) You tribes, what are you saying? A war chief I have been, All the same, I am still living. --Sitting Bull, June 1876

Sources: (First quote) *SPMPP,* May 31, 1876; (second quote) Buel, *Heroes of the Plains,* 582; (third quote) *MT,* September 8, 1876; (fourth quote) Creelman, *Great Highway,* 298-303; (fifth quote) Vestal, "Works of Sitting Bull," 274.

2) I Prophesied to My People. --June 1876

A SUN-GAZING DANCE was begun on June 14, 1876, on the Rosebud River, conducted by chief Black Moon in the office of intercessor. Since Sitting Bull was the chief dancer it became known as "Sitting Bull's

Sun Dance." Bull had danced many times before and performed the most serious tortures. Skewers had been inserted into his chest and back muscles and attached to ropes, and he had danced and struggled to free himself. This time Bull decided on a different method of torture: He offered 100 pieces of skin from his arms. Then he made his prayers and danced for a day and a night. By noon on the second day he went unconscious. When Bull revived he said that he had had a vision. Black Moon relayed Bull's words:

> **Sitting Bull wishes to announce that he has just heard a voice from above saying, "I give you these because they have no ears." He looked up and saw soldiers, and some Indians on horseback coming down like grasshoppers with their heads down and their hats falling off. They were falling right into our camp.**

The chief's cousin, Mrs. Spotted Horn Bull, later said, "[W]hen [Sitting Bull] revived.., he told most solemnly of a dream in which it had been foreshadowed to him that his people would soon meet Custer and his followers and would annihilate them." Bull added to his vision statement, saying: **"These dead soldiers who are coming are the gifts of *Wakan Tanka.* Kill them, but do not take their guns or horses. Do not touch the spoils. If you set your hearts upon the goods of the white man, it will prove a curse to this nation."**

In later years Sitting Bull gave his own account of the dance:

> **[W]e held our annual Sun Dance, [it] being our offering to the Great Spirit. It is our belief that we can only come into the presence of the Great Spirit through sufferings of the flesh. But though the ceremony indicates pain to those participate, yet there is really no suffering when there is an acceptance.**
>
> **At the conclusion of the third day of our dance I became unconscious of my material surroundings and was awakened in the spirit before the Great Ruler. He smoked and then gave me the peace pipe.... He said to me, "Tatanka-e-Yotanka, you are being surrounded by your enemies; in seven suns you will be attacked by your ancient foe, the Crow Indians, but over these I will give you a victory; three more suns shall not set before your people will have an engagement with white soldiers; the fight will be a terrible one, but your enemies will be slaughtered and you shall have a great victory. This prophecy you can make to your people, for they are weary and this will give them courage...." I prophesied to my people... and, that it came to pass as uttered, my people are my witnesses.**

Sources: (First quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 149-51; (second quote) Graham, *Custer Myth,* 82-83; (third quote) Buel, *Heroes of the Plains,* 584.

3) Father, Save the Tribe. --June 24, 1876

THREE DAYS AFTER the dance, Bull learned that over 1,000 soldiers and 260 Indian scouts were approaching from the south under General Crook. At his order about 1,000 warriors readied for war and gathered at his lodge. Leaving late that night, they rode until daybreak, when they were discovered by Crow and Shoshoni army scouts on the Rosebud River. The fight lasted for an entire day. When it was over Crook retreated, missing his planned rendezvous with soldiers under General Alfred "Star" Terry on the Yellowstone. A rumor went around that Sitting Bull was killed in the action because an Indian found on the battlefield fit a description of the chief given by Frank Grouard. The supposedly deceased chief was also credited by one reporter as having shown "himself the equal of the great Indian fighter, Crook, in the disposition and handling of his forces." Actually, Bull's arms were all but useless to him, being swollen and sore from the recent dance, and he had limited his participation in the fight to ranging up and down the Indian line to give courage to the warriors.

After the Battle of the Rosebud, the Lakotas and Cheyennes removed their camps to the Little Bighorn River. Here one of the largest Indian villages in the country was erected, having camp circles stretching out for three miles! Sitting Bull announced to his nephew, One Bull, that *Wakan Tanka* had promised an even greater victory

than the fight they had just won. That evening, June 24, Bull climbed to a ridge on the east side of the river and sang a thunder song. He prayed:

> ***Wakan Tanka,* pity me. In the name of the tribe, I offer you this peace-pipe. Wherever the sun, the moon, the earth, the four points of the wind, there you are always. Father, save the tribe, I beg you. Pity me. We want to live. Guard us against all misfortunes or calamities. Pity me.**

Bull then placed slender wands in the ground and tied tiny buckskin bags of tobacco and willow to them. Later that evening the wife of his uncle Four Horns died. Her death made him think that the promised victory might be that very day--June 25. According to Hunkpapa warrior Rainin-the-Face's later statement, "Sitting Bull had made big medicine way off on a hill. He came in with it; he had it in a bag on a coup-stick." Bull then made a big speech and said:

> ***Wakan Tanka* had come to him riding on an eagle. *Wakan Tanka* had told him that the "long swords" were coming. But the Indians would wipe them off the face of the earth.**

Sources: (Prayer) Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 144; Miller, "Echoes of the Little Bighorn," 28-30; (second quote) Wood, *Lives,* 454; *CDT,* July 7 and 11, 1876.

4) We Heard the Soldiers Were Coming....

IN LATER YEARS Sitting Bull was asked again and again about the Battle of the Little Bighorn. He eventually gave the following account of the period just before the battle to Father Jean B. Genin, a Catholic missionary:

> **We knew the soldiers were coming upon us weeks before our fight, yet we did not want to fight if we could do otherwise. In our camp on the Little Bighorn there were the tribes of the Tetons as follows: the Hunkpapas, who had many lodges; the Santees, with many warriors, whose lodges were pitched next to the Hunkpapas; next came the lodges of the Oglala--not so many; the Brule Lakota came next in the order of their tepees; the Miniconjou lodges were next; the Sans Arc lodges were pitched next; the Blackfeet lodges came next; the Cheyenne camp came next. There were some Arikara Indians in the camp with some of the Lakota tribe, and some of the Two Kettle tribe also, these being visitors and without lodges of their own.**
>
> **We did not go out there to fight. We took along our women and children, and went to meet all the tribes of this region, to make laws and treaties and to visit each other, and to make our young men and maidens acquainted with each other, so they could marry, as our fathers have done for many generations. So, when we found the white soldiers were following us, we marched back into the hills a long way, still being pursued by the army in direct violation of the Treaty of 1868, which article first pledges the honor of the United States to keep peace. We resolved to camp and await the will of *Wakan Tanka* at the time praying to *Wakan Tanka* to save us from the hands of our enemies, now near and coming without provocation to complete our extermination.**

Bull neglected to state that at least one particular group of twenty-six lodges, headed by the Blackfeet Lakota chief, Kill Eagle, had wanted to leave the camp before there was any fighting. However, the soldiers' lodge forced them to remain, even going so far as to kill and steal their horses and whip and bruise the Indians themselves.

Sources: (Speech) Kingsbury, *Dakota Territory,* 1:965; Graham, *Custer Myth,* 46-47.

5) Parley with Them If You Can. --June 25, 1876

ON THE EVENING of June 24, 1876 Lieutenant Colonel Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, a total of about 620 men, marched through Montana in a southwesterly direction, looking for the Indian encampment. In the morning Custer's Crow and Arikara scouts spotted the village and warned that it was extremely large. Brushing aside the warnings, and expecting that the Indians would scatter upon his approach, Custer divided his command into three battalions: He directed Captain Frederick W. Benteen to proceed westward to cut off any retreat to the southwest and sent Major Marcus Reno to attack the southern end of the village. Meanwhile, he led 210 men north along the east side of the Little Bighorn River to look for a convenient place to attack the village from the northeast.

At about noon on June 25 Reno's command began charging the southernmost Hunkpapa lodges. Sitting Bull immediately gave his rawhide shield as a badge of authority to One Bull and told him: **"You will take my place and go out and meet the soldiers that are attacking us. Parley with them if you can. If they are willing, tell them I will talk peace with them."** One Bull raised Bull's shield to get the attention of the warriors, and Iron Hail later testified that he saw One Bull go forward with his hand raised in a peace sign to show the soldiers that the Indians wanted to talk. However, when One Bull found that there was no hope of talking, he and the other warriors began massing and returning fire; he was then urged by Gall and Crow King to leave off charging until more warriors could be gathered. In a short while the Indians engaged the soldiers, who halted their charge and deployed a skirmish line. About fifteen minutes later Reno ordered his men to a position in the woods lining the riverbank. He soon afterward felt that his force was too threatened and ordered a hasty retreat across the river to a nearby hill. The Indians gave chase and literally hunted the fleeing soldiers like buffalo. A third of Reno's command was killed or wounded.

Meanwhile, Sitting Bull took his mother to a place of presumed safety in the hills to the northwest. Coming back to the village, he saw One Bull returning with a wounded companion. Bull ordered him to help him in guarding the women and children, fearing that soldiers might be coming from other directions as well. About that time Runs the Enemy, the leader of the Two Kettle warriors, returned from the fight with Reno and saw more soldiers on the ridge on the east side of the river. As he headed toward these soldiers, he encountered Sitting Bull riding along the line of warriors on a buckskin horse, saying:

> **A bird, when it is on its nest, spreads its wings to cover the nest and eggs and protect them. It cannot use its wings for defense, but it can cackle and try to drive away the enemy. We are here to protect our wives and children, and we must not let the soldiers get them. Make a brave fight!**

The chief then followed the warriors along the east side of the river and said at some point: **"Warriors, we have everything to fight for and if we are defeated we shall have nothing to live for; therefore let us fight like brave men."**

Sources: (First quote) Miller, "Echoes of the Little Bighorn," 30, 38; (second quote) Dixon, *The Vanishing Race,* 174-75; (third quote) Graham, *Custer Myth,* 96.

6) Our Men Rained Lead....

AFTER LEAVING MAJOR RENO, Custer confidently led five cheering, but physically exhausted, companies in columns abreast toward the north end of the village. He stated: "We will go down and make a crossing and capture the village." But Custer had underestimated the warrior strength--about 2,000 men according to Bull--and also thought that most of the men had gone buffalo hunting. After failing to find a ford to cross the river, he probably realized that he had divided his command prematurely and sent word to Benteen to catch up. Meanwhile, Reno was left to fend for himself. He was apparently unaware that Custer's plan of support to him was to attack the other end of the village and interpose his men between the warriors and the women and children, thereby gaining custody of the non-combatants and forcing the disconcerted warriors to surrender. After proceeding several miles upriver, Custer left three companies under Captain Myles Keogh at the head of Medicine Tail Coulee and charged with two companies, intending to penetrate into the village.

According to Indian testimony, the river crossing was guarded by only ten warriors. But when they fired a volley at the oncoming soldiers, Custer himself, at the head of his soldiers, was seriously wounded and fell into the water! The column immediately halted to retrieve their commander, and then instead of continuing the attack which was so vital to their success, they dismounted and retreated up Deep Coulee.

Custer's companies (about ninety men), probably headed now by Captain George W. Yates, reunited briefly with Keogh (and his 120 men). Although Keogh was the ranking officer, he did not pitch in, but rather apparently gave Yates permission to ride further north to find the true end of the village and perhaps capture the noncombatants there--hence, to try and salvage the battle plan. But Keogh's division of his force was risky, and incredibly, for reasons not known, Yates returned (to Cemetery Ridge) without having accomplished anything: He neither entered the village to fight nor did he take prisoners. His offensive failure undoubtedly destroyed whatever remained of the soldiers' chance for success. To make matters worse, he halted on Cemetery Ridge for some twenty minutes when he could have rejoined Keogh and either attacked the Indians with their combined force or made an attempt to get back to Reno. Perhaps both he and Keogh hoped--in vain--that Benteen would come to the rescue, but their mistakes placed both their commands in certain jeopardy. By this time the warriors had left Reno and had infiltrated around Keogh (on Calhoun Hill), although they were held at bay by skirmishers of Lieutenant Calhoun's company. When almost outflanked, however, Keogh sent one company to push the Indians back (in Calhoun Coulee); only half of the company survived the maneuver. Seizing the opportunity, Lame White Man, a Cheyenne leader, led a charge to break Keogh's tactical cohesion. Other Indians joined in the melee and two of Keogh's companies were virtually wiped out; the third company, reduced to half its force, fled over to "Custer Hill." In the meantime, Yates's command came under pressure, panicked, and also moved up Custer Hill. But instead of making a unified stand, forty men made a dash for the river where the Indians easily cut them off in a deep ravine; five other men on horseback tried unsuccessfully to escape to the south. The forty or so troopers who remained on the hill offered minimal resistance and were soon killed. Custer's body, with two bullet wounds, lay among them.

From his peripheral vantage point, Sitting Bull later gave his version of the action:

> **After... [Reno] was driven back to the bluffs he [Custer] took this road and went to see if he could not beat us there.... [T]he squaws were flying like birds; the bullets were humming like bees.... [The soldiers] fought. Many young men are missing from their lodges. But is there an American squaw who has her husband left? Were there any Americans left to tell the story of that day?... They were brave men. They were tired. When they rode up their horses were tired and they were tired. When they got off from their horses they could not stand firmly on their feet, they swayed to and fro--so my young men have told me--like the limbs of cypresses in a great wind. Some of them staggered under the weight of their guns. But they began to fight at once; but by this time, as I have said, our camps were aroused, and there were plenty of warriors to meet them. They fired with needle guns. We replied with magazine guns--repeating rifles.... Our young men rained lead across the river and drove the white braves back....**
>
> **I started... to tell the squaws to pack up the lodges and get ready to move away.... [The warriors] formed themselves on all sides of him [Custer], except just at his back.... [T]he trouble was with the soldiers. They were so exhausted, and their horses bothered them so much, that they could not take good aim. Some of their horses broke away from them to stand and drop and die. When the Long Hair... found that he was so out-numbered and threatened on his flanks, he took the best course he could have taken. The bugle blew. It was an order to fall back. All the men fell back, fighting and dropping. They could not fire fast enough, though. But from our side it was so (he clapped his hands rapidly to express the rapidity of the Indian fire).... They kept in pretty good order. Some great chief must have commanded them all the while. They would fall back across a coulee, and make a fresh stand beyond, on higher ground. The map is pretty nearly right. It shows where the white**

> **men stopped and fought before they all were killed.... There was one party driven out there, away from the rest, and there a great many were killed.**
>
> **I cannot find one who saw the Long Hair until just before he died. He did not wear his hair long as he used to wear it.... [A]s I have told you, I started down to tell the squaws to strike the lodges. I was then on my way up to the right end the camp, where the first attack was made upon us. But before I reached that end of the camp.., I was overtaken by one of the young warriors, who had just come from the fight. He called out to me. He said, "No use to leave camp; every white man is killed." So I stopped and went no further. I turned back, and by and by I met the warriors returning.**

Sources: (Speech) Graham, *Custer Myth,* 70-73; Fox, *Archaeology,* 320-21. This version of the Custer fight follows Fox, but neither he nor Utley subscribe to the early shooting of Custer. Fox's argument that Custer turned back from the ford because the village was empty is not convincing, especially in light of substantial Indian testimony that Custer was shot as stated in David H. Miller, *Custer's Fall: The Indian Side of the Story* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1957), 128-29, Frank B. Linderman, *Pretty-Shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 235-38, 246, and Finerty, *War-Path,* 138, 286.

7) Let Them Go. --June 26, 1876

WHEN GENERAL ALFRED TERRY arrived at the scene later, he initially reported: "Sitting Bull commanded [the Indian] troops in person. The chiefs carried flags." But Bull later admitted, **"I was not in the fight and know nothing about it save what my warriors have told me.. .."** After the soldiers on the ridge were wiped out, he found that the warriors wanted to destroy the others under Reno and Benteen. The chief, described by one as being very sorrowful, said, **"This is all bad. The Great Father at Washington will now be very angry, for we have killed his soldiers. The war chief will come against us with greater fury than ever."** He announced to the village:

> **This is not my doing nor these men's. They are fighting because they were commanded to fight. We have killed their leader. Let them go. I call on the Great Spirit to witness what I say. We did not want to fight. Long Hair sent us word that he was coming to fight us, and we had to defend ourselves and our wives and children.**

In the meantime he was sent for by Makes Room, whose son, White Bull, had been hit in the ankle by a spent bullet; Bull dressed the wound and warned his nephew to be more careful.

That evening, in a council with the chiefs, Bull gave his assessment of the day's victory:

> **We cannot afford to make war on the white soldiers. They are too many and too brave. My heart is heavy with this day's work. It is our first battle with the bluecoats and I now look to see all their war chiefs assemble against us. We must leave this place. There is no refuge for us here. We must go farther into the unknown world to the west. In ancient days our people migrated and now our turn has come.**

He later explained: **"I did not want to kill any more men. I did not like that kind of work. I only defended my camp. When we had killed enough, that was all that was necessary."**

However, Bull made the mistake of overstepping himself in taking credit for the victory. He told the people: **"I told you how it would be. I made great medicine. My medicine warmed your hearts and made you brave."** Rain-in-the-Face recalled that most everyone was willing to give Sitting Bull the credit for the victory, except for Gall, who was greatly offended and commented, "We did the fighting; you only made medicine."

Sources: (First speech) Graham, *Custer Myth,* 77, 103, 75; (second speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 178-79; Gen. A. H. Terry to Col. R. C. Drum, June 27, 1876, cited in *CDT,* July 9, 1876; Walker, *General Custer,* 102;

Vestal, *Warpath,* 201; *MT,* August 8, 1876; Buel, *Heroes of the Plains,* 582; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 49; Finerty, *War-Path,* 347; Wood, *Lives,* 456. To add to the mysteries of the fight, Beede was told by Indian informants that Sitting Bull went to the body of Custer that evening to talk to his ghost and to pray. Bull supposedly received a prophecy from Custer's spirit that he would die by his enemy's tricks in fifteen years time (or about 1890). However, Bull claimed at the time of the battle that he did not know who led the soldiers.

8) [Custer] Was a Fool and Rode to His Death.

IN LATER YEARS Sitting Bull spoke of the Custer battle on occasion, though he was usually terse and cautious in his statements, knowing that the topic evoked great passion among the whites. In 1882 Lieutenant W. Tear wrote: "Bull is very diffident about giving any incidents of his fights with the whites." Once Bull said:

> **We... all fought hard. We did not know Custer. When we saw him we threw up our hands and I cried, "Follow me and do as I do." We whipped each other's horses, and it was over .... There were not as many Indians as the white man says.... There was not more than 2,000....**

Another time Bull spoke insultingly about Custer's men. Perhaps the reason behind Bull's criticisms were his stated acknowledgement that the movements of the soldiers' horses caused many to have bad aim when they fired, and many acted as though physically exhausted, unable to offer much fight. He said, **"In those tepees there we have old women whom we have thrown aside. I will place them on horses and they can whip all the Long Knives your people can send, if they are all like those the Long Hair had. His people could neither ride a horse nor shoot a gun."**

Frontiersman Joseph Henry Taylor quoted Bull as speaking defensively about the guilt that some wished to pin on him:

> **They say to you [that] I murdered Custer. I say to you it is a lie. I was not fighting in the battle that day. His eyes were blinded that he could not see. He was a fool and rode to his death. He made the fight--not I. Whoever tells you I killed Custer is a liar.**

On another occasion Bull again spoke defensively:

> **I did not hunt Custer. I thought I had a right to protect my own women and children. If he had taken our village he would have killed our women and children. It was a fair fight.**

Sources: (First quote) Lt. W. Tear to General John C. Smith, August 10, 1882, cited in Stirling, "Pictographic Autobiographies," 5; (second quote) *CDT,* July 5, 1879; (third quote) Joseph H. Taylor, *Sketches of Frontier and Indian Life on the Upper Missouri and Great Plains* (Pottstown, Pa.: privately published, 1897), 21.

I) [Sitting Bull]... was a strong, hardy, sturdy looking man of about five-feet-eleven-inches in height, well built, with strongly marked features, high cheek bones, prominent nose, straight thin lips, and strong under jaw, indicating determination and force. He had a wide, large, well-developed head and low forehead. He was a man of few words and cautious in his expression, evidently thinking twice before speaking. He was very deliberate in his movements and somewhat reserved in his manner. At first he was courteous, but evidently devoid of any genuine respect for the white race. Although the feeling was disguised, his manner indicated his animosity toward those whom he had to meet. --Colonel Nelson Miles, 1876

II) Sitting Bull has never entered an agency nor drawn rations from the government and never will. His conduct is consistent in this respect.... He has always been the white man's most inveterate enemy and a bitter opponent of any policy other than that of driving the white man back into the sea whence he came. He has always declined to go into the treaty-making councils--always refused to sign the treaties when made--believing that any temporizing whatever with the whites was a piece of ignoble weakness unworthy of his race. In short,

he is a malcontent, even among his own people, and I believe that if he were out of the way we would have much less trouble with the Sioux hereafter. --General Alfred H. Terry, 1876

III) I am a lonely wolf, wandering pretty nearly all over the world.

He, he, he!

What is the matter? I am having a hard time, Friend.

This that I tell you, you will have to do also.

Whatever I want, I always get it.

Your name will be big, as mine is big. Hiu! Hiu! --Sitting Bull

Sources: (First quote) Greene, *Yellowstone Command*, 94-96; (second quote), *SPMPP*, November 16, 1876; (third quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 205.

2) We Have Two Ways to Go. --August 1876

IN SPITE OF HIS OBVIOUSLY EMPTY THREATS against the Canadians and the Blackfeet, Sitting Bull began to consider leaving the United States to take refuge in Canada. He told LaFramboise, a Metis, that he did not intend to make war on the people of the north or the Canadians: He had already fought the whites, but was sure that the Americans were again advancing against him and that he would have to fight them again. He was like **"an island in the middle of a sea."** Daily he considered the matter, praying to *Wakan Tanka* and counseling with his fellow chiefs. On one occasion he said:

> **We can go nowhere without seeing the head of an American. Our land is small, it is like an island. We have two ways to go: to the land of the Grandmother, or to the land of the Spaniards. Since spring we have killed 1,000 Americans. We are done counting, let us strike [camp?].**

He also reasoned about the matter with LaFramboise:

> **We can find peace in the land of the Grandmother. We can sleep sound there, our women and children can lie down and feel safe.**
>
> **I don't understand why the Redcoats gave us and our country to the Americans [after the War of 1812].**
>
> **We are the Grandmother's children and when we go across the Medicine Road we shall bury the hatchet. My own grandfather told me the Redcoats were our people, and good people, and I must always trust them as friends.**

About this time Bull and his followers headed back east and camped on Grand River. He was greatly grieved when a young son of his was kicked in the head by a mule and killed. Then, on September 9, 1876 General Crook's army attacked a Miniconjou camp of thirty-seven lodges at Slim Buttes. Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse rode from their nearby camps to join in the fight, but the soldiers were able to kill a number and take others captive to Standing Rock. As Sitting Bull had relations among the Miniconjou, he sent word to the chiefs at the agency that he would give them 1,000 ponies if they would help him rescue the prisoners.

Sources: (First speech) Gabriel Solomon, Affidavit, August 18, 1876, GGO, PAC; (second speech) Gontran Laviolette, *The Dakota Sioux in Canada* (Winnipeg: DLM Publications, 1991), 191; Gontran Laviolette, *The Sioux Indians in Canada* (Regina: Published by the author, 1944), 86; McLaughlin to S. A. Galpin, October 6, 1876, NARG 75, Letters Received, Devil's Lake Agency, roll 283.

3) You Scare All the Buffalo Away. --October 16, 1876

A MONTH AFTER Slim Buttes, Bull and his people moved west again to hunt buffalo. On October 11 they found a wagon train led by Captain Charles W. Miner on the Yellowstone (which was attempting to supply Colonel Nelson "Bearcoat" Miles's forces at a cantonment on the Tongue River). When Bull and his men approached, a skirmish occurred. A few days later the Lakotas came across yet another train led by Lieutenant Colonel E. S. Otis. This time Bull deemed it best to dictate a letter to the commander in order to prevent a fight. He said on October 16:

> **Friend: I am coming up here to hunt. Ever since I was grown I have been unwilling to fight with soldiers or white men. But wherever I camp, you come and begin shooting at me. Now again you are shooting at me, but still I have come only for hunting. Therefore, when you see my letter, move away. I am coming there to hunt. I am Sitting Bull.**

The message was interpreted and written down by Johnny "Big Leggins" Brugiere. It read:

> **Yellowstone**
>
> **I want to know what you are doing on this road. You scare all the buffalo away. I want to hunt in this place. I want you to turn back from here. If you don't, I will fight you again. I want you to leave what you have got here and turn back from here. I am your friend, Sitting Bull**
>
> **[P.S] I mean all the rations you have got and some powder. Wish you would write as soon as you can.**

Otis invited Bull to parley, but Bull remarked to his followers, **"These white men are all liars. If I smoke with them, they will start a fight right away, and then I shall be perjured before *Wakan Tanka.* I will not smoke with them. I will send somebody else in my name."** Otis offered Bull's representatives a gift of 150 pounds of hard bread and two sides of bacon, and then continued on unmolested.

Sources: (First message) Vestal, *Warpath,* 208, 222; (second message) Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 165-70; *MT,* September 18, 1876; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 19-24, 32.

4) I Will Fight When You Push Me to the Wall. --October 20, 1876

LEARNING OF BULL'S PRESENCE in the area, Bearcoat set out with 400 soldiers to find him. They soon came upon the Indian camp at Cedar Creek and a parley was held on October 20. Miles asked the chief: "Sitting Bull, ever since you grew from boyhood, you have been strongly against the whites, haven't you?" Bull replied:

> **No, I never thought that I was against the white man, but I admit I am not for him.... I have always been glad to see white men. I like to be friendly. I don't want to fight, if I don't have to.... All I am looking for is to see how and where I can find more meat for my people, more game animals for my people, and to find what *Wakan Tanka* has given me to eat.... Any white man who comes into my country as a post trader or a traveling trader is welcome. I always try to go to their trade-houses and trade back and forth with them the best I know how.**

Miles then asked the chief where he was headed, and Bull said:

> **There are more buffalo hereabouts. That is why I came here, to get those buffalo and feed my nation.... I've been well fed since I crossed the Yellowstone. While I was hunting, a bunch of your soldiers came and scared my buffalo away, and when I went out to meet them they**

> **started shooting. I had a little shooting scrape with them.... I know what you came here for. You came to fight me. That's all you soldiers are made for--just to fight.**

By one account Miles asked Bull why he would not go to a reservation, and the chief replied:

> **Because I am a red man and not an agency beggar. The bluecoats drove us west of the Missouri, they robbed us of the Black Hills, they have forced us to take this land from the Crows, but we wish to live at peace. You have no right to come here. You must withdraw all your troops and take all settlers with you. There never lived a paleface who loved a redskin, and no Lakota ever loves a paleface. I am Hunkpapa and I desire to live the ways of my fathers in the valleys which the Great Spirit gave to my people. I have not declared war against Washington, but I will fight when you push me to the wall. I do not like strife. It is not pleasant to be always fleeing before your guns. This western world is wide; it is lonely [devoid] of human life. Why do you not leave it to us? All my days I have lived far from your people. All that I got from you I have paid for. My band owes you nothing. Go back to the sunrise and we will live as the Great Spirit ordained that we should do.**

Sources: (First and second speech) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 193-202; (third speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 182-83.

5) You Are Telling a Pack of Lies. --October 21, 1876

THAT NIGHT the chiefs counseled together--most were disheartened and wanted to surrender. The following day Sitting Bull, Pretty Bear, Gall, White Bull, Standing Bear and Bull Eagle returned to council with Miles. Bull said that they had agreed to the following: **"We ask the abandonment of this our country by your soldiers. We ask that all settlements be withdrawn from our land, except the trading posts...."** Miles grew angry at Sitting Bull and replied, "If you do not immediately surrender... I will attack you and pursue you till you are utterly destroyed. I give you fifteen minutes to decide...." The chief replied hotly:

> **You are telling a pack of lies. Yesterday when we talked I agreed to all you said, and you agreed to all I said.... But today you are changed, you are angry. Why are you marching through this country, and why are you angry about it...?**
>
> **Now let the talk be over. You are losing your temper. Your soldiers are preparing to fight us again. Let us dismiss the council.**

Bearcoat attacked and drove the Lakotas for some twenty miles, taking their ponies, lodges and provisions. The Lakotas were terrified of the awesome power of the soldiers' Gatling gun. Five or more Indians were killed as Miles's troops continued to pursue them on the second day. On the third day the chiefs held a council. The Yanktonai, Sans Arc and Miniconjou leaders wanted to surrender. Bull and Gall were adamantly opposed to this. Bull grew hottempered and said:

> **Are we coyotes? Shall we slink into a hole and whine? You Yanktonais and Miniconjous have eaten too much white man's bread. It has taken the heart out of you. Do you wish to be the sport of our enemies? Then go back to the agencies and grow fat on the scrap they will throw to you.**
>
> **As for me, I am Hunkpapa, I will not submit. I owe the white race nothing but hatred. I do not seek war with Miles, but if he pursues me I will fight. My heart is hot that you are so cowardly. I will not take part in this peace talk. I have spoken.**

Bull sent his men to tell the people that whoever wished to follow him should break camp. He then moved off to the north with thirty lodges. On October 25 the other chiefs held a council with Miles. Black Eagle, Red Skirt, Sunrise, Sitting Eagle and Foolish Bull with 1,700 Sans Arcs and Miniconjous surrendered--although

many later changed their minds. Then the entire Northern Cheyenne tribe surrendered to Miles at Fort Keogh. Miles wrote General Terry: "If we can keep [the Lakotas]... divided and destroy Sitting Bull's influence, I think we can end this trouble in time.... I believe Sitting Bull would be glad to make peace, but he is afraid he has committed an unpardonable offense."

Sources: (First and second quotes) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 193-202; (third quote) Garland, *American Indian,* 185; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 25-26.

6) I Can Still Fight When Need Comes. --Winter 1876

AFTER THE BATTLES WITH BEARCOAT, Bull's immediate influence over the Hunkpapas and the other tribal groups began to decline. He and Gall went twenty miles south of Fort Peck and camped at Dry Fork to await the arrival of Iron Dog. However, even Iron Dog quarreled with Bull and said that he would not follow the latter's direction anymore.

Bull then sent word to Thomas Mitchell at Fort Peck that he was friendly and wanted to trade for ammunition. But Mitchell had received instructions from General William T. Sherman that peaceful relations would begin only when Sitting Bull surrendered and became a prisoner-of-war. Bull was soon forced to flee when troops under Colonel William B. Hazen arrived at the post on November 22. On December 18 his camp at Ash Creek was attacked by Lieutenant Frank D. Baldwin's troops. Again he lost many lodges--some ninety being burned--and much food, though only one Lakota was killed.

Later, a friendly Metis from Canada came to Bull's camp and told the chief that he ought to cross the "medicine line" between the United States and Canada because the bluecoats would not dare cross over to the side of the redcoats. Some of the chiefs were in favor of going over immediately, including Black Moon and Inkpaduta. But Sitting Bull was inherently suspicious even about the Canadian whites. He said:

> **I was born in the valley of the Big Muddy [Missouri] River. I love my native land, I dread to leave it, but the pale[-face] soldiers have pushed us out and we are wanderers.**
>
> **I have listened to our friend. I should like to believe him, but I cannot. White people are all alike. They are all forked[-tongued] and wear trousers. They will treat us the same no matter what color of coats they wear.**
>
> **If any of you wish to go I will not hinder. As for me, I am not yet weak in the knees; I can still run, and I can still fight when need comes. I have spoken.**

In spite of Bull's stand, the Santee leader, Inkpaduta (mistakenly referred to by one newspaper as "Red Paint") crossed the line with his following. His sons boasted that they had mutilated the remains of Captain Thomas Custer and had Custer's horse, and that furthermore they were now Canadian subjects. They were soon followed by Black Moon, Long Dog and Little Knife and about sixty lodges. Black Moon told the representatives of the Northwest Mounted Police that they had been driven from their homes by the Americans, that they had come to look for peace, which they had been told by their grandfathers they would find in the land of the British. Their brothers, the Santees (such as those under White Cap and Young Standing Buffalo), had found it years ago, and they had followed them. The Hunkpapas, he said, had not slept soundly for years and were anxious to find a place where they could lie down and feel safe.

Sources: *SPMPP,* November 2 and 16, 1876; *MT,* November 6, October 21, 1876; Greene, *Yellowstone Command,* 107-12, 115, 140-143; (speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 188-89; *Fort Benton Record,* December 22, 1876; Diedrich, *Famous Chiefs,* 56-57; Denny, *Law Marches West,* 121.

I) Grandfathers, from above look down upon us. You are between the earth and sky. Water and fire, these are powerful. Grandfathers, pity us all! --Sitting Bull

II) Everywhere on earth I roam, All alone I wander. Love of my country makes me do this. --Sitting Bull

III) Don't for the world intimate to him... that he is a mere medicine man. He would deem that to be a profound insult. In point of fact he is a medicine man, but a far greater, more influential medicine man than any [Indian]... I have ever known. He has constituted himself a ruler. He is a unique power among the Indians. To the warriors, his people, he speaks with the authority of a Robert Peel, to their chiefs with that of Richelieu. This does not really express the extent of his influence; for behind Peel and Richelieu there were traitors and in front of them were factions. Sitting Bull has no traitors in his camp; there are none jealous of him. He does not assert himself over strongly. He does not interfere with the rights or duties of others. His power consists in the universal confidence which is given to his judgement which he seldom denotes until he is asked for an expression of it. It has been, so far, so accurate, it has guided his people so well, he has been caught in so few mistakes and he has saved even his ablest and oldest chiefs from so many evil consequences of their own misjudgment, that today his word among all is worth more than the united voices of the rest of the camp. He speaks; they listen and they obey. --Major James Walsh, 1877

Sources: (First and second quotes) Vestal, "Works of Sitting Bull," 276, 274; (third quote) *Wild Life,* 395.

> **... [I]t took them twenty-five days to make the trip from Powder River to where we saw them; that they were harassed by the troops until they got close to the Missouri, which they crossed west of Fort Peck, and they were so closely pressed they could not hunt and were obliged to kill their horses for food; they had lived on horse flesh for ten or fifteen days. They claim the Lakota are British Indians; that sixty-five years ago was the first their fathers knew of being under the Americans. Their fathers were told at that time by a chief of their British father that if they did not wish to live under the Americans they could move northward and there they would again find the land of the British. Why the White Father gave them and their country to the Americans they could not tell. From childhood they had been instructed by their fathers that properly they were children of the British. They were living with strangers, but their home was in the north; further, that in their tribe could be seen medals of their White Father, given to their fathers for fighting the Americans, and although the British gave them and their country to the Americans, they never made peace with them; they always intended moving to the country of their fathers. They were informed that their arrival would be reported to the Grandmother, the Great Chief in this country, and if they obeyed the words given them, they and their families would sleep in peace.**
>
> **[H]e had buried his weapons before coming to the country of the White Mother; that up until then he had been fighting only because he had to...; that he had a deep affection for the redcoated officers, that he would do no wrong in the country of the Grandmother, that if his followers did anything wrong on the United States side of the line, they would not return to Canada. His heart was good, save when he came in contact with the Long Knives....**

The chief concluded with an expression of amazement that whites were actually visiting his camp in a peaceful manner:

> **[T]his morning is the most wonderful experience of my life and wrought a great change upon [me].... This is indeed a great change. Yesterday, I was fleeing from them and cursing them as I moved. Today they plant their lodge by the side of mine and defy me. Have I fallen? Is my reign at an end?**

However, Walsh's immediate impression was that Sitting Bull had a "revengeful disposition," and if the chief obtained enough assistance he would probably cross the line and continue the war against the Americans. In later years Walsh recorded that Sitting Bull did not know it then, but he had "surrendered his power forever."

Sources: Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 182; George E. Hyde, *Spotted Tail's Folk* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 267-68; *MT,* October 27, 1876; Turner, *Medicine Line,* 77-79; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:319-21; (first

speech) Denny, *Law Marches West,* 121-22; Walsh to Cora, May 21, 1890, WP; (second speech) Walsh to MacLeod, March 15, 1877, Irvine to Scott, May 23, 1877, GGO, PAC.

2) [Crazy Horse] Is Looking at Me.... --June 2, 1877

ON MAY 26, 1877 Father Martin Marty and two other Americans came to the Lakota camps on Buffalo Plains (about 140 miles east of Fort Walsh), asking the Lakotas to surrender to the Americans. But Bull refused to speak with them until Major Walsh and Lieutenant Colonel Acheson G. Irvine arrived on May 31. Irvine commented in his report: "I was particularly struck with Sitting Bull. He is a man of somewhat short stature, but with a pleasant face, a mouth showing great determination, and a fine high forehead. When he smiled, which he often did, his face brightened up wonderfully.... [H]e spoke as a man who knew his subject well, and who had thoroughly weighed it over before speaking.... His speech showed him to be a man of wonderful capability." Bull and his fellow chiefs, Pretty Bear and Bear's Cap, sat down on buffalo robes and smoked the pipe; Bull invoked *Wakan Tanka,***"My Father, have pity on us; we are going to take our place with new people."** He told Irvine, **"At last we have met you; we know today what we never knew before. We know we are safe."** He went on to say that he was angered by Marty's message that he should return and give up his arms and horses. (However, his frequent use of the term, "Grandfather," is confusing, perhaps due to inadequate translation or recording; at times Bull seems to refer to *Wakan Tanka,* or perhaps the President and even the British leaders.) He said:

> **... [W]e are going to raise [up] another people and that is what I am going to speak about. We are going to raise [ourselves up] in the north with the British. *Wakan Tanka* raised us and *Wakan Tanka* says that we are going to raise [ourselves up] with the British without throwing away anything.**
>
> **I come here to hunt nothing bad. My Grandfather said we must shake hands with the British; today I see it all. Anything that is bad I came here to let my Grandmother know it.**
>
> **My Grandfather made us shake hands with the Long Knives, and we have done it since I was in my mother's womb; I was in my mother's womb ten moons. I have been looking all the time south--something bad happened there. *Wakan Tanka* raised me strong. All the rivers run down to our Grandmother and He sees it. The Americans have nothing to do with the heads of all the creeks. My Grandfather raised me in a long blanket; *Wakan Tanka* raised me in four parts of a strong blanket. My Grandfather said he would raise me with a big body and heart; my heart was good.**
>
> **The Americans always ran behind me and that is the reason I came this way. *Wakan Tanka,* our Father, said the Long Knives would raise me and then fight me; *Wakan Tanka* stopped him so the Americans have buffalo and trade. Our Grandfather said [that] what the ground produced raised me and you. The Americans gave us flour in every direction; I said, "Hold on, we want bull's meat." My Grandfather, if I had done what the Americans told me, I would have been no one today. All the women were going to raise children. If we had remained with the Americans we would have been nothing.**

I came to see the English [here], where we are going to raise [begin] a new life. There are still some of us behind yet. On the American side I saw [that the Americans]... were running us in every direction. That is the reason I came here to see you. When I left the other side, my Grandfather told me that this was the place to come to. The Americans gave us flour--no powder and ball. I saw we were all going to be destroyed. My Grandfather will shake hands with us. We always had powder and ball. I [have been].. . here a good many days but have seen none yet. The buffalo are around us. I am here with my children looking towards the fort [Walsh].

My comrade, we are the same now--[let us] help one another. I am glad. Anything I can't do I will ask you [Walsh] for help. You told me if anyone came into camp, "Let me know." Some Americans came. I

did let you know. The war on the other side did not send me. I crossed here to let my Grandmother know it. *Wakan Tanka* told me.

***Wakan Tanka* makes horses. He raised me on horseback. Now I see it. The Americans did not teach me to get on a horse. I know it. When I had plenty of horses, the Americans wanted all my horses; that is the reason I came to let you know it. The Americans who came here asked for my gun and horse, and then [said] they would take care of me well. I then told my young men to tell you [about it]. [The Americans]... camped close to the Yankton[ais]; the Yankton[ai]s sent to let me know.**

***Wakan Tanka* raised me with a good heart. Then the Americans treated me bad. They asked for all my arms, and I came to let my Grandmother know it. The Americans who came here asked me if I threw our land away. I told them *Wakan Tanka* did not tell me to--Crazy Horse is still holding it. He is looking at me to see if it is good here. I am through.**

Chief Swift Bird, the leader of sixty Oglala lodges, spoke after Bull and added that for forty years he had been in the Black Hills, "the heart of the people," and now he had come to see what the Grandmother would say to him. Spotted Eagle, the Sans Arc war chief, reiterated that the Lakotas wanted to trade their buffalo robes and raise their families on their old lands, but since the Americans were "bad" to them he had come across the boundary.

Irvine assured the chiefs that the Americans could not cross the line to pursue them. Bull repeated what he had been told by Marty, that the Canadians might not accept them and even if they did they would "get smaller and smaller and die." Bull then said, **"What am I going there [the U.S.] for? For the Americans to come after me again? *Wakan Tanka* will give me prosperity. I have only two friends--the English and Spaniards. If you had not told me to let you know if any one came into my camp I would not know what to have done."** (Of course, Bull had no idea if the Mexicans would be a "friend.") Pretty Bear, the Hunkpapa orator, added, "I only see on this ground the blood of buffalo, and that is the only blood I want to see.... If you send the Americans away the buffalo will raise from the ground...."

Sources: Turner, *Medicine Line,* 93-96, 103; Turner, *NWMP* 1:327-28; see also *Bismarck Tribune*, June 15, 1877; Irvine to Scott, with enclosure of speeches, June 6, 1877, GGO, PAC.

3) Did God Tell You to Come? --June 2, 1877

LATER THAT DAY Bull requested that Marty join in the council. A pipe ceremony was held, and Bull prayed, **"*Wakan Tanka,* look at me. I never smoke with white men; now I smoke with this man and he smokes with me. If there is any lie between us may all men know it."** Bull then made a long speech with words inflamed with bitterness and sarcasm:

> **You pray to God. God sent you to me. Do you know [that] what you tell me is going to be so?... Where are you from? Under the ground? Do you not know the cause of the war? You ask me if I am going to return to your country. It's impossible for me to go back. *Wakan Tanka* never told the Americans to come to the head of the Missouri. We were raised on this side of the sea. You were raised on the other side.**
>
> ***Wakan Tanka* told me that... he brought me up in a great blanket [the U. S.]. On both sides of America there are only two blankets left to cover me [Canada and Mexico]. *Wakan Tanka* made me big enough. I know because his Grandmother covers me.**
>
> **My heart was made strong, but now really it is weak, and that's why the Americans want to lick my blood. My heart has been big and sweet, and although the Long Knives wanted to lick it, I took pity on a good many of them.**

> ***Wakan Tanka* raised me on the face of the earth. Why do the Americans want to drive me [away]? Because they want only Americans to be there. *Wakan Tanka* made me leader of the people. *Wakan Tanka* did not tell me to fight the Americans and that is why I left. *Wakan Tanka* is looking at me now and you know it.... [N]o one can destroy but by *Wakan Tanka*'s will. *Wakan Tanka* told me [that] if anyone came from the east to eat with him just the same. [But] it is no use.**
>
> ***Wakan Tanka* made me leader of the people and that's why I am following the buffalo. *Wakan Tanka* told me, "If you do anything wrong your people will be destroyed," and that is why I came here. I was afraid. Look at me. See if anything wrong sticks to my body.... You told me you came as a messenger of God. What you told me was not good for me.**
>
> **Look up, you will see *Wakan Tanka*.... You come and tell me, as God's messenger, what to do, but I don't believe it. I have nothing but my hand to fight the white men with. I don't believe the Americans ever saw *Wakan Tanka* and that is the reason they don't listen to me.**
>
> **You know, as the messenger of God, that they tried to kill me. Why did you wait until half my people were killed before you came? I told the Americans to keep off my land. I only want the buffalo to bring to you. Do you think it's the will of God to have some of His people under your arms, so that you can laugh at them? You are waiting for my people to come to your land so that the Long Knives may rush at them and kill them.**

If you want to make a treaty, give us back our horses. *Wakan Tanka* made all Indians out of one Indian, and He came to smoke with the old Indians and make peace. *Wakan Tanka* looks at me every day, and after this talk, if there is any wrong, it will be against me.

Are you here to ask me if I am going to throw my land away? I never thought of giving my land to the American people, and still you follow me to bring something wrong to me....

[W]hy, if I go back to the Americans, are they going to take all my stock away? Did God or the Queen ask you to tell me to give all my stock to the Long Knives? *Wakan Tanka* raised me on horseback to make my living. Did God tell you to come and make me poor?...

I never tried to do anything wrong to the white men. My body is clean. I never saw the road [the international boundary line] before, but I came on till I got to this side of it. I only think of two people, the English and the Spanish. I am between them. The Americans tried to cut me up....

I am afraid of the cross you spoke of. If you will use your influence with the President to send back the bad men to where they came from and leave the good men, there will be peace.

Marty asked Bull again if he intended to return, and Bull said:

> **What should I return for? To have my horses and arms taken away? What have the Americans to give me? They have no land. Once I was rich, plenty of money, but the Americans stole it all in the Black Hills. I have come to remain with the Grandmother's children.**

Later, Sitting Bull visited Irvine in his tent and had a long conversation which continued through the night. When asked about the Custer fight, Bull said that he knew twelve days ahead of time that soldiers were coming; that most of the soldiers fought with revolvers and carbines that had jammed; that the Indians had pulled many soldiers off their horses and killed them with knives and coupsticks. Bull spoke endlessly of his grievances against the Americans and expressed hope that his people would receive the same treatment from the Grandmother as the Santee Dakotas, particularly the Sissetons under White Eagle, Young Standing Buffalo and

White Cap (some of whom had been involved in the Dakota War in Minnesota), who had been received hospitably and had not been forced back to the United States.

Sources: Irvine to Scott, ibid; Turner, ***Medicine Line,*** 97-100; Turner, ***NWMP,*** 1:329-31.

4) Crazy Horse Is a Squaw. --June 1877

AFTER THE COUNCIL Sitting Bull moved south to Frenchman's Creek to hunt. While there, he met the mixed-blood trader, Jack Culbertson. He said that he intended to go south soon to fight the bluecoats. Culbertson asked if the chief was not afraid of the soldiers, now that Crazy Horse had surrendered. According to Culbertson, Bull replied "in excellent English":

> **I am afraid of nothing. Crazy Horse is a squaw and I will make his women weep before the snow falls. I will fight the soldiers as long as I have a warrior. My young men are no papooses; they remember the Bighorn fight, and Miles need not fear that we will run from him. When I am ready I will hunt him and give the coyotes a feast. I don't want to fight but they have sent soldiers after me and I'll show them the Hunkpapa is no squaw!**

Bull moved on to Wolf Point and visited another trader. When the trader asked the chief why he did not look ahead and see that the buffalo would soon be gone, Bull replied:

> **I did not leave the Black Hills of my own will; the soldiers pushed me out. I loved my home, but the paleface came and with his coming all the old things began to change. I kept out of his way; I did not seek war with him but he never slept till he drove me among the redcoats. The redcoats do not say much to us but what they speak is fair and straight. So long as a gopher remains on the plains I will stay and I will fight. All my life I have been a man of peace but now my back is to a rock; I shall run no more. I am not afraid to die and all my warriors are of the same mind.**

The trader then asked why Bull did not surrender to the Great Father. Bull heatedly said:

> **Because I am a red man. If *Wakan Tanka* had desired me to be a white man he would have made me so in the first place. He put in your heart certain wishes and plans, in my heart he put other and different desires. Each man is good in His sight. It is not necessary for eagles to be crows.**
>
> **Now we are poor, but we are free. No white man controls our footsteps. If we must die, we will die defending our rights. In that we are all agreed. This you may say to the Great Father for me.**

The trader reminded the chief that not all white men were against him, but Bull replied, **"I cannot trust them. A few months ago some men came professing friendship; they offered me land and a house, but I fear all those who come bearing gifts. I will trade; I will not take gifts. I do not make war; I only defend my women and children."**

Sources: (First speech) *SPMPP,* June 12, 1877, August 15, 1876; (second and third speeches) Garland, *American Indian,* 191-92; Dempsey, *Crowfoot,* 91-92; Turner, *Medicine Line*, 155-156.

5) [T]his Is Your Fight, Not Mine. --September 1877

IN VIEW OF HIS INTENTION to continue the fight as long as he could, Sitting Bull met with Blackfeet chief Crowfoot at the Great Sand Hills (north of Cypress Hills) in August 1877. He also had contact with the Cree chiefs, Big Bear and Poundmaker, and the Metis leader, Louis Riel. As early as 1869 it was rumored that Bull had wanted to assist Riel in forming an independent province for Metis and Indians in Canada; Riel supposedly declined, as the Catholic church would not allow Indians to be in political office as Bull wished.

Meanwhile, the Nez Perce of Oregon were making their last stand. Refusing to go to their Lapwai Reserve, chiefs Joseph, Looking Glass, White Bird and others led their bands over the Rockies and into Montana. They fought several battles along the way and camped just short of the Canadian line by forty miles. Then they were attacked at Snake Creek by Bearcoat Miles. After the initial fighting, a stalemate occurred, with both sides hoping for reinforcements. The Nez Perce chiefs sent messengers to Sitting Bull to plead for military help. But although Bull was sympathetic to the Nez Perce, he had been warned many times by Canadian authorities that he must not cross the line to engage in hostilities against the whites. When the messengers came, he knew what he had to say: The Canadians would not give him refuge if he crossed the border to fight on their behalf:

> **You may smoke and eat here; you are welcome; but this is your fight, not mine. You must not expect that any of my warriors will go across the border to help you.**

Meanwhile, at the battlefield, there was a few minutes when it looked as though Sitting Bull might be coming. Major H. R. Tilton, with Miles's command, wrote: "Early in the day we discovered in our rear two long lines of cavalry marching toward us on either flank. Were these General Sturgis' troops, or the warriors of Sitting Bull? Many anxious moments were spent before we determined that they were buffalo marching in single file with all the regularity and precision of soldiers." The non-appearance of the Lakotas sealed the fate of the Nez Perce for any possible victory or even a successful retreat.

In spite of his decision to stay out of the fight, Bull may have afterward changed his mind. A Lakota war party started out towards the border and met some of the Nez Perce who had escaped from the battlefield. But they misunderstood the Nez Perce sign language and thought that the battle had taken place on the Missouri River, and Bull said that that was too far away for them to help. Later, when the Lakotas had pinpointed the place of the battle, Bull started out again with ten Lakotas and nine Nez Perce. He found White Bird's band of about 200 people, who had slipped away from Miles. They said that the fighting was over--Joseph had surrendered. Bull told White Bird: **"Before Long Hair died, we killed four Nez Perces. Now I want to be friends. You can stay with us as long as you please."** White Bird readily took Sitting Bull up on his offer and for years following was closely associated with the chief.

Sources: (Quote) *SPMPP,* July 21, 1881; Alvin Josephy, Jr., *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 632; Laviolette, *The Dakota Sioux in Canada,* 194; Turner, *Medicine Line,* 113; Dary, *Buffalo Book,* 32.

6) They Will Never Forgive Us.... --October 1877

IN THE FALL OF 1877 Sitting Bull returned to Wood Mountain, telling Major Walsh, **"I have come here to stay this winter. I have heard the Americans intend to go to war with us. I want to stay here that you may see what I am doing."** But then he was startled to hear word from Walsh that the U. S. government was planning to send a commission under General Terry to treat with him for his surrender. Furthermore, Walsh endeavored to convince him to hear the Americans out.

Bull was still outraged, not only with his grievances against the U. S. government, but also the grievances of the Nez Perce, particularly as related to him by White Bird. He had seen with his own eyes the condition of the Nez Perce survivors--many naked, all hungry and numerous wounded. He could not believe that the government would make peace offers to him just after it had all but destroyed the Nez Perce, whom he considered as being "almost white" because of their extensive adoption of the white man's civilization. Bull told Walsh indignantly:

> **He could not comprehend the meaning of Terry's coming to ask the return of the Lakotas,.. [when Terry had] only just completed the work of driving White Bird out of the country and carrying Joseph off a prisoner, and shooting women and children. [Terry]... was coming to offer a house for [Sitting Bull]... and his people, yet had just taken from Joseph and his people the houses occupied by the Nez Perce for 200 years.**

What had Joseph and his people done to be treated so? Joseph and White Bird and their people had always been friends of the whites. I look upon them as almost white. They lived in wooden houses, had schools and churches and believed in the white man's God. They drive this man from them today and tomorrow ask me, who they call a wild man, a hostile, a killer of white men, a hater of the Americans, to come back and they will give me and my people a home and clothe and feed us. With such evidence before [me].., [I]... could not be otherwise than suspicious of these men's purpose.

What is the use? We have heard the lies of the Long Knives often. They will never forgive us for defeating them in battle. Already they have taken everything we own. Now that we have nothing left, they will take [our] lives.

There is no use talking to these Americans; they are all liars, you cannot believe anything they say. No matter what terms they offer, we cannot accept them, because we have no faith in their promises.

Sources: (First speech) Walsh to Cora, May 21, 1890, WP; (second speech) Laviolette, *Dakota Sioux in Canada,* 195; (third speech) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 215; *SPMPP,* February 13, 1878.

7) [T]he LakotaS Had Been Deceived So Often.... --October 16, 1877

The U. S. peace commission, which consisted of General Terry, A. G. Lawrence and a secretary, arrived at Fort Walsh on October 16. Sitting Bull consented to a council with the Americans only because Walsh asked him to, but remained outside of the fort in his lodge. That evening he told Walsh:

[H]e did not intend to return to his native country. No offers by the Americans would induce him to change his mind.... [H]e believed they would proffer sweet words and promises; but the Lakotas had been deceived so often across the border that they could never again place confidence in such assurances.

They would gladly listen to the advice of the Grandmother, but they did not wish to leave her country. On the other side of the boundary there was continual bloodshed and they were tired of warfare; there was no shedding of blood in the Grandmother's country, and under her protection they hoped to live and raise their children. If the Grandmother would protect them, they would be ready at all times to assist her whenever called upon.

Walsh was sympathetic, but the Canadian government had determined to try and rid themselves of the newcomers. Minister of the Interior David Mills wrote on August 24, 1877, "It is feared that, should they remain in Canada, they will be drawn into hostile conflict with our own Indians, that on going upon the hunting grounds of the Blackfeet and Assiniboins or Crees, they will excite opposition and resentment of these tribes, and that ultimately, from a failure of the means of subsistence and from other causes, they will become a very considerable expense to the Government of Canada."

Sources: (Speech) Turner, *NWMP,* 1:364; Denny, *Law Marches West,* 123-24.

8) [Y]ou Are a Bigger Fool than I Am. --October 17, 1877

ON OCTOBER 17, 1877 Sitting Bull, along with Bear's Cap, Spotted Eagle, Swift Bird, Iron Dog, Little Knife, Crow, Yellow Dog and a few others met with Terry at Fort Walsh. The general presented the government's case, that a full pardon would be given to Sitting Bull "for acts committed... in the past," but to no avail. Bull had already determined to show Terry a great rebuff by inviting a woman to speak at the council. Described as being "gloomy, reticent, suspicious and impertinent," Bull said:

For sixty-four years you have kept me and my people [since the War of 1812], and treated us bad. What have we done that you should want us? We have done nothing. It is all the people of your side that have started us to do all these depredations. We could not go anywhere else, so we took refuge in this country of the British. It was on this side of the country that we learned to shoot, and that is the reason I came back to it again.

Why do you come here? In the first place I did not give you the country, but you followed me from one place to another, so I had to leave and come over to this country. I did not give you any country, but you took it away from us.

I was born and raised in this country with the Red River Half-breeds and we are going over to that part of the country, and that is the reason why I have come over here.

Bull then shook hands with the British officials present and said:

That is the way I was raised--in the hands of these people.... You have got ears to hear and you have got eyes to see, and you see how I live with these people. You see me; here I am. If you think I am a fool, you are a bigger fool than I am.

This house is a medicine house [a sacred place]. You come here to tell us lies in my Grandmother's house. Don't you say two words more. Go back home where you came from.

This country is mine and I intend to stay here and to raise this country full of grown people. See these people here--we were raised with them....

See me shaking hands with these people. The part of the country you gave me you have run me out of. I have now come here to stay with these people.... I wish you to go back and to take it easy getting back.

When Terry asked if they rejected his offers, Bull concluded, **"If we told you more--why, you would not pay attention to it. That is all I have to say. This part of the country does not belong to your people. You belong on the other side; this side belongs to us."**

Sources: (Speeches) *SPMPP,* October 25, 1877 and June 21, 1881.

9) [W]hy Did They Drive Me Away? --October 17, 1877

THE EVENING after Sitting Bull delivered his answer to General Terry, he was visited by the Northwest Police commissioner, James F. Macleod. Macleod told the chief: "...[I]f any of you or your young men cross the line with arms in your hand,.. then we become your enemies as well as the Americans.... You must remember that you will live by the buffalo on this side of the line and that the buffalo will not last forever. I hope you have thought well on the decision you have given today, not only for yourselves, but for your women and children." Bull gave his unqualified acceptance to Macleod's requests:

I tell you the truth; I have done nothing bad. The Americans tried to get our country.... [T]hey knew that the gold was there. We did not wish to give it up. I told them not to go into the Black Hills. I did not give them our land--no more than you would have given it had it belonged to you....

My people suffer from the Americans. I want to live in this country and be strong and well and happy.... The Americans kill ten or twenty of my children every day for nothing. I like to see all my children alive. Soon you will see more of our tribe crossing the line.

***Wakan Tanka* gave us lots of buffalo to live long.... I don't believe you will help the Long Knives to harm me as long as I behave myself.... The Americans gave us sweet words today;**

they promised me flour and cattle, but if they get me across the line they would fight me. I hope they will not come here a second time....

We will pay for what we want here; we asked the Americans to give us traders, but instead they gave us fireballs. All of them robbed, cheated and laughed at us. I could never live there again. They never tell the truth. They said they did not wish to fight, but they began it.... Everything that was bad always began with them; I have never heard a good word of them. Here, I hear nothing bad. If they liked me why did they drive me away?

... Today, you heard one of our women speak to the Americans--she spoke the truth. We want to raise children and be friends with all people here. We will live in peace with the red children of the Grandmother; they can come to our camp at any time. We like you and the police very much, and it is only for this reason that we came to see the Americans....

Sources: (Speech) Turner: *Medicine Line,* 134-35; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:371.

10) Tell Her I Will Be a Good Man. --October 1877

IN ANOTHER TALK with British officials Bull spoke of going to Red Deer River, to live along the route from Battleford to Fort Walsh. He gave further assurances that he would remain peaceable:

My friend, and all the Queen's men whom I so respect: I have heard of your talk. I knew you would speak to me in this way. Nobody told me. I just knew it. It is right.

I came to you in the first place because I was being hard driven by the Americans. They broke their treaties with my people, and when I rose up and fought, not against them, but for our rights, as the first people on this part of the earth, they pursued me like a dog and would have hung me to a tree.

They are not just. They drive us into war and then seek to punish us for fighting. That is not honest. The Queen would not do that. Long ago when I was a boy, I heard of the Queen, now my Grandmother. I heard that she was just and good; now I know it. You gave me shelter when I was hard pressed. My own life is dear to me, but I did not value it when I fought the Americans, but I did value the life of my nation. Therefore, I brought my people to you. I do thank you for what you have done for them.

I will go to the Red Deer River and be at peace. Tell the Queen that. Tell her I will be a good man, that my people will be good. Tell her also that we never were bad, for she knows it is not wrong to fight for life. My people are weary and sick. I will take them to Red Deer River.

And now I declare to you that I will not make trouble or annoy you, or give pain to the Queen. I will be quiet. I will never fight on your soil unless you ask me to help you, then I will fight. I wish you good. Goodbye.

Place me where you like. I will be at peace in Canada. But you who are brave soldiers and not treaty-breakers, thieves and murderers, you would think me a coward if I did not die fighting the Americans.... I will come back when my braves are strong; or if they will not come with me, I will come alone and fight the Americans until death.

You--I love and respect; them--I hate; and you, Queen's soldiers, would despise me if I did not hate them. That is all. I am ready to go with you to the Red Deer River.

Source: (Speech) Maclean, *Canadian Savage Folk,* 113-14.

11) [T]he Whites Are Liars. --October 17, 1877

AFTER GENERAL TERRY departed, Sitting Bull agreed to talk to an American reporter. He recounted the reasons for his bitterness towards the Americans:

> **I never taught my people to trust the whites. I have always told them the truth, that the whites are liars.**
>
> **I have never dealt with the whites. Why should I? The land belonged to my people. I said I never dealt with them--I mean I never surrendered my people's rights.**
>
> **I traded with them, but always gave them more than full value for what I got. I never asked the United States Government to make me presents of cloth, or anything else. I told every trader who came to our villages that I did not want any favors from him. I proposed to give him buffalo robes, elk skins and furs in exchange for what we wanted. I wanted to trade with him fairly and equally, giving him full value for what I got, but the traders wanted to give little for much. They told me if I did not accept what they give me in trade they would get the government to fight me. I told them I did not want to fight. I tried hard to prevent a fight but the government wanted everything we had. We had to fight.**
>
> **I am a Lakota.... I was born on the bank of the Missouri river... . Now we have nothing. The United States government has stolen all we had; and besides that it has murdered our women and children whenever the army could sneak upon them. The country is full of troops now. If the army cannot kill us, it drives the buffalo away to starve us to death.... We do not want to fight, but we have been unable to hide from the army and had to fight. Now they want us to give them our ponies.... They do not belong to the government. The guns are also mine. I bought them and paid for them... . If they take them from us it is robbery.**
>
> **As long as we had plenty of buffalo we could live. Now they are gone, almost all of them. We have nothing to eat and no land to put our lodges on. We will have to surrender. If we are starved, our grief will be over. If I had been the ruler of the great Lakota Nation in the days of my forefathers, I should have decorated the forest of the Atlantic coast with the scalps of the Europeans as fast as they came to this continent. Now my warriors are dead. My people slain. I yield by necessity, not by choice. It is vain to resist, but if I had an army I would forever remain in the field against you.**

Source: (Speech) *Wild Life,* 401.

12) [T]hey Kill Buffalo for What? --October 17, 1877

BULL WAS ASKED at one point if he thought that the buffalo would last much longer. Not only were the Indian tribes hunting them, but also about 1,000 white hunters. The reduction of the northern herd was evident in figures kept by hunter George Newton. In 1880-81 he and a friend killed 1,300, the following winter 900, and during the winter of 1882-83 only 37. Bull knew full well the activities and consequences of the white hunters and deplored their work. He, on the other hand, had been taught to honor the buffalo which *Wakan Tanka* had provided for their sustenance. On one occasion, after viewing the littered bones on the prairie of the buffalo his people had killed, he said: **"Friends, we must honor these bones... of those who gave their flesh to keep us alive last winter."** He proceeded to place the buffalo skulls so that they would be facing the sun. Bull told the reporter:

> **We know that on the other side the buffalo will not last very long. Why? Because the country there is poisoned with blood--a poison that kills all the buffalo or drives them away.**

> **It is strange that the Americans should complain that the Indians kill buffalo. We kill buffalo as we kill other animals--for food and clothing and to make our lodges warm. They kill buffalo for what? Go through your country. See the thousands of carcasses rotting on the plains. Your young men shoot for pleasure. All they take from the dead buffalo is his tail, or his head, or his horns, perhaps to show they have killed a buffalo.**
>
> **What is this? It is robbery? You call us "savages." What are they? The buffalo have come north. We have come north to find them, and to get away from a place where people tell lies.**

When asked why his people thought highly of him, Bull said sarcastically, **"Your people look up to men because they are rich; because they have much land, many lodges, many squaws. ... I suppose my people look up to me because I am poor."**

On November 28, 1877 Sitting Bull, Long Dog, Little Knife, Four Horns, Bear's Cap and Spotted Eagle held a council at Cache du Lac Fork to decide whether or not to surrender. By one dubious report Sitting Bull wanted to yield to the Americans, citing negative pressure from the Blackfoot tribe, but Marmot, Big Smoke and Pretty Boy (called "brother" by Sitting Bull) objected. That winter the Lakotas camped on the east end of Cypress Hills with the remnant of the Nez Perce under White Bird. About this time Bull heard that Major Walsh was going on a trip east, and he asked him to speak to the Grandmother on his behalf. Meanwhile, according to a visiting correspondent, Sitting Bull spent the day "reading old newspapers, preparing herbs and roots for the old and sick among his people,.. and talking to his headmen."

Sources: (First quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 33; (speech) *New York Herald,* November 16, 1877; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:386, 391; *St. Cloud Daily Times,* December 26, 1877; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 117; Usher L. Burdick, *Tales from Buffalo Land: The Story of George "W" Newton* (Baltimore: Wirth Brothers, 1939), 16-17.

13) They Think Me a Very Bad Man. --Spring 1878

IN AUGUST 1877 Sitting Bull's people received a long visit from Father Jean Baptiste Genin, a French Catholic missionary. Genin visited again the following spring, and by one account the chief adopted Genin into his family. Genin counted about 1,600 lodges among the aggregation and learned that Bull had been working for a year or so in trying to arrange a grand congress of Indian nations, including Lakota, Nez Perce, Blackfeet, Blood, Piegan, Cree, Assiniboin and Ojibway. Rumors were spreading as well that the Crees under Big Bear and Poundmaker were beginning to rendezvous with other tribes to attack Fort Macleod, while Bull was organizing the Lakota, Nez Perce and others to attack Fort Walsh. But a week later it was learned that Bull had nothing to do with the Crees' plans. However, he *was* trying to arrange a meeting with the tribes at the end of May, and failing that, planned to ask rations from the Canadian government; he supposedly said that if he was refused rations he would break the peace and lead all the Lakotas back to the United States.

Genin said that Sitting Bull was still "by all odds the biggest man in the tribe in point of influence." He talked with the chief in the French, English and Lakota languages and reported:

> **Sitting Bull protests against mischief.... He understands the box he is in, but he means to put on a bold front and make the most of his surrender, if surrender it ever is. He wants no reservation and will have none. He wants a land of his own where there is plenty to live on. He wishes the Great Father to keep his gold, silver and goods, and give him a game country. If the soldiers come after him to drive him on a reservation they must take the consequences. He has no idea of being a captive upon a reservation and surrendering his ponies and arms.**

In regard to the Custer fight, Bull gave Genin a false story about how he had fooled Custer by preparing a village with dummies--blankets on sticks, made to resemble people; that Custer fell upon empty lodges and was in turn surprise-attacked by his warriors. But he concluded with a truthful statement:

People in the United States blame me for having killed Custer and his army. They came to attack me in sufficient numbers to show that they wanted to destroy me and my children.... When I saw [the soldiers]... coming, I called on *Wakan Tanka* to help me and liberate me and my children. [The whites]... must accuse *Wakan Tanka,* for He did the fighting. They think me a very bad man.

Father, all I have done in my life has been to try to procure a living for my children and my old parents and save them from the dangers of death.

Sources: (Speeches) *SPMPP,* June 10, 1878; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 126; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:388-89.

14) I Now Have Six Tribes Ready to Join Me. --Summer 1878

AS GENIN REPORTED in May 1878, Sitting Bull appeared to be strengthening himself militarily, having more manpower available to him now than at any time since the Custer fight. Colonel MacLeod, the Fort Walsh commander, hired one LaRiviere to keep him informed of all the movements of the Lakotas. LaRiviere reported: Sitting Bull, with 80 lodges, was at Pinto Horse Butte; Black Moon had gone to see the Governor at Battleford, but his 200 lodges remained encamped on White Mud River (Frenchman's Creek); Swift Bird, who had 250 lodges, was moving about, fearing an attack by Americans; Swift Bird and Spotted Eagle, with his fifty lodges, were headed to see Sitting Bull; Red Hand, a Santee chief with 80 lodges, was at Wood Mountain; and Big Bear, the Cree, with 300 lodges, was encamped with Assiniboin and Blackfeet near the mouth of the Red Deer River. Rumors had spread that Sitting Bull had seven tribes represented in his camp and was being joined by small bands of Assiniboins and Yanktonais. U. S. leaders asked the Canadian government if these reports were true and if Sitting Bull was going to attack the U. S.. MacLeod sent word, however, that there was no truth to these statements--Sitting Bull was "quiet" at Cypress Hills.

But Bull was still trying to gain support from whatever source. To this end he had sent couriers with tobacco to the Sisseton Dakotas on their reserve at Lake Traverse, inviting them to join his people in hostilities against the whites. (It was also claimed that Bull had disguised himself and gone to Standing Rock for a few days.) He was particularly rankled by government threats to take away the ponies of the Lakota and said that this would be resisted by a general war. Bull also sent a message to the Ojibways (or Chippewas) of White Earth Reservation in northwestern Minnesota (carried by a Cree to Pembina, and a Pembina chief to White Earth) which read:

Chippewas of White Earth and all the Chippewas of Minnesota: I send... tobacco for you and the Halfbreeds to smoke, to tell you to look at me. I ask you not to help the whites by acting as scouts against my people. I do not wish to war against the whites but they are after me and my people to destroy us. But when they attack us we must fight in [self-]defense.

Look at the whites and see what they have done. They have robbed us of our lands. If you are treated as we are, fight. Do as we do. Our lands will then be regained.

I now have six tribes ready to join me, and I have notified the Indians and Halfbreeds of the Plains to keep away from the directions we are to travel when we go to war.

It was believed that Little Shell, the Pembina Ojibway chief, and a few of his warriors, went to join Sitting Bull. Bull also met up with a band of Bloods under Heavy Shield. Although there had been much enmity between the Lakota and Bloods, Bull made overtures of peace.

Sources: R. W. Scott to MacLeod, January 23, 1878, MacLeod to Scott, January 29 and July 9, 1878, GGO, PAC; (Bull's letter copied in) Charles A. Ruffee to E. A. Hayt, July 16 and August 3, 1878, NARG 75, Letters Received, Chippewa Agency, roll 166; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:400.

15) The Americans Are like Snakes. --November 1878

IN THE FALL OF 1878 Bull was disturbed by possible desertion in the ranks (as chief Pretty Bear wanted to go back to the United States with his forty lodges) and he told Walsh in early October that he was determined never to return, fearing assassination by "roughs" at the agencies. His position was soon strengthened, however, when 250 lodges of Oglalas, reacting to the killing of Crazy Horse by a soldier at Fort Robinson, bolted towards Canada; they said that Crazy Horse's last words were in regard to his wish to join Sitting Bull. Bull informed Walsh that he would not cross the line unless the Americans attacked the Oglalas (Walsh kept General Miles informed of Bull's activities and claimed that it was Bull's emissaries who had induced the Oglalas' move.) On November 9 Bull agreed to go with Walsh to the Oglalas when they arrived. He said with a great deal of bravado:

> **The Americans had not troops enough on the frontier to stop those people [from] coming north if they once started, that they did not in the least fear the American soldiers.... [A]ll the men the Americans had are on the Missouri and Yellowstone, and [they] only look[ed] to the Lakota like one man.... [T]he Americans might show many men, but their strength was nothing.... [T]hey could neither ride horse[s] nor shoot guns.... [T]he American was born with a gun in his hand, but he did not know how to use it.... [T]he Lakota, with their stone coupsticks, would fight and defeat the Americans with guns.... [T]here were old men in the camp that were looked upon as unable to do anything, that were better soldiers than the Americans....**
>
> **[T]he Great Spirit had provided for these people [the Oglalas] up to this time, and if they reached Canada he did not think they would starve, that the Great Spirit would still look after them....**
>
> **[N]one of the Hunkpapas would go across the line to assist the approaching Lakotas and he did not believe the Oglalas would want any assistance, that they were quite strong enough to take care of themselves.**

The Oglala leaders, Big Road, Stone Dog and Little Hawk (Crazy Horse's uncle), soon joined the Hunkpapas near Wood Mountain. When a council was held with the Mounted Police, Bull arrived impressively at the head of 1,000 mounted warriors and sought assurance that the Americans would not cross the line. Walsh replied that if the Americans did so he would order them to consider themselves as his prisoners! Sitting Bull was not so sure that this would work and replied: **"The Americans are like snakes--they will not listen to you and you have but a few men and cannot force him. I am now going to return to my camp to look after my young men, to see that they do not cross the line. If the Americans cross the line and do not listen to you, send me word and every young man in the camp will mount his best horse and come to your assistance."**

Sources: Walsh to Commanding Officer, October 8 and 27, November 2, 1878, Walsh to General Nelson Miles, November 3 and 9 (speeches), 1878, WP; Irvine to Scott, April 2, 1878, GGO, PAC.

16) It Was My Wish to Try to Get Every Man That Lived by the Bow and Arrow to Confederate.... -- January 23, 1879

IN NOVEMBER 1878 hunger was so great in the Lakota camps that the women were begging the men to go hunting across the line to save their children from starvation. Sitting Bull went south for a time and traded with the Yanktonais and Assiniboins of the Fort Peck Agency. He later told Walsh that he **"was certain that the Great Spirit would pity them and send the buffalo into the Grandmother's country."**

Ironically, the whole world thought that Sitting Bull was about to invade the United States again. This was based upon Sitting Bull's continued pursuit of a confederation of Indian tribes. He had sent emissaries to all the tribes of Montana and Dakota Territory (But there was an apparent false report that his congress came off in December 1878 at Wolf Mountain, Montana.) Bull and White Bird tried particularly to gain the support of the Crows, encouraging them to come to Canada, where buffalo were still available, and the traders could sell them guns and ammunition. The Crows sent a reply, stating that if the Americans acted upon their threats to take

away their guns and ponies, they would join the Lakota and Nez Perce. But just then, a Crow horse-stealing party succeeded in running off about 100 head from Bull's camp. Bull was furious. He grew even more angry when Major Walsh visited on January 23 and told him that he was to blame for the raid because he tried to "plant sedition" among the Crows. The chief responded:

> **I never deny anything I do. I *did* send messengers to the Crows, asking them to leave their reservation and join the Lakota camp north of the line; I *did* tell them they could purchase guns and ammunition, and if they wanted to raise their children, to leave the Americans. I did this, not feeling safe, and believed that if I could get the Crows to join me, I would be strong enough to fight the Americans, if they came to attack me. It was my wish to try to get every man that lived by the bow and arrow to confederate, but while I was endeavoring to get them to shake hands, the Americans appeared and stole my horses.**
>
> **The Americans have beat me. There is no man in the American country that wears trousers that is not a rascal. I said I would not commence war first. I have been waiting for them to attack me. They have done it. I think I am as strong as they are. I wish you to tell the Grandmother that I will do to the Americans as they have done to me. It is not my wish to go to war, but I must.**
>
> **I never told you before that I was a chief; today I tell you I am one. You never saw the pipe hanging over my door before. I have put it there to call the young men to my lodge to smoke and prepare for war.**

Sources: Manzione, "*Looking to the North*," 129; Laviolette, *Dakota Sioux in Canada,* 197-98; (speech) Walsh to Irvine, January 25, 1879, GGO, PAC; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 205-6; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:389-90; (the Crow horse raid) Peter Nabokov, *Two Leggings: The Making of a Crow Warrior* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967), 188-92; Pennanen, "Sitting Bull," 131-32.

17) My Arrows Are Broken.... --March 1879

WALSH WAS ANGERED by Sitting Bull's hope of resisting the Americans. He argued that Canada had provided protection for the Lakotas and there was no need for Bull to talk of war or alliances. In March 1879 Bull apologized to Walsh and wanted to correct any false impressions that he had created by speaking of the war-pipe:

> **... [H]e did not mean by those words that he would go out and make war but to be prepared to defend themselves, for he thought as the Crows had commenced war on him they would continue it.... [H]e would not fight without being forced to by being attacked. If his horses were stolen he would leave it to the White Mother to have them returned.... [H]e did not blame the Crows but the Americans, who dared not themselves to come into the Grandmother's country to injure him and could not rest without persecuting him and took this means of doing so....**

Bull went into winter camp at Pinto Horse Buttes and in early February sent a letter to chief Iron Horse at Standing Rock (Iron Horse was a brother of Rain-in-the-Face, the noted warrior who had been badly crippled at the Custer fight):

> **I want to tell you that I have seen a big soldier who wears a bearskin coat. I saw him at the Tongue River two years ago and had a council with him; he wanted me to give up my arms and become friendly with the whites, which I told him I would do the same. I asked him to raise his hand with me to the Great Spirit and swear eternal friendship to each other but he refused; after the council had concluded I left my camp with about twenty-five men, and a short distance away from him his men opened fire upon us and we ran away. If there is no good news for me at Standing Rock I want you to send me word; we have plenty of game**

out here but no grass for our ponies. I would come to Standing Rock and live with my people if the soldiers would let us live in peace.

In March Bull wrote again to friends at Standing Rock with sentiment sounding much like Chief Joseph's surrender speech of 1877. If ever he gave expression to his low morale it was here:

Once I was strong and brave and my people had hearts of iron, but now I am a coward and will fight no more forever. My people are cold and hungry. My women are sick and my children freezing. I will do as the Great Father wishes. I will give my guns and ponies into his hands. My arrows are broken and my war paint is thrown to the wind.

Sources: (Speech) Walsh to Irvine, March 24, 1879, WP; (first letter) Milligan, *Dakota Twilight,* 90-91; (second letter) *Saskatchewan Herald,* March 24, 1879; (on Iron Horse) Elizabeth B. Custer, *Boots and Saddles or: Life in Dakota with General Custer* (Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House Publishers, 1977), 206-15.

18) I Am Looking to the North for My Life. --March 21, 1879

BULL AND HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY, including two sisters, a wife, Little Assiniboin, One Bull and Bad Soup, arrived back at Fort Walsh on March 20, 1879. The following day they had a council with Walsh and Bull said that it was rumored that he and Big Road wanted to be admitted to the Yanktonai Agency if terms were satisfactory. Regarding this, he said:

What I wish to say to the Grandmother is [that] I have but one heart, and it is the same today as when I first shook your hand. When I first entered her country, I told you that my heart was pale at how my people had been persecuted by the Americans, and that I came to the Grandmother's country to sleep sound and ask her to have pity on me--that I never would again shake the hand of an American. I went at your request to the Grandmother's fort [Fort Walsh] to meet the Americans, but I will never meet them again. ... I have always said to my people in council, "If any of you want to go back, tell me!" None of them has done so yet.

I am looking to the north for my life and hope the Grandmother will never ask me to look to the country I left, although mine, and not even the dust of it did I sell, but the Americans can have it. I never look at the Grandmother's children with a side face. I told you before and I tell you now, I am never going to leave the Grandmother's country.

I see many roads coming; they are the Grandmother's. I will live with them. Those who wish to return to the Americans can go, and those who wish to remain here, if the Grandmother wishes to give them a piece of land, can farm, but I will remain what I am until I die, a hunter, and when there are no buffalo or other game, I will send my children to hunt and live on prairie mice, for when an Indian is shut up in one place his body becomes weak....

[After explaining that he was encamped south of the line to hunt food, he said:] I will not remain in the south one day longer than I can help. I do not lie. I have but one mind.... All I am looking for is something for my children to eat. I want to see no blood but the blood of a wild animal....

You have for many months been advising us to think of getting our living from the ground. Will you tell me where we will find this ground?

Walsh replied that the Cypress Hills area was good, but that they would have an easier time on the American reservations. He warned again that within a few years even the Montana herd of buffalo would be gone and that the railroad was coming through. Bull was apparently so desperate that he asked his cousin, "Watogola" (Wild One), to petition the government for provisions, seeds and tools.

Sources: (Speech) Walsh to Assistant Commissioner, March 24, 1879, WP; Manzione, *"Looking to the North,"* 133-34; Turner, *Medicine Line*, 163-65.

19) I Am Tired of War. I Am Tired of Blood. --June 16, 1879

IN MID-JUNE 1879 Bull was again camped south of the Canadian line in the Milk River country when Chicago correspondent Stanley Huntley found the camp. Although he was at first suspected of being a spy, Huntley was able to interview Bull, whom he thus described:

> There is something remarkable in his face. It is rather broad and fleshy, but the determined line around the mouth destroys the impression of flabbiness. His eyes are wide, and black and piercing. The upper lids are heavy and the outer corners hang over the eyes as if the brain has escaped into them. His shoulders and chest are broad and strong, and the hands awfully dirty. He is dressed in blue leggins, beaded moccasins, a shirt made of the same material, figured like the patterns of broche shawls, and his blanket bound lightly around his waist.

Bull was asked if he hated the Americans and he replied:

> **I hate them. Do you ask my why? Because I and my people have always been deceived by them. They asked us to go to the gift houses (reservations) and said they would care for us and feed us. Many of my people went. They believed what the Americans said to them. They were there but a short time, and then they were told they must farm. Some of them would not do this. Then they found that their rations were short.**
>
> **It was not many years ago that your people said they would give us the country of the Black Hills. They said our children should have it and own it for them, that it should be our hunting ground. As soon as they found [that] there was shining dust there, they drove us from it, and told us the country did not belong to us. Such actions make me so that I cannot believe them.**
>
> **We went away from the [Black Hills]... peacefully, though we knew it was rich with gold, for the sake of peace to our wives and children. The American people sent the Long Hair to follow us. Do you know of anything we did to bring the Long Hair upon us at the Little Bighorn River? No, you don't. Do your people know of anything we did? No, they don't. We were assembled there in a peaceable camp, hunting for meat to feed our families. What stories did your people hear that they sent the Long Hair upon us? Who told you these stories? If you were ever told that we were hostile, it is a lie. Whoever told you so is a liar. It was a hunting camp. We had attacked nothing but the buffalo.**
>
> **It is for [this that]... I dislike the Americans. It is for their conduct towards me.... I do not want war with them. I am tired of war. I am tired of blood. I went with my people into [this]... country so as to get away from war. If I had wanted to fight I would have stayed in my own country.**

Sources: (Speech) *CDT*, July 5, 1879; Lewis O. Saum, "Stanley Huntley Interviews Sitting Bull," *Montana Magazine of Western History* 32 (Spring 1982): 2-15.

20) They Want Us to Starve. --June 16, 1879

HUNTLEY WENT ON to ask the chief about why the Lakotas were hunting on the American side of the line. Sitting Bull, knowing that Fort Assiniboine was being established on the Milk River, in addition to Fort Keogh, to keep them from getting buffalo, explained:

The buffalo have come down here, and we follow them. We want meat. Our women and children are hungry. There is nothing for us but the wild game. We have not come to injure the white man or his property. We were forced to come....

If the Long Knives will let us hunt in peace, we will go back as soon as we have got meat. We don't want the white man's blood. We don't want his horse. We want something to eat, and we must go where it is....

We will avoid the Long Knives if we can. If we cannot, we will fight. I moved into the Grandmother's country to get away from the Long Knives. They have followed me. They are making a soldiers' house close to the Assiniboin gift house. It is to cut us off from the buffalo. They want us to starve.

Listen, friends. Your people wanted my country. I have given it to them. I have not sold it to them. I have given it to them. Then we went off on the prairie to hunt. Your people followed me. They drove me away. I fled before them, and left my country behind me. They came close to the line and built their soldiers' house. The buffalo have left us. We have followed them. Will your people let us hunt in peace? We mean them no harm. The white men are safe. We do not want to steal your horses.

If the Long Knives come, we will meet them. We will take 1,500 lodges. That is what we had when the Long Hair came.

In times past Bull had often sung mystical songs relating to his dependence on the buffalo to keep his people alive. One song envisions the buffalo seeking a peace-pipe with the Lakotas: **"At daybreak I roam. I seek a peace-pipe as I wander around."**

Source: (Speech) *CDT*, July 5, 1879; (song) Vestal, "Works of Sitting Bull," 276.

21) Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Are Rascals. --June 16, 1879

HUNTLEY TRIED to reason with the chief, arguing that the Lakotas on the reservations were happier than those who were living in fear. He claimed that Red Cloud and Spotted Tail and their people were content. Bull, upon hearing the names of those chiefs, was furious and replied:

Red Cloud and Spotted Tail are rascals. They sold our country without the full consent of our people.... Spotted Tail and Red Cloud and some more sold [our country]... for [us]. Many of them are dead now. They thought they were wise. They find they were fools. None of them were Hunkpapas. No Hunkpapa chief ever sold his country. What right had these men to sell it? We would not agree to what they had done.

Then they made your people believe that we were hostile, and your people commenced chasing us over the prairies. We did not want to fight. We ran and hid from them. They trailed us until the Long Hair found us, and then we fought for our women and children.

During Sitting Bull's talk with Huntley, he spoke much of his faith in *Wakan Tanka*. Walsh was later to say that he had never seen an Indian with so much implicit faith in his god. When asked about the scarcity of the buffalo, which would eventually lead to the near-starvation of his people, Bull said:

You must not think that the Great Spirit does not watch me as closely as he watches you. He put me on these prairies, and He has permitted me to thrive with them. I know that He is watching me, and He will never leave me to starve. When the buffalo are gone He will give me something else.

> **The Americans must think the Great Spirit looks after them alone. He is with me as much as He is with them, and I know He punishes those who persecute me, although I don't see it.**

Huntley also heard brief speeches by Long Dog, Pretty Bear, Bear's Cap, White Gut and Big Road. Stone Dog, an Oglala head warrior, spoke angrily and mournfully of Crazy Horse's death:

> Can you tell why your people killed Crazy Horse? I was with him, and saw his blood running on the ground. I had my gun and was going to shoot his murderer, but the Great Spirit whispered, "No. Crazy Horse is dead. Keep your bullet for your own defense." I escaped. Your people know what the shining dust is. You have it for your search for it's on every hill. Crazy Horse was shining dust to his people. We loved him. We cannot forget his death. The ground he fell on must be gold.

Source: (Speeches) *CDT,* July 5, 1879, August 1 and 5, 1879; Mounted Police Report, December 31, 1880, Sessional Paper No. 3, Canada, House of Commons *Sessional Papers,* 1880, p. 25-27.

22) [O]nce You Cheyennes Were Leaders in War. --July 16, 1879

On July 16, 1879 eight Cheyenne scouts came from Bearcoat Miles to Bull's camp on the Beaver River. Sitting Bull was appalled that his former allies were now working as scouts for the soldiers. Among them was Bobtail Horse, who was one of the ten warriors who confronted Custer's attack at the Little Bighorn: He and his comrades fired the shots that brought Custer down in the river. Directing his words to Bobtail Horse, Bull said:

> **Where are the soldiers? Are they following you to attack us and kill our women and children? Did you bring an army with you...? You're the man they call Bobtail Horse? These two men are going to speak Sioux, but do you use the sign language? And take care to tell us the truth. We want to keep away from the soldiers. If you lie to us, we'll kill you.... When a man is out to do mischief, he can expect to be killed. It is my duty to live here on my own ground and protect my people.**

Bobtail Horse explained that the soldiers had pressed the Cheyennes very hard and they were unable to refuse peace and a reservation. Sitting Bull replied:

> **... [O]nce you Cheyennes were leaders in war, big fighters! Why did you put away your guns? If you had not, if you had stuck to me, the soldiers would go away, they would not have the courage to attack us all.... We'll not surrender, not for a year or two anyhow. But we are not going to do any more running around. We're going to stay right here, outside the post.... When are you men going home? I'm not going to run away. I'm going to stay right here.**

Bobtail Horse said that when he came back they would have to fight. On July 17 Lieutenant W. P. Clark, with a company of soldiers and about sixty Indian scouts, found Sitting Bull's hunting party. Sitting Bull and White Bird signalled for a parley, but Clark continued the attack. Bull directed the warriors in a skirmish with the Indian scouts and personally killed the Crow warrior, Magpie. His warriors soon executed a flanking movement and surrounded Clark's command, but Miles's main column approached and Bull's warriors began to retreat to the north. They reached their camp, but in continuing the retreat, they left behind much property. Afterward, Miles stationed his troops at various places to keep the buffalo from going back north that fall.

Sources: (Speeches) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 221-223; Miller, *Custer's Fall,* 126, 129; Marquis, *Wooden Leg,* 246, 381; *CDT,* July 23, 1879.

23) Sweep Him off the Prairie! --July 1879

ON JULY 28, 1879 Bull sent Long Dog to Miles to say that the Lakotas would stay permanently on the northern side of the line. He told Walsh, **"So long as there remains a gopher to eat, I will not go back."**

Privately, however, he was so mad about Miles's attack that he wanted to exterminate the soldiers and called a council of chiefs to discuss the matter. Bull gave a history of his people and all the treaties they had made which the United States government had violated. He went on to speak of the attacks on their camps and the killing of their women and children and defiantly urged action: **"Sweep him [Miles] off the prairie. He will fall before us like dry grass before fire...."** But Walsh entered into the discussion, later terming it as the most bitter debate he had ever had with the chief (But he felt that his presence spared Miles's command from certain annihilation.) When the other chiefs backed Walsh, Sitting Bull eventually said:

> **[They] hunted me like wild animals seeking for my blood.... [H]e and his people had crossed the line seeking peace. The grass in Canada was not stained with blood. They came for rest and to be relieved of war and hoped Canada would deal gently with them.**

Back at Wood Mountain Bull avoided talking to American newspaperman John Finerty, saying, **"That man is from the other side. I want nothing to do with the Americans. They have my country now. Let them keep it. I never seek anybody. Least of all do I seek any Americans."**

To make matters worse, Big Bear and Poundmaker, the Mountain Cree chiefs, were again trying to unite the western tribes against the Canadians. Big Bear (or Edouard Lambert) had a reputation in Canada about the same as Sitting Bull in the States, as he had not been willing to sign any treaties with the Canadian government. But having only a small following, Big Bear went to Sitting Bull to ask for aid in fighting the British soldiers. It was said that the chief gave no reply (but "a son" of Crazy Horse wanted to fight).

Bull spent the winter of 1879-80 on Frenchman's Creek with about 450 lodges. The snowfall was heavy and this made hunting difficult. Due to their desperation, Swift Bird with 60 Oglala lodges and 20 lodges of Brules went into the agency at Poplar Creek to draw rations. But Bull, Big Road and Little Knife returned to Wood Mountain by early April 1880; here they endured months of starvation. For lack of food they gathered up and ate ponies which had died of scurvy the previous fall. However, this diet caused an epidemic of "mountain fever," and many Lakotas died. The Mounted Police witnessed the poverty of the Indians and divided their own rations with them, as did the Metis. During this period Waterspout, Iron Dog and Hairy Chin surrendered to the Americans.

Sources: (Speech) Walsh to Cora, May 21, 1890, Walsh's notes, December 16, 1890, WP; Finerty, *War-Path,* 282-83; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:463, 474; (on Big Bear) *CDT,* August 17, 1879, J. W. Grant MacEwan, *Portraits from the Plains* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Limited, 1971), 102-6, and *Washington Post,* June 16 and 23, 1885.

24) I Beg You to See the White Father.... --July 6, 1880

BY MID-MAY 1880 Bull's following had dwindled to less than 200 lodges. Then he learned that Walsh was being removed from the Wood Mountain post. On July 6 he asked Walsh again to help him secure a home in Canada. He said that he wanted to enjoy all the privileges that other Canadian Indians received and have permission to cross the boundary line for hunting purposes. He did not think that he should be blamed for the bloodshed which had occurred, as whatever he had done had been done in defense of the women and children of his tribe. Continuing, Bull said: **"I now show you my heart; you can make known my feelings to all the world."** Actually, he went into a tirade about Spotted Tail and Red Cloud:

> **In the first place the Great Spirit provided for both the white and the red man. But... the white race has become so powerful that he defies the Great Spirit and is trying to undo all He has done.**
>
> **A few years ago the Americans called a council of Lakota chiefs--Spotted Tail, a Brule chief, and Red Cloud, an Oglala--being the principal men, and proposed and succeeded in purchasing from the council, in which there was not a chief or warrior to represent our tribe, the Black Hills country, the home of the Hunkpapa, my people. In hearing the news of**

> **our country being sold, I immediately sent a message to Spotted Tail and Red Cloud, upbraiding them for what they had done and informed them that we would not surrender our home to any person.... Spotted Tail said I was a rascal and that I should not be listened to.... [But he]... has brought more misery upon our people and caused more white men's deaths than any other Indian on the plains. Spotted Tail will sacrifice anything to benefit himself....**
>
> **If the White Mother is determined to drive me out of her country and force me into the hands of those who are waiting for me like hungry wolves, I beg you to see the White Father of the United States and find out the best conditions upon which I can return, also, if the conditions will be faithfully and fully carried out.**

Then, to add greater weight to his plea, Bull presented a treasured war bonnet to Walsh, saying, **"Take it my friend and keep it. I hope never to have use for it again. Not a feather there but marks some deed done in war while yet the Lakota were strong."**

In spite of Bull's demonstration of friendship, Walsh informed his superiors: "I consider it impolitic to give Bull a reservation in Canada. He is the shrewdest and most intelligent Indian living, has the ambition of Napoleon, and is brave to a fault.... In war he has no equal. In council he is superior to all.... Bull's ambition is, I am afraid, too great to let him settle down and be content with an uninteresting life." On July 15 Walsh left for his new post at Qu'Appelle; then he was granted a sick leave and went home to Brockville, Ontario.

Sources: (Speech) Walsh to Minister of the Interior, September 11, 1880, RG 10, vol. 3691, file 13,893, PAC; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:514-20; Major Walsh's Report, December 31, 1880, 27-29.

25) I Was like a Bird on the Fence.... --November 23, 1880

DURING THE SUMMER of 1880 Sitting Bull paid another visit to the Blackfeet chief, Crowfoot, in the Cypress Hills. He explained that the Lakotas were merely hunting and wanted peace between the two tribes so that the hunting could proceed safely. Crowfoot was pleased to make peace and invited Sitting Bull for a dance and feast. Bull happily declared that he would honor the chief by naming his son after him. He went on to say: **"We will be friends to the end of our lives. My children will be your children and yours mine. From now on we will never fight again, and we will be on the same side at all times."** Unfortunately, the Lakotas later stole some horses from the Blackfeet and Crowfoot considered that Bull was a liar.

Bull also had talks with Walsh's replacement, Captain Lief N. F. Crozier. Crozier learned that Bull wanted to delay the surrender of his people and was using his soldiers' lodge to enforce his will; he therefore took action to destroy Bull's authority. He reported: "I... concluded to break his influence with the camp; consequently on subsequent occasions instead of treating him with exceptional deference and addressing myself especially to him in council, I spoke to the people generally, telling them not to allow any one or any set of men to prevent their accepting the American terms of surrender...." His efforts caused some to try and leave the Hunkpapa camp, but the soldiers' lodge forced them back. Crozier reported: "[B]y [Sitting Bull's]... conversation and manner it was plain that he felt his influence was fast waning, and although he told me, as he had often done before, that he was going to surrender, one could see that he wished to delay as long as possible."

In early July Bull joined the Oglala chiefs, Big Road, Dull Knife, Stone Dog and Little Hawk, in presenting another plan: They said that they would surrender if they were given a reserve at Poplar Creek or on the Tongue River. Even so, others refused to wait around any longer: Spotted Eagle was convinced by Crozier to surrender and he left with 65 lodges.

That fall, while Bull hunted buffalo south of the line, he had a visit from police sergeant Henry Hamilton. He spoke feelingly of Major Walsh and asked Hamilton to write to Walsh and say that **"although they were widely separated, his heart was with his old benefactor."** He said that sometimes he had imaginary conversations with Walsh, and **"upon reflection was sorry for many things he had done, because, as it**

always turned out, the 'Majeer' was right." But as much as Bull wanted to see Walsh again, Irvine told him on November 23 that Walsh would not be returning to his former post. Bull retorted that he would not do anything until he had talked to him:

> **When Walsh was here I told him I did not know what to do. I was like a bird on the fence, not knowing on what side to hop.... I was inclined to surrender to the United States. He told me to wait here in Canada until he returned, and he would then advise me what to do.**

Sources: (First quote) Dempsey, *Crowfoot,* 123; (second quote) Report of Lief N. F. Crozier, December 1880, WP; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:526, 536-37; (third quote) Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 217-18.

26) I Am Ready to Make a Peace. --April 1881

DURING THE WINTER Edwin "Fish" Allison arrived in the Hunkpapa camps from Fort Buford to try to convince the Lakotas to surrender. Although Bull wanted to delay making a decision until he had heard from Walsh, Gall was amenable to Allison's suggestions. When Bull heard word from Walsh that he should surrender, he agreed to go along, saying:

> **I am ready to make a peace. But as for going to Standing Rock, that is a question I must consider a long time. I am no fool. I know that the man who kills me will be rewarded and I do not intend to be taken prisoner.**
>
> **I have long understood the power of the whites. I am like a fly in a mountain stream when compared with this wonderful and cruel race. I do not care to have my head sold to make some man-coyote rich.**
>
> **Now this is my answer, I will make a peace....**

Gall and his followers crossed the line to Poplar River. But when they did not surrender immediately, American troops attacked them on December 25 and forced the issue. Upon hearing this news, Bull quickly headed back to Wood Mountain. Even so, Crow King and Long Dog and many Hunkpapas surrendered, as did Low Dog and his Oglalas.

When Bull arrived back at Wood Mountain on January 31, 1881, he was told by Colonel Irvine that he could not expect any help whatsoever from the Grandmother. Crozier also tried to convince the chief that his position was untenable. He reported: "Sitting Bull was in anything but a good humour.... He felt that he was losing his power as one after the other [of his]. .. people declared their intention of surrendering.... I lost no opportunity of telling his followers that he was to blame for their suffering, that over and over again they had been advised by us to surrender.... [Bull] tried to blame me for the suffering of his people but I showed them that those who were holding them here were the guilty... and even Sitting Bull has at last but very, very reluctantly admitted that we have advised them in this matter for their benefit." On April 3 Bull finally concluded to send One Bull and another man to Fort Buford to see how the surrendered Indians were faring:

> **I want these two young men to go that they may see for themselves how the Americans are treating the Indians and then they will return and tell me everything. Send one of your men with them that he too may see everything, for I know what a Redcoat says is true. You write to the Americans. Tell them what I say and ask them when we go in to do us no harm. I want to see if they will write and tell you that we will not be harmed and that we will be kindly treated. I do not believe everything the Indians who were here the other day said.**

Sources: (First speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 196; (second speech) Capt. Crozier to Lt. Col. Irvine, April 3, 1881, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3691 and 3652, file 13,893 and 8589 Pt. 1, PAC; see also, Major David Brotherton to Terry, April 12, 1881, roll 32, MP; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 220-22, 225-26; Allison, "Sitting Bull's Surrender," 256-61.

27) I Am Going in. --April 1881

INSPECTOR ALEXANDER A. MACDONELL went along with One Bull to Fort Buford. They told Major David H. Brotherton that Sitting Bull had heard rumors about his people being placed in irons and was afraid he would be treated in a similar manner. Bull's actual message was:

> **Tell the Americans not to be afraid that I will eat the provisions they send me and then not go in. They will see me. They may say, "If he wants our food let him come and get it." They will see me soon. I have given my word and my body to the Queen, and will do what I am told. I am in earnest. I am going in.**

Brotherton sent a letter back to Sitting Bull, dated April 12, 1881, which said, "I wish to assure you of our good feeling towards you and all your people, that our hearts are good and we are pleased to hear that you have made up your mind to come in and live with us." He also said that the chief's emissaries would report that the rumors about bad treatment were false, and provisions and wagons would be sent to help them with their march. But when One Bull returned, he gave Bull a bad report and effectively sabotaged the surrender for a time. The chief not only changed his mind about going in, but reportedly dispatched emissaries to the Hunkpapas and Yanktonais at Fort Peck and Fort Buford, urging them to rally around him once again and stand against the Americans.

Still concerned with possible American treachery, Bull traveled east to Willow Bunch to see an old acquaintance, trader Jean Louis Legare. On April 19 Legare said that he would try to get explicit assurances of good treatment from Brotherton if the chief surrendered. After Legare left on his mission, Bull still hoped against hope that he could remain in Canada. He therefore headed for Fort Qu'Appelle on April 28 with thirty-eight lodges, thinking that he might see Major Walsh. Arriving in a destitute condition, he sought assistance from Father Hugonard of Lebret, who had just received a supply of flour for his mission:

> **Black Robe, we meet you as friends. You know there are no buffalo on the plains since the fire last fall. Hunger forced us to leave Wood Mountain and come here. Perhaps we can live by fishing or a little trading. I have never been afraid of an enemy, but I tremble at the sight of our children crying from hunger.**

Hugonard traded away six or seven bags of flour for materiel taken largely from the Custer fight.

Sources: (First speech) Crozier to Major David H. Brotherton, April 5, 1881, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3652, file 8589 Pt. 1, PAC; Brotherton to Sitting Bull, April 12, 1881, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3652, file 8589 Pt. 1, PAC; *SPMPP,* May 4 and 8, 1881; (second speech) Turner, *Medicine Line,* 238; MacEwan, *Sitting Bull,* 186-87; *SPPP,* June 17, 25, 1881.

28) This Is My Country Here. --May 25, 1881

ON MAY 25, 1881 Sitting Bull had a council with the Canadian Indian commissioner, Edgar Dewdney. Dewdney asked why the Lakotas had not gone back to the Americans? Bull replied:

> **I was going back and, when over the line, I was fired at.... I received a letter stating that the Americans were going to take me, so I ran back.... Some of my party that started were taken and they sent me word to go back. I had not given up my country, I was only visiting it, and was coming back to see what Major Walsh had to send to me....**
>
> **I told Colonel Irvine and Captain Crozier [that] I want to get an answer from Major Walsh. I said, "What is the reason that you are in such a hurry to send me across the line?... This is my country here. What is the reason you want to push me out of my country? You were**

born across the water. I thought you had come here to make money and feed those that were hungry. How is it you are in a hurry to push me aside?"

I told him: "... [M]y hands are tied, and I do not intend to do anything wrong. I have received nothing in comparison with what the Crees have. The Great Spirit, who made me, made all upon this earth, and made us that we live on buffalo meat." I told Colonel Irvine, "The Great Spirit did not make me to live on the half-breeds and white man. This is the first time I have asked for assistance. I shake hands with the white man on this side and I feel safe. I shake hands with the Americans and I am afraid of them." I told Captain Crozier, "No one has harmed me since I came on this side." I said, "How many times did you ever hear of anyone fighting me on the Queen's ground when I came across the line on this side with no evil intentions?" I asked him who it was that spilt blood on that side of the line. I said..., "I am waiting for an answer from Major Walsh and I am going to Qu'Appelle," so I came away then. He asked me if I would not send some of my men across the line and hear how the Americans were treating those that surrendered. I said, "yes," and they went. It was true [that] I said I would go over the line and it was afterwards I changed my mind.

Here on this side I am good friends with everybody. They all shake hands with me. I told him, "Let us take ten chiefs from Canada, ten from America, ten of my people, ten of the Crees, ten priests, and let us see who would be in the wrong after we had done talking." I said, "Look here, my words are sweet. I don't use any harsh language...." Now try and get word to Major Walsh. I want to wait about here... to hear what he has to say. ... I know the reason why all of you want me to go back to my country. My carcass is nothing but gold; they would give a good deal for my carcass.

Source: Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney to Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, June 5, 1881, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3625, file 8589 Pt. 1, PAC.

29) I Want You to Put Everything Straight. --May 26, 1881

DEWDNEY TOLD Sitting Bull emphatically that no reserve would be given to him. He suggested that the Lakotas make up their minds to return to the U. S. by way of Fort Ellice and Pembina, that he would issue them rations and go down with them himself and obtain assurances from the government that they would be treated well. Bull said that he would reply on the morrow.

On May 26 a council was held at Sitting Bull's camp--a pitiful group of twenty-seven lodges, filled with women and children and not more than twenty men. Dewdney asked the chief for his response to the Queen's requests. Bull began by naming most of the men with him, including Black Moon, White Dog, Iron Eyes and his own son, Crowfoot. He asked Dewdney about what had happened to the letter he had sent to the Canadian authorities, suggesting that a grand council be convened at Fort Garry (Winnipeg) to consider the Lakota problem; he wanted representatives invited to participate from every party involved, including not only the Americans and Canadians, but also the Cree, Metis and Catholic priests:

I would wish this boy to grow up like these men. He says to you, "Now Father look into this.., do this and find out where I may live a long time." That is what my son says to you.

Look at me well.... I beg of you to look up to the heavens and down to the earth and see how I am to get along. It is, I suppose, from the sky above and the earth below that I am going to live.... I came on this side, thinking that I was going to live in my Mother's country.... The Great Spirit told me that I had to live, and I didn't want to put aside what He told me.... I do no harm to anyone and I would not like anyone to have a bad feeling towards me. This is the reason why the People-who-wear-the-Cap (The Americans) have pushed me back and that is the reason I have come to make my home on this side.... [T]hey have pushed me and stolen my country.. .. The reason why I have come to the Queen's country is... to shake

> **hands with the people on this side. The British hands are clean; the American hands are bloody....**
>
> **The words [that] I sent from... Wood Mountain, where have they gone to? How is it that I don't hear anything of them? It [has been]... over five years since I sent... word to my Mother, and I have heard no answer yet. Today, my Mother, the Queen, will hear my words, and I wonder what answer I am to get. The words I sent were these:... that [a council should be called with] ten principal men of the Lakota, Americans, priests, Canadians, Crees and half-breeds so that we could talk over [the Lakota problem]... and put everything straight. The reason why I sent this word was that it might be known who was in the wrong. The reason why I sent my words was that I [wanted to be able to]... shake hands with the Americans and the British. I did this so that I might be able to go any place.**
>
> **Who was your father and my father? It was those who have brought us to what we are. Who is called "The Father" here? That is the one I came**

over here to see.... I came on this side thinking [that] I would live.... Today, what she--the Queen--has said to me, I take it; what my Grandfather told me, I also know and swear to abide by....

I want you to put everything straight.... I thought [that] as many of our people who wear the breechcloth would live together and make our living. We beg of you to see that we are going to live the same as those over there [in the U. S.?].

Now look sharp and send my word away so that the Queen may hear what I have said. The Queen wants to know what I have in my mind and I have now told you what I think.... The reason why I came [over to]... this side was so that I could make my living like the white people. There are still fifty lodges that are out. Think on them. They have not yet come in. That is why I have taken things so quietly.

Now I beg of you to get some carts to go for some grub, so that we might get some provisions in here. Try to be quick. We were wishing to try and get this thing settled soon.... I am waiting now for two days grub so that the children might be eating and so that we might be finishing this arrangement quick.... I know you have no flour or buffalo meat but try and get some animals to kill.

After several other headmen spoke, Dewdney asked Bull pointedly if he was going to do as he was advised. Bull finally said that he would go back to his country. Dewdney asked again if he had heard correctly, and the chief said: **"Yes, that is what I said. That is the reason I asked you to give me something to eat. I know that the Americans are just waiting to hear my words."** When Dewdney asked if all had agreed to this, Bull added:

> **Yes! Hear me! The heaven above hear me. They will all go as one man if I go. You want to know what is in my mind. I will let you know and this is the first time I will let it be known.... And there is no one who wears the breechclout that will go back on what I say.**

Dewdney asked again if Bull meant what he said, only to find that Bull went back to his former request: **"I meant that I would go down if you could get the ten people asked for before to meet at Fort Garry and settle what I want."** Dewdney said that this request would be refused and urged the chief to go to Fort Ellice. But Bull wanted the provisions brought to him. Dewdney declined and Bull angrily said that **"he was not so poor that he could not live."**

On the next day many of Bull's followers told Dewdney that the chief was holding them back from returning to the U. S., but they would not leave him. Dewdney thought that this might be a ploy on their part to get provisions from him as he knew that the band was living on ducks, roots, berries and eggs. He figured that by winter they would have to decide between surrender and starvation, and was so impressed with Sitting Bull's

obstinacy that he reported to his superiors that their surrender could "only be brought about by actual starvation."

Sources: (Speeches) Dewdney to Superintendent-General, June 7, 1881; Pennanen, "Sitting Bull," 139.

30) I Would Rather Stay and Starve. --June 1881

WHILE AT QU'APPELLE Bull met a correspondent for the *New York Herald.* The reporter wrote that whatever the chief suffered in looks, he made up for with tact and "cuteness"; that the chief was the "mastermind" of the Indian camp and his word was considered law. Being able to speak a great deal of English, Bull asked the reporter about Major Walsh and was very disappointed when the correspondent knew nothing of him. When Bull was asked if he would go back to the states, he replied, **"No, the Big Knives would scalp me. I would not go back--never! I would rather stay and starve, because the Big Knives would not be true to their word."** The chief, the reporter wrote, then "dropped into a dreamy silence, which he broke by rapid utterances." **He** continued to denounce the Americans, but spoke of having been offered a chance to go on an exhibition to curious crowds in the east--he had mentioned this to Dewdney, but the commissioner replied that the chief's carcass was not worth ten cents! Bull went on to say that he had two herds of ponies, 125 in all, and that the Qu'Appelle Lakes would afford him sustenance until fall.

In spite of his bravado, Bull finally decided that there was no point in staying at Qu'Appelle--even till fall. The local Indians, Standing Buffalo's Sissetons and a band of Crees, saw him as an unwelcome intruder. And Dewdney's offer to supply them with provisions, but march them back to the U. S., did not sit well with him. More importantly, he received a message that Legare had already taken some of his people under Old Bull to Fort Buford on May 26, and to his utter dismay, his daughter, Many Horses, had eloped with a man of this group. On June 16 Bull left for Wood Mountain with his band, minus a few people who wanted to remain with the Sissetons.

Sitting Bull arrived back at Wood Mountain on July 2, looking lean, haggard and dirty. He now knew that most of his options were gone. Furthermore, he had heard rumors that his daughter had been placed in irons upon her arrival at Fort Buford and he feared for her safety. He cried out, **"Is it so? Do they make war on a poor weak girl? I will go to her. I will kill her captors. I will die beside her."** After he had calmed down a bit, he told his remaining followers:

> **My children, you know that the white men have tried often to get me to go south to act their pleasure, but I have always refused. Now they have taken my daughter, a weak girl with no power to defend herself. They have put irons on her feet and on her hands. At last I must go south. I must follow her. I wish to find her and to kill those who have abused her. I do not want you to go with me. I go alone to suffer whatsoever comes to me.**

However, his warriors said that they would go with him. Bull replied: **"Friends, you have stayed too long with me. If you wish to go I cannot refuse, but the road is dark and dangerous; whereto it leads I cannot tell."**

Sources: *SPPP,* July 13, 1881; Hedren, "Sitting Bull's Surrender," 5; (speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 197.

31) [W]e Will Go to Buford With You. --July 1881

SITTING BULL decided to entrust the process of going back to the Americans to Jean Louis Legare, who had so often supported the Lakotas in their time of need. He told the trader:

> **These five years I have known you; you never said anything much to me in your life, but I heard many times what you were saying to the others.**

I heard in Qu'Appelle that you were carrying my camp to Buford. I started from Qu'Appelle with the same intention, to surrender myself if you give me time for it.

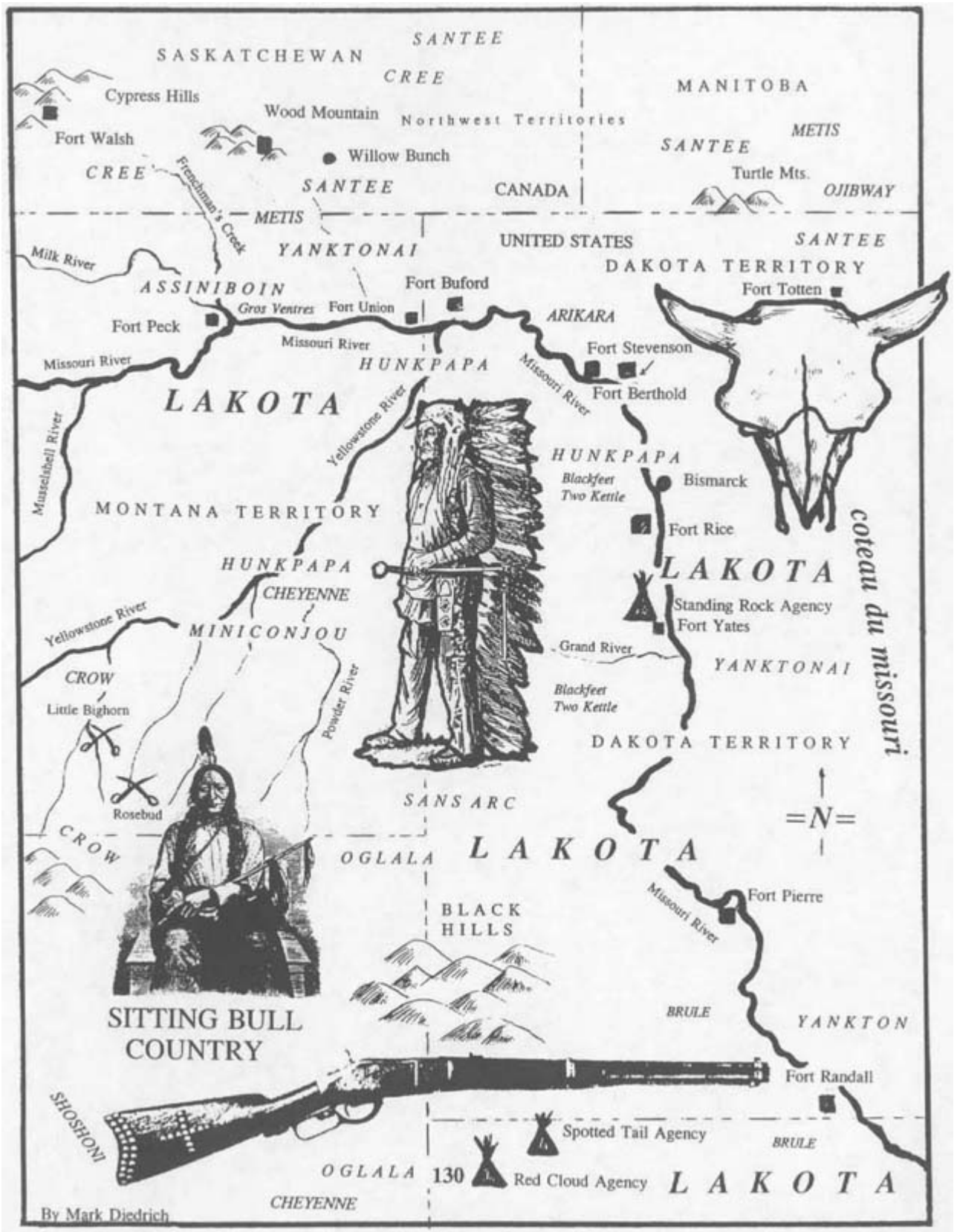
The Queen's chief [Dewdney] offered to feed us all the way if we surrendered to the Americans. I said, "No, I [will] surrender with nobody else but Jean-Louis...." If you wait until we are in a little better order and fatter, we will go to Buford with you.

But Legare insisted upon leaving in about a week and arranged to have thirty-seven Red River ox-carts for the Hunkpapas to use.

On July 10 Legare headed out with twenty-five carts loaded with Hunkpapas, but at the last minute, Bull's group of twelve carts stayed behind. Four Horns was apparently still unwilling to go, and Bull was still debating the issue. He declared that he could not have it said that he had been captured: He was surrendering of his own free will and no one would ever boast that they had seized him. Furthermore, he wanted to fight if the military tried to seize them. But Legare sent some Metis to encourage them on and Bull and Four Horns went along reluctantly. Still, Bull complained about the food supply and threatened to "clean up" the outfit and seize the provisions; he even reportedly fired two shots into the flour sacks!

Even after Sitting Bull left, some of the Oglala and Hunkpapa Lakotas, numbering about forty lodges, remained behind. Their headmen were Black Bull and White Cap (not to be confused with the Sisseton chief, White Cap, of Duck Lake). Numbering about 120 people in 1897, they lived at Wood Mountain in the summer and worked for the white settlers at Moose Jaw in the winter. The Nez Perce leader, White Bird, also remained in Canada, though many of his band returned to their reservation. However, in 1882 the chief's medical skill failed and two children under his care died. For this their father shot and killed him.

Sources: (Speech) Turner, *Medicine Line,* 241-42; Turner, *NWMP,* 1:581; Manzione, *"Looking to The North,"* 151, 124; James H. Howard, *The Canadian Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 35; *SPPP,* December 22, 1890; Pennanen, "Sitting Bull," 139. Black Bull was mentioned in 1890 as wanting to exterminate the whites after he heard of the death of Sitting Bull.


SASKATCHEWAN
SANTEE
CREE
MANITOBA
Cypress Hills
Wood Mountain
Northwest Territories
Fort Walsh
Willow Bunch
METIS
SANTEE
CREE
Frenchman's Creek
SANTEE
CANADA
Turtle Mts.
OJIBWAY
METIS
YANKTONAI
UNITED STATES
SANTEE
Milk River
DAKOTA TERRITORY
ASSINIBOIN
Fort Buford
Fort Totten
Gros Ventres
Fort Union
ARIKARA
Fort Peck
Missouri River
Missouri River
HUNKPAPA
Fort Stevenson
Missouri River
Fort Berthold
LAKOTA
Yellowstone River
HUNKPAPA
Musselshell River
Blackfeet
Two Kettle
Bismarck
MONTANA TERRITORY
Fort Rice
coteau du missouri
HUNKPAPA
LAKOTA
CHEYENNE
Standing Rock Agency
Fort Yates
Yellowstone River
MINICONJOU
Grand River
YANKTONAI
CROW
Blackfeet
Two Kettle
Little Bighorn
Powder River
DAKOTA TERRITORY
SANS ARC
Rosebud
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CROW
OGLALA
LAKOTA
Fort Pierre
Missouri River
BLACK
HILLS
BRULE
YANKTON
SITTING BULL
COUNTRY
Fort Randall
SHOSHONI
Spotted Tail Agency
BRULE
OGLALA
130
Red Cloud Agency
LAKOTA
CHEYENNE
By Mark Diedrich

MARK
DIEDRICH
1998

CROW KING
MARK DIEDRICH
1998

GALL
MARK DIEDRICH 1998

MARK
DIEDRICH
'88

MARK
LIEDRICH
1998
Kicking Bear

I) Fort Buford, D.T., July 14, 1881. General A. H. Terry.... Just received a dispatch from Legare, dated 12th inst.; says he is en route with Sitting Bull, Four Horns, and Red Thunder; in all 6 chiefs, 40 families--about 200 in all, men, women, and children. He says they came from Lake Qu'Appelle starving. Will send in this morning to meet them with rations. Messenger says they are about sixty miles out.

--Major David H. Brotherton

II) I was born a soldier-I have lived thus long. Ah, I have lived to spend my days in poverty --Sitting Bull

III) I am entitled to some consideration from the government and the Great Father, as I have never yet received a handful of corn from the United States authorities. I come and yield to the wishes of the government, not on

my own account, but because my women and children are starving. The white people all lied to me.

--Sitting Bull, July 1881

Sources: (First quote) Walker, *General Custer,* 74; (second quote) Garland, *American Indian,* 196; (third quote) *SPMPP,* August 7, 1881.

2) I Surrender This Rifle to You. --July 20, 1881

ON JULY 20, 1881 Sitting Bull formally surrendered to Brotherton, as the leading representative present of the United States. He took with him his young son, Crowfoot, who carried his Winchester rifle. Brotherton said that the Indians would be sent to Fort Yates. Bull replied:

> **I surrender this rifle to you through my young son, whom I desire to teach in this manner now that he has become a friend of the Americans. I wish him to learn the habits of the whites and to be educated as their sons are educated.**
>
> **I wish it to be remembered that I was the last man of my tribe to surrender my rifle. This boy has given it to you, and he now wants to know how he is going to make a living. Whatever you have to give or whatever you have to say, I would like to receive or hear now, for I don't wish to be kept in darkness longer. I have sent several messengers in here from time to time, but none of them have returned with news. The other chiefs, Crow King and Gall, have not wanted me to come, and I have never received good news from here. I now wish to be allowed to live on this side of the line or the others as I see fit. I wish to continue my old life of hunting, but would like to be allowed to trade on both sides of the line.**
>
> **This is my country, and I don't wish to be compelled to give it up. My heart is very sad at having to leave the Grandmother's country. She has been a friend to me, but I want our children to grow up in our native country, and I also wish to feel that I can visit two of my friends on the other side of the line--Major Walsh and Captain Macdonell--whenever I wish, and would like to trade with Louis Legare as he has always been a friend to me. I wish to have all my people live together upon one reservation of our own on the Little Missouri. I left several families at Wood Mountain and between there and Qu'Appelle. I wish all [of] them and those who have gone to Standing Rock to be collected together upon one reservation. My people have--many of them--been bad. [But] all are good now that their arms and ponies have been taken from them.**
>
> **You own this ground with me, and we must try and help each other. I do not wish to leave here until I get all the people I left behind and the Hunkpapas now at Poplar Creek. I would like to have my daughter, who is now at Fort Yates, sent up here to visit me, and also eight men [who are] now there, and I would like to know that Louis Legare is to be rewarded for his services in bringing me and my people in here.**

The American press felt that Bull, in making these demands, seemed "entirely oblivious to the mischief" he had done, and that he would be fortunate if he escaped indictments and trials for his crimes.

Sources: (Speech) *SPMPP,* July 21, 1881; *New York Post,* July 22, 1881.

3) I Will Fight No More. --July 1881

AFTER BULL'S SURRENDER SPEECH, Brotherton informed the chief that he could not send for the chief's daughter or any of the others, but that the government would deal with them in the best manner possible. Yet he gave the Lakotas little else but food and new army blankets. The following day Bull watched Louis Legare leave for Canada with the intention of gathering up some of the Hunkpapas who had remained behind.

Meanwhile, the Lakotas traded their saddles, bull boats and other items to the post trader for food. Sitting Bull was quoted as saying:

> **I do not come in anger toward the white soldiers. I am very sad. My daughter went on this road. I am seeking her.**
>
> **I will fight no more. I do not love war. I never was the aggressor. I fought only to defend my women and children. Now all my people want to return to their native land. Therefore I submit....**
>
> **I do not wish to be shut up in a corral. It is bad for young men to be fed by an agent. It makes them lazy and drunken. All agency Indians I have seen were worthless. They are neither red warriors nor white farmers. They are neither wolf nor dog. But my followers are weary of cold and hunger. They wish to see their brothers and their old home, therefore I bow my head.**

About the time that Sitting Bull surrendered, President James Garfield was the victim of an assassin's bullet, though he lingered for weeks before dying. A reporter asked Bull what he thought about this and what the Indians would do if a coward shot a chief. Bull's answer illustrated the cultural divide between Indian and white law and also demonstrated his stinging sarcasm:

> **It was a cowardly act. If a warrior had been there, he would have gone to the Great Father's face and looked him in the eyes and then shot him.**
>
> **I heard when way up there [in Canada] about the Great Father being shot, but had no one to tell me all about it. I don't know whether the warrior was wise in doing it or not. He might have shot the Great Father because he was not treating the Indians right. If that was so, it was not a bad thing to do.**
>
> **If a coward should shoot one of our chiefs without looking him in the eyes, our friends would go and kill him. If he was a very rich coward he could pay the damages in many ponies and we would let him leave.**

Sources: (First speech) Virginia I. Armstrong, *I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1971), 146; Hedren, "Sitting Bull's Surrender," 13; (second speech) *SPMPP*, August 4, 1881.

4) I Don't Want a White Man over Me. --August 2, 1881

ON JULY 29, after ten days at Fort Buford, Sitting Bull and his 187 followers boarded the *General Sherman* en route to Fort Yates. The steamer first stopped on July 31 at Bismarck--the first settlement of any size that Sitting Bull had ever been to. His entourage visited the town and he shook hands with hundreds of residents; he also found a ready market for his autograph. He requested to see Mrs. Lulu Harmon (daughter of Matilda "Eagle Woman" Galpin). When she came down to the boat, Lulu, who spoke Lakota, asked the chief if it wouldn't have been better for him to surrender in 1868 rather than now. Bull replied: **"Yes, I think it might have been better, but as me and my people were born in this country, I always considered that it belonged to me, and do so yet; and I never would have come in, only for the sake of my women and children...."**

On August 1 Bull arrived at Fort Yates. When he was greeted by the old shirt-wearer, Running Antelope, Bull said, **"This is the first time I have had to surrender and give up,"** and broke down and cried. Later he spoke about the freedom which he desired for himself:

> **When I came in I did not surrender. I want the government to let me occupy the Little Missouri country. There is plenty of game there. I have damages against the government for holding my land and game. I want the Great Father to pay me for it.... My hunting ground is from the badlands to the end of the Little Missouri, and I want it extended down here where some of my people are so that I can trade.... If the Great Father gives me a reservation, I do not want to be confined to any part of it. I want no restraint. I will keep on the reservation, but want to go where I please. I don't want a white man over me. I don't want an agent. I want to have the white man with me, but not to be my chief.**
>
> **I ask this because I want to do right by my people and can't trust any one else to trade with them or talk to them. I want interpreters to talk to the white man for me and transact my business, but I want it to be seen and known that I have my rights.... I don't want to give up game as long as there is any game. I will be half-civilized till the game is gone. Then I will be all civilized....**
>
> **My daughter came to see me last night. We both cried. I was happy to see her. The soldiers would not let her come into my camp at first. She came here before I did, and I listened a long time to hear word from her, and for the winds to tell me how she was treated. I did not hear. I came down to see her. She seems to be doing well....**

When he was asked about who the great chiefs of his tribe were, Bull said that he was upset with Running Antelope because **"he made treaties and allowed the white man to come in and occupy their land."** He went on to say: **"[Running] Antelope is a fool. I have seen Gall.... He is not a chief of my people."**

Sources: Hedren, ibid, 13-14; Walker, *General Custer,* 106-7; (speech) *SPMPP,* August 4 and 7, 1881.

5) [T]he Great Father Sent for Me. --Summer 1881

SITTING BULL immediately endeavored to get permission to go to Washington but was refused. James Creelman wrote: "When Sitting Bull marched across the British frontier.., he was told that President Garfield would receive him in the White House in Washington, and hear from his own lips the grievances of his people. But Garfield had fallen and was in his grave. President [Chester] Arthur refused to allow the savage who was responsible for the slaughter of Custer... to go to Washington." Undeterred, Sitting Bull found opportunity to send the President a letter through a Lakota relation, William Selwyn. Among the matters on his mind was the news of the August 5 murder of Spotted Tail, the Brule chief, by one of his own people:

> **For the last few years I have been in the north, where there are plenty of buffalo, for the buffalo were my means of living. *Wakan Tanka* made me to live on the flesh of the buffalo, so I thought I would stay out there as long as there were buffalo enough for us. But the Great Father sent for me several times, and although I did not know why he wanted me to come down, I consented to do so.**
>
> **I never, myself, made war against the children of the Great Father, and I never sought a fight with them. While I was looking for buffalo, they would attack and shoot at me, and of course I had to defend myself or else I should die. But all the blame is put on me.... [B]ut I know that I am innocent.... Everybody knows that I was not going to stay in the north any longer, but that when the buffalo disappeared I should make up my mind to come down.... When I first came down, white men came to me almost every day to get some words out of me, but I said: "No! When I settle down I shall say some words to the Great Father." I know that some white rascals have dealt [falsely] with the Lakotas, and by their foolish ways have ruined them. As for myself I do not want anyone to do [anything] mischievously or deceitfully. So I do not want to let any ordinary man hear my words....**

[Addressing Selwyn, Bull said:] All this people here belong to me and I hope that the Great Father will treat them kindly. I always thought that when we came back, and any of my relatives came to me with good words, I should reply, "Yes, yes." Today you have put good words into my ears.... In the future I hope I shall have some good, honest, reliable man with me. Interpreters have come to me often, following me up, and I have said, "No, I am not a child; if I want to do anything, I shall take time to think it over."

It is said that Spotted Tail was killed by getting mixed up with bad men. Oftentimes a man has lost his life by being mixed up with bad men. But I wish that my people may be treated well so that they may do rightly. I am the last one that has come in from the north, and yet I wish to surpass the old agency Lakotas in what is right, and I wish that the Great Father would furnish me with farming implements so that I can till the ground.

Sources: Creelman, *Great Highway,* 297-98; (speech) Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 162-67.

6) I Will Not Be Chained like a Wolf.... --August 1881

IN ANOTHER INTERVIEW with reporters, Sitting Bull expressed his great displeasure that the whites considered him to be the author of the wars with the Americans. He therefore presented a list of his grievances to explain matters to the contrary. His speech was interpreted by Edwin Allison, who, it was said, "clothed the ideas of Sitting Bull in the English rather than the Indian form of speech." Bull said:

I was not raised to be an enemy of the whites.... The palefaces had things that we needed in order to hunt. We needed ammunition. Our interests were in peace. I never sold that much land (picking up a little dirt and letting it fall and blow away). I never came in to claim my rights and the rights of my people. I was driven in force from my land and I now come back to claim it for my people. I never made war on the United States government. I never stood in the white man's country. I never committed any depredations in the white man's country. I never made the white man's heart bleed. The white man came on to my land and followed me. The white man made me fight for my hunting grounds. The white man made me kill him or he would kill my friends, my women and children.

Bull was soon afterward chagrined to find that even the new American promises were about to be broken. He and his band were not allowed to remain with their people at Fort Yates. Instead they were placed aboard the steamer *General Sherman* bound for Fort Randall to be held as prisoners-of-war. Naturally, Sitting Bull was extremely suspicious of the government's intentions and told his Silent Eaters:

This may mean that they are going to take us into the mysterious east to kill us in sport, or to starve us in prison, far from our kind. Now listen, be ready! Our reservation ends at Fort Randall. If they attempt to carry us beyond that point let each man snatch a soldier's gun and fight. Let no one cease battle till the last man of us is killed. I am old and broken, but I am still a chief. I will not suffer insult and I will not be chained like a wolf for the white man's sport.

All agreed to the plan, and when the boat came near the fort all were ready to fight to the death. But the boat stopped at the fort. Although relieved, Bull's suspicions were aroused again when the soldiers led them toward an enclosed picket fence. He refused to go into it and insisted that they be allowed to camp without walls.

Sources: (First speech) *SPMPP,* August 4, 1881; (second speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 201.

7) I Was Brought into This Life for a Purpose. --September 1881

WHILE LIVING at Fort Randall Bull was constantly under the eye of the soldiers and constantly feeling the pains of his bondage. When visited and interviewed by correspondent James Creelman, he bitterly lamented his

loss of freedom to live as an Indian:

> **I am one of the last chiefs of the independent Lakota nation and the place I hold among my people was held by my ancestors before me. If I had no place in the world, I would not be here, and the fact of my existence entitled me to exercise any influence I possess. I am satisfied that I was brought into this life for a purpose; otherwise, why am I here?**
>
> **This land belongs to us, for the Great Spirit gave it to us when he put us here. We were free to come and go, and to live in our own way. But white men, who belong to another land, have come upon us, and are forcing us to live according to their ideas. This is an injustice; we have never dreamed of making white men live as we live.**
>
> **White men like to dig in the ground for their food. My people prefer to hunt the buffalo as their fathers did. White men like to stay in one place. My people want to move their tepees here and there to the different hunting grounds.**
>
> **The life of white men is slavery. They are prisoners in towns or farms. The life my people want is a life of freedom. I have seen nothing that a white man has, houses or railways or clothing, or food, that is as good as the right to move in the open country and live in our own fashion.**
>
> **Why has our blood been shed by your soldiers? [Then, drawing a square on the ground with his finger, Bull continued:] There! Your soldiers made a mark like that in our country and said that we must live there. They fed us well and sent their doctors to heal our sick. They said that we should live without having to work. But they told us that we must go only so far in this direction and only so far in that direction. They gave us meat, but they took away our liberty. The white men had many things that we wanted, but we could see that they did not have the one thing we liked best--freedom. I would rather live in a tepee and go without meat when game is scarce than give up my privileges as a free Indian, even though I could have all that white men have. We marched across the lines of our reservation and the soldiers followed us. They attacked our village and we killed them all. What would you do if your home was attacked? You would stand up like a brave man and defend it. That is our story. I have spoken.**

Sources: Creelman, *Great Highway,* 298-303. Sitting Bull and his followers were often photographed while encamped at Fort Randall. See Jan Dykshorn, "Sitting Bull Collection," *South Dakota History* 5 (Summer 1975): 245-65.

8) I Am Very Sad and Distrustful. --September 6, 1881

ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1881 Sitting Bull arranged to have the fort's commander, Colonel George L. Andrews, write a letter for him, requesting a trip for himself and a delegation to Washington. He hoped perhaps that by bypassing the Indian department and going through military channels, he could succeed in getting the invitation. Andrews was sympathetic to the chief and acceded to his request. He recorded the following:

> **... [Sitting Bull] very much desires to visit Washington D.C., taking with him Gall and other representative men, to the number of ten or twelve; failing in this, he desires a visit from someone especially commissioned by the President, and failing in this he desires to be informed "over the President's own signature" just what it is proposed to do with him and his people and when.... [H]e has acquired a great respect for the missionaries of the Episcopal Church and desires that one of them shall accompany him to Washington, also that they shall teach his people.**

> **He expresses himself as entirely done with war and only wishes to know the will of the President, that he may obey it. ... [H]e is satisfied that the United States is strong and that nothing remains for his people to do, but to go to work as other Indians have done and "raise their living out of the ground."... [H]is people should be taken care of as he sees other Indians are, and supplied with wagons, plows, white man's clothing, horses, oxen, cows, bulls, etc..., and... he as a representative man should be furnished with a wagon and a pair of horses.**

Andrews added that Sitting Bull and his people were in an entirely submissive mood and that action should be taken speedily in their case. Bull later thanked Andrews for his help, saying,

> **Your kindness makes my heart warm. It gives me courage to tread the new paths that lie before me. I am very sad and distrustful, for I am like a man who enters a land for the first time. It is not easy for me to sit down as a prisoner and dream out the future. It is all dark to me. You are my friend. You are wise and your words have helped me. If we could have the aid of men like you, the new road would be less fearsome to our feet.**

Sources: (Letter) Colonel George L. Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, September 26, 1881, roll 32, MP; (speech) Garland, *American Indian*, 202.

9) For My Women I See Nothing. --November 1881

IN OCTOBER 1881 Sitting Bull heard that a white anthropologist, Alice Fletcher, was visiting the Rosebud Agency. He sent a message to her saying that he wished to see her at Fort Randall. Fletcher and her companions agreed to come and when they arrived, Sitting Bull graciously greeted them, but apologized that he did not have gifts for them, as the soldiers had taken everything. The chief spoke of his desire to have his people adopt the white civilization, that since the buffalo were gone, there was no choice for them but to work as white men did; the skill of the hunter was of no use, nor was the valor of the warrior, and although it was too late for the older men, the young could learn the use of the plow.

Then for a moment Sitting Bull was distracted by the appearance of his younger wife, who came in with some firewood. After a few moments of reflection about the economic condition of his tribe's women, he said to Fletcher:

> **You are a woman. You have come to me as a friend. Take pity on my women, for they have no future. The young men can be like the white man, till the soil, supply the food and clothing; they will take the work out of the hands of the women, and the women, to whom we have owed everything in the past, will be stripped of all which gave them power and position among the people. Give a future to my women!**
>
> **They have worked for us. They are good; they are faithful; but in the new life their work is taken away. For my men I see a future; for my women I see nothing. Help them if you can.**

He then took a ring from his finger and gave it to Fletcher to remind her of his request: **"Help my women."** "God help me to help them," she wrote in her journal. She then gave the chief two dollars to buy something for the children. Fletcher wrote to the Secretary of War to ask if Sitting Bull's children could be sent to a mission school, as the chief wanted them to be educated in the ways of the whites, though he also told her that **"when the children were sent to eastern schools, they attempted to turn the Indians into whites and when they returned they were neither."**

Fletcher made a second visit to Sitting Bull's camp in August 1882. (Due to her willingness to try and help them, she was allowed to learn something about the hitherto secret ceremonies of the White Buffalo Festival and was told that no other white person had ever been knowledgeable of it.) She later recollected her visits with Sitting Bull and the message he gave her, writing in 1899: "The incident in Sitting Bull's tent enables us to

realize the gap that lies between the hunting stage in which work was classified by sex, and that of co-ordinate and associate labor which obtains under civilization. It is this gap the Indian man and woman must leap in order to live and prosper in the new conditions which are now upon them."

Sources: (Speech compiled from the following) Alice C. Fletcher, "Among the Omahas," *Women's Journal* (Boston and Chicago) 13 (February 11, 1882); Alice C. Fletcher, "The Indian Woman and Her Problem," *Southern Workman* (Hampton, Virginia), 28 (May 1899): 175; Joan Mark, *A Stranger in Her Native Land: Alice Fletcher and the American Indian* (Lincoln: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 60-62, 83-84, 128.

10) Tell [The Great Father]... to Allow Me to Visit. --1882

AMONG SITTING BULL'S visitors at Fort Randall was the German artist, Rudolf Cronau, who asked to paint the chief's portrait. Cronau got on well with the chief and also endeavored to teach him the German language. Later, Bull told Cronau, whom he nicknamed "Iron Eyes," that if he ever saw the Great Father in Washington to **"please tell him that we wish to be treated like human beings, entitled to the same rights as all the white people enjoy them in these United States."** Then the chief asked him to take down the following message:

> **I never was afraid of my enemies and did my best. My successes I owe the Great Spirit.**
>
> **Iron Eyes, when you go to the Great Father, I beg you to speak in my interest, for I am of the opinion, that up to now, no one has brought my wishes before the Great Father. Tell him... [to] allow me to visit to speak with him personally; tell him that I should like to live like a white man and own a farm that could feed me, for I do not want to live on the rations given to us daily. I like to help myself.**
>
> **I should like to live on the Cannonball or Grand River. There is good land, water, and wood. There also is the place where I was born.**
>
> **I wish that teachers might live there who would teach my children and those of my warriors; further, I should like that blacksmiths and traders would settle there with whom I could establish connections.**
>
> **Tell the Great Father that I do not speak just to speak. My heart is just and wants what I say.**

Before departing the fort, Cronau gave Sitting Bull a photocard of himself (which was found around the chief's neck when he was killed in 1890), and the chief told the artist:

> **Ista Maza, you were only with us a short while, but long enough to convince us that you are our good friend. Now you are going, and we are sorry that we shall never see you again. The Lakotas shake your hands. At their campfires they will remember you for a long time....**
>
> **Ista Maza, come back, and you will find us always your good friends. May the waters carry you safely, and may *Wakan Tanka,* the Great Spirit, preserve you from all dangers.**

Sources: (First speech) Vestal, *New Sources,* 270-71; see also a cruder version of the above speech in Cronau to Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CIA), no date, roll 32, MP; (second speech) Rudolf Cronau, "My Visit Among the Hostile Dakota Indians and How They Became My Friends," *SDHC* 22 (1946): 417, 423.

11) It Is Well Known That White Men Eat Each Other. --Circa 1882

WHILE RESIDING AT FORT RANDALL, Sitting Bull was fed rations out of the usual stores of pork and hardtack and flour. But when he saw a curious blue stamp on the pork, he thought that the meat had been tattooed! His paranoia brought forth rather humorous misconceptions:

> **It is well-known that white men eat each other [Perhaps he had heard of the Donner party disaster.] This is strange flesh [that] they offer us. I have hunted all my life, but I have never seen an animal with flesh like that. You can see in this camp how many of the white soldiers are tattooed. Well, look at the tattoo marks on that meat! Perhaps this is the flesh of some white man they have given you. Do not touch it.**

Sitting Bull also became acquainted with Lieutenant George P. Ahern, who was stationed at Fort Randall in 1882. Ahern described the chief as "a very remarkable man--such a vivid personality... [with] the manner of a man who knew his ground." He visited the chief when his one-year-old daughter, called "Sallie Battles," was grievously ill (She had been named for Sally Battles, the daughter of an army officer.) He wrote: "I sat on the cot next to the mother, Sitting Bull sat on the other side... watching most eagerly every movement of the child. Sallie was suffering great pain..; she had severe convulsions and, straightening out her little frame, seemed to give up the last spark of life. Sitting Bull showed the most intense anguish, and grasping the tiny hand, wept like a child.... At daybreak... Sallie joined the angels."

The chief was also visited by missionary John P. Williamson, who had grown up in the village of the famed Santee leader, Little Crow. He made a plea to the public for Bull's release:

> What has become of Sitting Bull?...[T]wo years ago he surrendered at Fort Buford. It was found [that] he was not a Sandwich Islander, he was not a Polander, he was not a Confederate general, he was not an Egyptian Pasha, he was not even an African chief. He was only an Indian.
>
> Suddenly he fell.... A trial would be honouring him too much. For two years he has been languishing with one hundred of his people at a little military post in South Dakota, a prisoner-of-war when there is no war.... We now publicly call the attention of the Government to his case. Treat him like a man. Give him a trial or set him free.

However, after Bull's release Williamson commented condescendingly: "Sitting Bull has turned over a new leaf. We hope he will continue his autobiography, and suggest that he commence the new volume with a frontispiece representing [himself]... plowing the virgin sod with his stubby horns."

Sources: (Speech) Vestal, *New Sources,* 197; *SPPP,* December 24, 1890; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 237; Winifred W. Barton, *John P. Williamson, A Brother to the Sioux* (Clements, Minn.: Sunnycrest Publishing, 1980), 167-68.

12) [H]e Would Be the... Big Chief.... --May 11, 1883

THE GOVERNMENT eventually yielded to pressure to allow Sitting Bull to return to Standing Rock. Part of the impetus behind the decision was a compelling letter received from Strike-the-Ree, the head chief of the Yanktons. He wrote Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln on December 11, 1882: "I lift up my voice and speak to you about *Sitting Bull,* whom you hold as a prisoner of war.... [W]hat has *Sitting Bull* been convicted of doing that you hold him a prisoner for so many long moons?... Tell me my friend when Sitting Bull was tried and condemned and I will say no more. I speak for him because he is kept in prison just across the river from me, and his moaning cry comes to my ear...."

Sitting Bull and his band were transported to Fort Yates on May 10, 1883. On May 11, in his first talk with agent James "White Hair" McLaughlin, the chief expected that he would be recognized as the head chief of the agency, which included Hunkpapa, Blackfeet and upper and lower Yanktonai bands. McLaughlin paraphrased the Bull's speech in his report:

> **... [Sitting Bull] announc[ed]... a code of regulations by which he and his people desired to be governed... [H]e did not intend to plant anything that season but would look around and see how it was done so that he would be prepared to commence next year. He did not want ration tickets, but would draw all of the supplies in bulk for himself and his people. He asked to be placed first on the rolls of the agency.... [He] ask[ed]... that his appointment of**

eleven chiefs and thirteen headmen be confirmed.., arguing that they were all hereditary chiefs, good and true men, true to him and superior to any of the old chiefs of the agency.... [T]he Great Father had written to him before he left Fort Randall that he was to return to his own country and live among his people, where he would be the headman, the big chief of the agency. That a good house was to be built for him to live in. That he and his people would have cattle, wagons, horses and buggies. That he might gather all of his people from all the other agencies, and have everything he desired.

Unbeknownst to Sitting Bull, McLaughlin had made it a personal priority and boast that he would "break" the chief. He told Bull that the Great Father had never written him a letter or ever made any of these promises. He soon selected a field of twelve acres about three miles south of Fort Yates to have plowed for Bull and his people. When this was finished, the agent demanded that Bull begin planting the following day. McLaughlin reported that the chief "worked with the others, using a hoe, but rather awkwardly...." Bull said that he was determined to become a farmer in earnest, but McLaughlin later wrote that the chief was "an Indian of very mediocre ability," and now "has been thoroughly subdued," that his influence was "very limited." A year later Bull and his band opted to move their village south about forty miles to the Grand River to get away from McLaughlin's constant observation.

Sources: Strike the Ree to Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln, December 11, 1882, roll 32, MP; (speech) Pfaller, *McLaughlin*, 96-99.

I) I am a great man! --Sitting Bull

II) My people wish me to remain chief during my lifetime. --Sitting Bull

III) Sitting Bull is a humbug but has a popular fame on which he has a natural right to "bank." --General William T. Sherman, 1885

IV) [Sitting Bull] is such an ignorant and vain man that his ideas are very crude, and he talks of "millions" as you and I would talk of "hundreds," and he says that he must have big money to go [East] & that he knows that he is worth untold fortunes and that he will not go without taking some more of his people. --James McLaughlin, August 26, 1884

Sources: (First quote) Clow, "Mary C. Collins," 10; (second quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 256; (third quote) General Sherman statement, attached to William F. Cody to CIA, circa May 14, 1885, MP; (fourth quote) Pfaller, *McLaughlin*, 102.

and I told him everything that was in my heart, and sent him back to tell the Grandfather what I told him. And General Terry sent me word afterwards to come in, because he had big promises to make me, and I sent him word that I would not throw my country away; that I considered it all mine still, and I wanted him to wait just four years for me; that I had gone over there just to attend to some business of my own, and my people were doing just as any other people would do. If a man loses anything and goes back and looks carefully, he will find it; and that is what the Indians are doing now when they ask you to give them the things that were promised them in the past. And I do not consider that they should be treated like beasts....

Whatever you wanted of me I have obeyed, and I have come when you called me. The Grandfather sent me word that whatever he had against me in the past had been forgiven and thrown aside, and he would have nothing against me in the future, and I accepted his promises and came in; and he told me not to step aside from the white man's path, and I told him I would not, and I am doing my best to travel in that path.

I feel my country has got a bad name, and I want it to have a good name. It used to have a good name, and I sit sometimes and wonder who it is that has given it a bad name. You are the only people now who

can give it a good name, and I want you to take good care of my country and respect it. When we sold the Black Hills, we got a very small price for it, and not what we ought to have received. I used to think that the size of the payment would remain the same all the time, but they are growing smaller all the time.

I want you to tell the Grandfather everything I have said--that we want some benefits from the promises he has made to us. And I don't think I should be tormented with anything about giving up any part of my land until those promises are fulfilled....

I consider that my country takes in the Black Hills, and runs from the Powder River to the Missouri, and that all of this land belongs to me. Our reservation is not as large as we want it to be, and I suppose the Grandfather owes us money now for land he has taken from us in the past.

You white men advise us to follow your ways, and therefore I talk as I do. When you have a piece of land, and anything trespasses on it, you catch it and keep it until you get damages. I am doing the same thing now.... I am looking into the future for the benefit of my children, and that is what I mean when I say I want my country taken care of for me. My children will grow up here, and I am looking ahead for their benefit, and for the benefit of my children's children, too; and even beyond that.

I sit here and look around me now, and I see my people starving. I want the Grandfather to make an increase in the amount of food that is allowed to us now, so that they may be able to live. We want cattle to butcher--I want to kill 300 head of cattle at a time. That is the way you live, and we want to live in the same way....

When the Grandfather told me to live like white people I told him to send me six teams of mules, because that is the way white people make a living, and I wanted my children, the Lakota, to have these things to help them make a living. I also told him to send me two spans of horses with wagons.... I was advised to follow the ways of the white man, and that is why I asked for those things. I never ask for anything that is not needed.. .. It is your own doing that I am here; you sent me here and advised me to live as you do, and it is not right for me to live in poverty! I asked the Grandfather for hogs, male and female, and for male and female sheep for my children to raise stock from. I did not leave out anything in the way of animals that the white men have; I asked for every one of them. I want you to tell the Grandfather to send me some agricultural implements, so that I will not be obliged to work barehanded. Whatever he sends to this agency, our agent will take care of for us, and we will be satisfied because we know he will keep everything right.

I want to tell you that our rations have been reduced to almost nothing, and many of the people have starved to death. Now I beg you to have the amount of rations increased so that our children will not starve, but will live better than they do now. I want clothing too. Look at the men around me here and see how poorly dressed they are. We want some clothing this month, and when it gets cold we want more to protect us from the weather. That is all I have to say.

However, Senator John A. "High Hat" Logan, replied that Sitting Bull was "not a great chief," and that he had "no following, no power, no control, and no right to any control." But Sitting Bull begged to differ: **"I have grown to be a very independent man, and consider myself a very great man.... I have just one more word to say. Of course, if a man is a chief, and has authority, he should be proud, and consider himself a great man."**

Source: Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 242-47.

2) Your Tepees Are Very Big.... --March 1884

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1883 Sitting Bull and Yanktonai chief Two Bears were brought to Bismarck, North Dakota, to help celebrate the upcoming driving-in of the last spike of the Northern Pacific Railroad--the whites

had apparently forgotten that Bull had done his best to battle that work to a standstill. Among those who came for the celebration was the former president, Ulysses S. Grant. Sitting Bull submitted to riding at the head of a parade, carrying an American flag. Territorial governor Nehemiah G. Ordway then put him forward to speak, saying that Sitting Bull was the oldest Dakotan present. But Bull **said: "I hate all the white people. You are thieves and liars. You have taken away our land and made us outcasts.. .."** The interpreter ignored the statements and said a few friendly phrases such as, "The Great Spirit moved him to shake hands with everybody." Still, Bull took advantage of his fame and sold his autograph to the on-lookers, earning about $150.00.

The following year (March 1884) Sitting Bull agreed to accompany McLaughlin to St. Paul for two weeks. His attitude toward the general white population had relaxed considerably from the year before. When they arrived by train on March 14, Bull and his nephew (One Bull) began to get tours around the city to every institution imaginable: the Merchant's Hotel--where they stayed, the Cathedral of St. Paul, the rectory of the Benedictine fathers, the firehouse and the capitol building. In a visit to a newspaper office, Sitting Bull sent a telegram to his son in Chicago and talked on a telephone. Then, through interpreter William Whitesill, he said:

> **I am very much pleased with this, my first visit to the white people's homes. I am glad to see so many whites. Your tepees are very big and very high. I never saw any so big before.**
>
> **If the Great Spirit has mercy this year, my people can raise some good crops on our new farms at Grand River. Last year the corn grew high, but didn't amount to anything. I have not heard from any of my band--who are in the Queen's dominions--since I left [Fort] Randall. I have heard some reports about Indians dying there for want of food, but I can hardly believe it.**
>
> **I suffer a good deal of pain in my chest and have had it a long time. The reason I didn't go to the Iowa State fair, or to the Cincinnati Exposition, was because of my chest.**

Bull had hoped to meet General Henry Sibley, but the latter was traveling in the south. The chief said he **"was sorry that he must return without seeing him, as he was the true friend of the Indian race."** Bull also saw a shooting performance by a young white girl--Annie Oakley. He was so amazed at her abilities that he asked her to come see him. When she refused, he sent her $65.00 for a photograph. When Annie sent the money back and visited the chief, a friendship resulted, and Bull insisted on adopting her as a daughter. He named her "Little Sure Shot."

Sources: *Bismarck Tribune,* September 7, 28, 1883; Havighurst, *Annie Oakley,* 47; *SPMPP,* March 14-17, 1884; *Minneapolis Evening Journal,* March 14, (speech) 15, 17, 21, 1884; *St. Paul Dispatch,* March 20, 1884; Newson, *Thrilling Scenes,* 192-200; *St. Cloud Journal Press,* March 20, 27, 1884; Kasper, *Annie Oakley,* 27.

3) There Is No Use Fighting Any Longer. --October 1884

DURING HIS VISIT in St. Paul Sitting Bull met "Colonel" Alvaren Allen, who, after seeing Bull's popularity firsthand, wanted to take the chief on an exhibition tour later that year. Bull, who had been kept from various exhibitions by McLaughlin, agreed to go, being promised that he could see the President. Bull was joined by his wife--Seen by Her Nation, his sister, a sixteen-year-old niece (Red Spear), as well as Gray Eagle, Long Dog, Spotted Horn Bull, Flying By and others. Proceeds from the trip were supposed to pay for house-building and farm tools.

The so-called "Sitting Bull Combination" left Standing Rock on September 2, 1884 and first attended the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul. Afterward they survived a collision of the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad and arrived in New York on September 11. While staying at the Grand Central Hotel Bull told a reporter that he did not like the railways, but would like to have a hotel on his reservation. At dinner, to the surprise of on-lookers, he threw his olives on the floor, remarking that the "plums" were not ripe enough to eat! He went on to enjoy several dishes of ice cream. They spent another month at the Eden Musee and then their show was

moved to the Association Hall in Philadelphia, where the audience was greatly entertained with the singing, war dances and speeches. Bull said on one occasion:

> **My friends, white people, we Indians are on the way to see the Grandfather, or president, of the United States. I see so many white people and what they are doing that it makes me glad to know that someday my children will be educated also. There is no use fighting any longer. The buffalo are all gone, as well as the rest of the game. Now I am going to shake the hand of the Great Father at Washington, and I am going to tell him all these things.**

After the show Sitting Bull and his sister were surprised to find Luther Standing Bear in the audience. Luther was a mixed-blood Brule, who was attending Carlisle Indian School; Sitting Bull's sister announced that the boy was her nephew. In Bull's talk with Luther it became evident that he had been deceived by Allen about visiting the Great Father: Bull asked where Washington was and Luther replied that it was east of Philadelphia--Bull replied, much surprised, **"Why, we must have passed the place."** Bull then asked Allen when he was going to see the President and Allen replied that the chief could see him on the way home!?! According to Luther, Bull had no interpreter (although Louis Primeau had been with the group in New York) and had a false impression that he would be able to go to Washington. On the trip home, which did not include a Washington stop, Bull was interviewed again. He laughed heartily when he was asked if he liked white women; he said that he liked the dancing girls he had seen and amused the whole railroad car when he imitated their dancing!

Sources: *New York Times,* September 12, 1884; *Public Ledger and Transcript* (Philadelphia), October 7, 10, 14, 15, 17, 1884; Havighurst, *Annie Oakley,* 47-49; (Speech) Luther Standing Bear, *My People, the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 185-87; *Bismarck Tribune,* September 19 and October 31, 1884; Louis Pfaller, "'Enemies in '76, Friends in '85'--Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill," *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives* 1 (Fall 1969): 21; Pfaller, *McLaughlin,* 101-102.

4) I Believe That the Palefaces Respect Me. --Summer 1885

OBSERVING ALLEN'S success with Sitting Bull, William F. Cody sought to obtain the chief as a star personage in his as-yet fledgling Wild West Show. He wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in May 1885 that Sitting Bull was expressing "a strong desire to travel through the East" with him during the summer. Bull really only wanted to see the President as he had not been allowed to do so the previous year. Cody's general manager, John M. Burke, made the arrangements with Bull at Standing Rock on June 6 and then brought him to Buffalo, New York, on June 12. The chief looked resplendent in a war bonnet with forty eagle feathers and a buckskin tunic with embroidery. Reporters asked about his travels and Bull said:

> **I have much pleasure and much fatigue. There is a great difference between prairie travel on horse and foot and on the wagons drawn by the vapor horse [locomotive]. Major Burke is very kind; in fact all persons have been very kind. I think all the palefaces feel kind to the Lakota soldier.... [I] believe they know why I held all my braves and all my people to starve rather than to submit to what was wrong.**
>
> **I believe that the palefaces respect me for all my hard fights and do not wish to hurt me because I had to kill the palefaces when I was fighting. I have no wish to fight now. I have always spoken the truth to the palefaces and have always been deceived....**
>
> **[T]he Great White Fathers had not helped him or his people, who were being pushed across the prairies and must perish with hunger among the barren mountains. He had no wish for blood in his heart. He knew the power and brain of the white man. He was sorry that the white man was not as honest as he was full of brain power. He would not kill a worthless pony simply to see its blood run out but would have fought till death came if he had believed it would have helped his race. He recognized the inevitable supremacy of the white man but hoped that the red man would have enough self-respect, and the white man enough honesty left to make the end of the controversy a peaceful one. He had consented to come and see the**

> **great scout, Buffalo Bill, because he hoped to travel with him and to see the new White Father at Washington and his longhaired chief from the hot south (Secretary of the Interior Lamar). He had nothing but justice to ask.... He had something to say to him if he would listen to him but would not ask anything he could not give. The palefaces want the corn, the trees, the sky; he only wanted for himself and his people a wide prairie where he could live among his tepees with his tribe in safety,.. [where] the palefaces should not disturb him, but let him die in peace and let his people bury him undisturbed.**

Sources: Havighurst, *Annie Oakley,* 49-52; William F. Cody to CIA (received May 19, 1885), MP; (speech) *Buffalo Courier* (date not known), courtesy of Paul Fees.

5) I Will Answer for the Dead of My People. --Summer 1885

PREDICTABLY, Sitting Bull became the hit of the Wild West Show, being more famous in Canada than Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, Johnny Baker, Mustang Jack and Buck Taylor, and more infamous than anybody else in the United States. Canadian papers hailed him as the "illustrious Indian general and statesman," though he was booed and hissed at in the states. In Montreal Cody had himself photographed with Bull with a caption that read, "Enemies in '76, Friends in '85."

Of the great cities and crowds, Bull commented, **"I wish I had known this when I was a boy."** On another occasion he added, **"The white people are so many that if every Indian in the west killed one every step they took, the dead would not be missed among you."** Once Sitting Bull was asked: "Do you not sometimes reflect with horror upon the loss of life you caused on the occasion of your fight with Custer?" Bull replied:

> **Nobody knew who killed Custer; everybody fired at him. Custer was a brave warrior but made a mistake. The Indians honored him and did not scalp him. I fought for my people. My people said I was right. I will answer to my people. I will answer for the dead of my people. Let the palefaces do the same on their side.**

On the positive side he renewed his acquaintance with Annie Oakley, who said, "He made a great pet of me. He is a dear, faithful old friend, and I've great respect and affection for him." When Oakley was asked years later about the chief, she said that, regarding Custer, "Sitting Bull seemed to think it served him right." She also recalled Bull's stories of how the whites would cheat the Indians by giving them a cow which was weighed with two men on the scale, or give the Lakotas cows that had been counted twice; he also said that they were given sugar which was half sand. Oakley also noted the chief's great generosity. She described him as an "open-handed uncle" to the boys that swarmed around him: "The contents of his pockets were often emptied into the hands of ragged little boys, nor could he understand how so much wealth could go brushing by, unmindful of the poor."

Sources: (Speech) John Burke (O'Connor), *Bullalo Bill: The Noblest Whiteskin* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 159; Kasper, *Annie Oakley,* 54-55; Havighurst, *Annie Oakley,* 62-63.

6) Will the Great Father Please Tend to That? --June 23, 1885

ON JUNE 23 BUFFALO BILL brought Sitting Bull and his entourage to Washington, D.C.. The delegation visited the War Department Office and conversed with General Philip Sheridan: Wearing a number of large eagle feathers in his hair, Bull showed indifference to the general. The chiefs were then taken to the State Department Library, where they examined the original Declaration of Independence. Bull must have pondered the irony that the document which proclaimed American independence had eventually meant the loss of his. Afterward, Sitting Bull finally had the audience with President Grover Cleveland which he had long awaited. A reporter said that the chief gave the President a letter in the Indian language, however, it had already been written (by Nate Salsbury) and translated. It read:

> **To my Great Father:**

I know the Great Father is a great chief and has great power over every person in the whole country. I am very glad to see the Great Father and to shake hands with him.

I want to travel in all the large places so that I can tell my people how the white people work and live. I want my people to get more rations for as yet we cannot support ourselves but are trying hard to farm. My people ask me to ask the Great Father for this. The agent has tried to get all [the rations] he can for us, but there [are]... so many [people] he cannot get [enough]. I want to ask for more farming equipment for myself. I also want to have the privilege of trading at one store--they charge me whatever they want to and I have to pay to[o] dear. I want to trade at the fort store, and ask the Great Father to open it to my people for he [the trader] is a much better man than we have on the reservation.

Our agent is good to me and my people. [But] our boundary lines only are half as far as I thought they would be, reaching only on Cedar Creek and Cannonball [River] instead of the Little Missouri. Will the Great Father please tend to that?

We [also] want to know where the money is for the Fort Pierre road through the country.

Yours respectfully, Sitting Bull

Regarding the visit Burke later said: "[Sitting Bull] saw President Cleveland and had a conference with Secretary Bayard and Secretary Lamar and left a letter for the President, telling him something about the condition of the Indians at the Standing Rock agency." The interpreter added that Sitting Bull and Crow Eagle "were very much pleased with their reception by the Great Father."

Sources: *Washington Post*, June 24, 1885; Sitting Bull to the President, June 23, 1885, McLaughlin to (?), November 9, 1885, MP; Pfaller, "Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill," 24-25; *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), October 4, 1885.

7) [H]e Had Been Solicited... to Join the Halfbreed Agitator. --August 23, 1885

ON AUGUST 22, 1885 the Wild West Show arrived in Toronto, Ontario, on eighteen railroad cars. Sitting Bull was the feature of the show and appeared with about fifty other warriors. He was asked about his time in Canada and the recent close of the Riel Rebellion, which involved some of the Cree chiefs he had known. Bull said that his people had been "very hard up during their stay," but he remembered Poundmaker and Big Bear well: **"Poundmaker was a very good man...; when his people were very poor Poundmaker was always very good and generous with them."** Bull then asked anxiously if it were true that Big Bear had killed two priests. He was informed that the killings had been done by members of Big Bear's band while the Cree chief was earnestly protesting against bloodshed of any kind. Sitting Bull was visibly relieved. He said that he **"had entertained a good opinion of Big Bear, but when he had heard that he had been a party to the murder of unoffending white people, and particularly of two priests, he had been rendered very unhappy."**

Going on, Bull mentioned his contacts with Riel. In 1880 Riel tried to persuade the chief to allow him to intercede for him with the American government; he warned the chief, "Keep the peace and do not get yourselves between ‘two fires’ until spring at any rate. If you want then to go back [to the United States]... I will see the President...." Evidently, Riel later tried to persuade Bull to join cause with the Metis against the Canadians. Bull said:

Before the rebellion broke out and before Riel had gone north he had been solicited no less than five times to join the halfbreed agitator in the rising against Canadian authority in the Northwest. He had paid no attention to the letters, however, and had informed the officers on his reservation that he had no intention of taking part in any disturbance on either side of the line.

Bull also spoke of his custom of sharing his food with people:

> **... [H]e had a family of sixteen and he received rations once a week, but these rations were usually gone in two days. [The agent interjected that Sitting Bull gave away most of his rations.].... [H]e fed a good many of his people while his rations lasted.... [I]t had always been his custom in the old days, when he had had plenty, to feed any man, woman, or child who came along when he himself was ready to eat, and that now he was too old to adopt the ways of the white man in this respect. His children might be taught economy and frugality, but for his part as long as he had anything to eat he would live as he had always lived, and feed anybody and everybody who came to his door hungry whether they be white men or Indians.**

Source: (Speech) *Toronto Globe,* August 24, 1885; Crozier to Col. J. S. Dennis, February 22, 1880, GGO, PAC.

8) [T]he Indians Can Secure Barely Enough Hay.... --September 1885

DURING THE TOUR Sitting Bull passed through Hamilton, Ontario, where he asked Nate Salsbury to write down a message for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, J. D. Atkins. He diplomatically said that he was not finding fault with the agent, whom he considered "a thoroughly honest and good man," no doubt fearing that if he told his real feelings the government would make an issue out of it. Still, he had a number of matters to bring to the government's attention. Bull's letter read:

> **The first and most important [matter] is the trespass by troops of the Army upon the hay and timber lands of the reservation. In the course of a few years the country will be entirely denuded of timber and the Indians can secure barely enough hay for their own stock. Bull declares that this is a subject of much discussion and much discontent among his young men, and is likely to breed trouble at no distant time.**
>
> **Bull further asks if it is proper for him to know just what rations are allowed to each member of his tribe for daily consumption. If permissible he would like to have a complete form of allowance.**
>
> **He complains that there is but one trader to do business at the agency, and that his people do not get the benefit of competition....**
>
> **Having been acquainted with the action of the President towards the cattlemen in the Indian Territory, he calls your attention to encroachment by cattlemen on his reservation.**
>
> **He avers that the men employed to teach his people how to farm do not speak his language and believes better results could be reached if this could be corrected....**
>
> **Sitting Bull has never complained of his treatment and does not now.**

The show then headed for Detroit, Saginaw and Columbus. At the last stop Bull was surprised to meet up with Lieutenant McMartin, who had once had charge of him at Fort Randall; Bull commented, **"This young man rolled cigarettes for me at Fort Randall."** Thereupon, McMartin obliged the chief and rolled another! The show then went to St. Louis.

Sources: Nate Salsbury to CIA J. D. Atkins, received September 4, 1885, MP; Havighurst, *Annie Oakley,* 64.

9) The Indian Must Keep Quiet or Die. --October 1885

WHEN THE WILD WEST show arrived in St. Louis in early October 1885, Bull met former Indian fighter General Eugene A. Carr at the Southern Hotel. He also fielded a few questions from a reporter. He said:

> **... [H]e was very much pleased with the country.... He had no idea that there were so many white people in the world as he had seen during his trip with the Wild West Show. Before he came east he had a vague, undefined idea that there were other white people in the world besides those that he had seen in Dakota and British America, but he never expected to see as many as he had seen.**

But the months of touring had left the chief weary of the constant contact with people. After his final appearance he told a reporter: **"The tepee is a better place for the red man. I am sick of the houses, and the noises, and the multitudes of men."** The interpreter added:

> **Sitting Bull longs for his wives and children. When he goes out the white men gather around him. They stare at him. They point fingers at him. He likes to be alone among his people. Traveling is interesting and it pleases Sitting Bull, but the forest is better and his family pleases him more.**
>
> **I go back to my people in one more moon. I will tell them what I have seen. They will never go on the warpath again. I have learned much. The Indian must keep quiet or die. The Great father must protect us and give us justice.**

He sadly parted company with his friends. He gave his adopted daughter Annie Oakley a feathered bonnet and a quiver of arrows. Buffalo Bill gave the chief a gray circus horse, which could do various tricks; the chief kept the horse, brought it back to his home and apparently named it "Tall Bull." Cody also gave the chief a big white sombrero. On one occasion, when a relative put the hat on, Bull said, **"My friend, Long Hair, gave me this hat. I value it very highly, for the hand that placed it upon my head had a very friendly feeling for me."** Cody was obviously immensely satisfied by the chief's appearance with his show. That year he made a profit of $100,000 and attracted one million viewers.

Sources: (First and third speeches) *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), October 4, 1885; (second speech) Kasper, *Annie Oakley,* 55; Shannon Garst, *Sitting Bull, Champion of His People* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1946), 157-58; Havighurst, *Annie Oakley,* 65-66; (last quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 251.

10) I Am a Great Man! --1885

SITTING BULL returned to Standing Rock with many fabulous stories. McLaughlin had hoped that Bull would have been so awed by the white man's civilization that he would cease to oppose government policies and was furious to find out that his plan had backfired. He wrote:

> Since Sitting Bull's return from his recent tour with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Exhibition, he is a great nuisance. He is inflated with the public attention he received and has not profited by what he has seen, but tells the most astonishing falsehoods to the Indians. He tells every person whom he sees that the ‘Great Father’ in his interview with him told him that he was the only great Indian living, that he made him head chief of all the Sioux, that all Indians must do his bidding, that he was above his agent and could removed the agent or any employee when he chooses and that any Indian who disobeyed him or questions his authority must be severely punished. Also, that all Indian dances and customs that have been discontinued should be revived, ‘sun dance,’ included, and rations to be issued in bulk. His statements... are so absurd that they are too much even for an Indian to believe, but as he is working against our schools and will not send any of his children and tries to influence others, and is very pompous and insolent, it may therefore be necessary for me to adopt stringent measures with him and that in the future I may be obliged to arrest him and confine him in the guardhouse.

Other than McLaughlin's word on the matter, it is only known that Bull said: **"The Great Father at Washington said to me: ‘Sitting Bull, you are the head of the Sioux nation, and I hold you responsible for the conduct of your people. Keep the peace.’ I promised him I would do this...."** However, Bull was

greatly puffed up by his experiences. He told missionary Mary Collins: **"I am a great man. White people pay money for my autograph. They come from afar to see me. I am the greatest chief of the Lakota, as Grant is of the whites."** But his delusions of grandeur soon faded, and even McLaughlin had to admit just two years later, "His behaviour for the past few months has been all that could be desired...."

The following spring Salsbury petitioned McLaughlin to allow Sitting Bull to tour again. However, the agent said that Bull had acted so arrogantly after the last tour that he doubted the government would allow him to go again. Finally, McLaughlin decided against the proposition, writing Salsbury on April 16, 1886: "... I do not think it advisable for Bull to travel again, as he is such a consummate liar and too vain and obstinate to be benefitted by what he sees and makes no good use of the money he thus earns, but on the contrary spends it extravagantly among the Indians in trying to perpetuate baneful influences.... Of the money and property that he brought home last fall, he did not have a dollar, or anything else (except the gray horse) left, after being three weeks at home & it was all used in feasting the Indians and trying to impress upon the *Indians* his own great importance...."

Sources: McLaughlin to (?), November 9, 1885, and McLaughlin to Paul, April 9, 1888, MP; Garland, *American Indian*, 267; (speech) Clow, "Mary C. Collins," 10; Pfaller, McLaughlin, 105-6.

I) You don't like me because you think I am a fool, and you imagine that, if I were not here, all the Indians would become civilized, and that, because I am here, all the Indians are fools. I know this is what you publish in the newspapers back East. I see it all in the paper, but I overlook that. --Sitting Bull to McLaughlin

II) [I]t is safe to predict that unless Agent McLaughlin is interfered with, he will have the famous Sitting Bull, within a year, one of his most efficient helpers, or else one of the least influential red men at the agency. --St. Paul Globe, *July 28, 1881*

III) His medicine was Indian medicine, what the young men wanted, and he got a following altogether out of proportion to his merits as a leader, because he was essentially an unreconstructed Indian--which he remained to the day of his death. --James McLaughlin

Sources: (First quotation), Vestal, *Sitting Bull*, 283-84; (second quotation) *St. Paul Globe*, July 28, 1881; (third quotation) McLaughlin, *My Friend*, 21.

2) [T]hat [Monument] Marks the Work of Our People. --September 1887

IN 1887 Sitting Bull was invited to go to England with the Wild West Show, but this time he himself refused, saying, **"It is bad for our cause for me to parade around, awakening the hatred of the white men everywhere. Besides, I am needed here; there is more talk of taking our lands."** Instead, in mid-September, the chief and a hundred others visited the Crow reservation in Montana--with the Little Bighorn battlefield nearby. Bull stayed two weeks and spoke to the Crows against land allotment, just as government commissioners were trying to sell the Crows on the idea. The commissioners soon reported trouble: "Immediately the result of [Sitting Bull's]... wily counsels were made evident by expressions, growing more and more emphatic of opposition coming entirely, however, from the [Crow] chiefs." Their change in attitude, the commissioner said, was the result "of the machinations and insidious counsels of Sitting Bull. He has convinced the Crow chiefs that their influence with their people will be destroyed and lost in proportion as their people learn to look to the agent for guidance and control, instead of them...." The commissioner admitted that from Bull's standpoint the chief was quite right. Bull forthrightly told them that he had given this advice to the Crows and also said that **"the same system had been proposed to his people, but that he was opposed to it. ... [and] his purpose [was] to induce the Crow to take common action in opposition and thus strengthen his position at home."** Bull also told the Crow agent **"that he did not want his lands allotted yet, and had asked his agent to delay awhile in making the allotments."**

During the visit Bull went over the Little Bighorn River to view the marker which the government had placed for the dead of the Seventh Cavalry. He spoke of the irony that his people had killed so many whites and yet

were receiving better treatment than the Crows:

> **Look at that monument--that marks the work of our people. See how the white men treat us, and how they treat you. We get one and one-half pounds of beef per ration, while you receive but one half pound. You are kept at home and made to work live slaves, while we do no labor and are permitted to ride from agency to agency and enjoy ourselves.**

Two years previously Bull had said about the same thing to the Gros Ventre, Mandan and Arickara tribes at Fort Berthold. When they told him that they did not get enough to eat, he replied that they should never go hungry, that if they did what he had done, they would have plenty to eat, **"for I and my people went to war with the whites and the government now gives us a full ration of beef and everything else we want."**

Later, surveyor James Howard noted that the predictions of Sitting Bull regarding the Crows came true: "[H]e had told them that **'the white man only wanted to squat them down on a small piece of land and take the balance from them in some way.'"**

Sources: (First quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 255; (second, third and fifth quotes) J. G. Walker and J. R. Hazan to Commissioner Atkins, September 27, 1886, Henry Williamson to Atkins, September 27, 1886, MP; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History, The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 148-49, 152-53; (fourth quote) *SPPP,* December 4, 1890.

3) I Would Rather Die an Indian.... --Circa 1888

MARY C. COLLINS, a Congregational missionary, began a mission about ten miles from Sitting Bull's home. Although she was disappointed that she was unable to convert the chief to Christianity, she esteemed him quite highly. She later wrote that he had a "winning personality," and was "always so tender, gracious, and invariably sweet.... He had some indefinable power which could not be resisted by his people, or even others who came in contact with him."

In one of their conversations, Bull told Collins why he was discouraging his people from taking on the white men's ways without some discrimination. He had seen much of the eastern United States and the many cities where poverty and prostitution flourished and did not want to follow that example:

> **The farther my people keep away from the whites the better I shall be satisfied. The white people are wicked and I don't want my women to become as the white women I have seen. I want you to teach my people to read and write, but they must not become white people in their ways; it is too bad a life. I could not let them do it. I would rather die an Indian than live a white man.**

As he told his brother-in-law, Grey Eagle, regarding doing what the agent wanted:

> **Yes, you are right. But I cannot give up my Indian race and habits. They are too deeply seated in us. You go ahead and follow the white man's road, and do as he says. But as for me, leave me alone.**

He also said: **"I have advised my people thus: When you find anything good in the white man's road, pick it up; but when you find something bad, or that turns out bad, drop it, leave it alone."**

Sources: (First speech) Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 269; (second speech and last quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 22, 263, 256.

4) None of Them Ever Goes out Alone to Meet the Great Mystery. --Circa 1888

MISSIONARIES tried many times to convert Sitting Bull to their particular brand of Christianity. To one who read him portions of the Bible, Bull said that the stories were interesting and the ideas familiar, but he

commented: **"The Lakota were better Christians before they ever heard of Christ."** On the other hand he said, **"I do not understand your Christ and his teaching. I must have time to think; I will not be pushed into it."** He also said once, **"What does it matter how I pray, so long as my prayers are answered?"** White hypocrisy was a primary factor in his confusion. Bull had noted the extreme divisiveness among those who professed to be Christians and felt that the Indian way to contact the Great Spirit was the best. He told his people:

> **Why should you listen to them? They cannot agree among themselves about the right manner of worship. Each missionary shouts that his way is the right way; then they quarrel among themselves about it. None of them ever goes out alone to meet the Great Mystery. That is the way it is done--not by gathering in groups and shouting from pulpits.**

In another instance Bull was able to overcome his pride and ask for help when it came to the needs of his family but at the same time declined to change his mind about the traditional spiritual ways of his people. He petitioned Mary "Winona" Collins to look at his sick child, saying, **"I am a great medicine man; [but] I have exhausted my powers upon this, my sick child, without avail. It is dying. If you can restore it I will concede your medicine is superior to mine."** Collins discovered that the child's gums were swollen, and after she lanced the gums, the child got better. Bull offered to adopt her as a daughter for this service, but she replied that she would then expect him to go to church. Bull said, **"No, I will not come to your church. The One above did not intend His children to worship indoors. He intends them to meet Him face to face outdoors and alone."** He later argued:

> **I do not lie. I do not cheat. I do not take lands or anything else that does not belong to me. Is that what your man called Jesus told me to do? Yet how many whites follow His teaching?**

Still, there was some talk that Sitting Bull was a Catholic convert: In 1888 he was said to have been raising his children in the church's teachings. But he later claimed that he personally had refused to join.

Sources: Garland, *American Indian,* 251; Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 256; (first speech) Vestal, *New Sources,* 283; (second speech) Garst, *Sitting Bull,* 160-62; Robinson, "Sidelights," 393; Beede, *Sitting Bull-Custer,* 44-45; *Washington Post,* October 14, 1888.

5) Learn All You Can. --Circa 1886

CATHOLIC PRIEST Martin Kenel felt that Sitting Bull had an adverse affect on the Indian children who were being taught Catholicism: When the chief visited the school on one occasion, Kenel said that "it was as though the devil himself... [had come] in with Sitting Bull." But Bull's attitude eventually relaxed, at least toward education in general. As McLaughlin noted in 1886, "Sitting Bull has not only withheld his own children [from school] but has also been prejudicing others against the schools. His bad influence, however, is gradually being overcome. ..." In a talk to children who were being taught to read by priest Jerome Hunt, Bull said:

> **My dear grandchildren: All of you folks are my relatives, because I am a Lakota and so are they. I was glad to hear that the Black Robe had given you this school where you can learn to read, write, and count the way white people do. You are shown how the white men work and make things. You are living in a new path.**
>
> **When I was your age, things were entirely different. I had no teachers but my parents and relatives. They are dead and gone now, and I am left alone. It will be the same for you. Your parents are aging and will die some day, leaving you alone. So it is for you to make something of yourselves, and this can only be done while you are young.**
>
> **In my early days I was eager to learn and to do things, and therefore I learned quickly and that made it easier for my teachers. Now I often pick up papers and books with all kinds of pictures and marks on them, but I cannot understand them as a white person does. They**

have a way of communicating by the use of written symbols and figures; but before they could do that, they had to have an understanding among themselves. You are learning that, and I was very much pleased to hear you reading.

In the future your business dealings with the whites are going to be very hard, and it behooves you to learn well what you are taught here. But that is not all. We older people need you. In our dealing with the white men, we are just the same as blind men, because we do not understand them. We need you to help us understand what the white men are up to.

My grandchildren, be good. Try and make a mark for yourselves. Learn all you can. With all my heart I thank my Black Robe friends for their goodness and kindness towards me.

Sources: Frank B. Fiske, *Life and Death of Sitting Bull* (Fort Yates, N.D.: Pioneer-Arrow Print, 1933), 23-24; (speech) W. C. Vanderwerth, *Indian Oratory: Famous Speeches by Noted Indian Chieftains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 189; McLaughlin to Atkins, April 14, 1886, MP.

6) I Can Make It Rain Anytime I Wish.... --Spring 1888

IN THE SPRING OF 1888 there was a lack of rain for the Hunkpapa crops. When McLaughlin visited Sitting Bull's camp in early June, he saw the obvious suffering of the crops and remarked to the chief that if it did not rain soon the crops would amount to nothing. Sitting Bull was of course a holy man of his people and had often received prophecies from *Wakan Tanka.* He matter-of-factly told the agent:

Yes, the crops and rain and my people have been importuning me to have it rain. I am considering the matter as to whether I will or not. I can make it rain anytime I wish, but I fear hail. I cannot control hail and--should I make it rain--heavy hail might follow which would ruin the prairie grass as well as the crops and our horses and cattle would thus be deprived of subsistence.

McLaughlin commented later, "[Sitting Bull] made this statement with as much apparent candor as it was possible for a man to give expression to and there was not an Indian among his hearers but appeared to accept it as within his power." No doubt many Hunkpapas had witnessed the miraculous events brought about by Bull's connection with *Wakan Tanka* and the Thunderbird deity. He once sang a song in which he saw a thunderbird coming through the sky, promising to bring rain to the Lakota:

Against the wind I am coming.
I am seeking the peace pipe.
So rain I am bringing as I come.

Source: (Speech) Pfaller, *McLaughlin,* 92; (song) Vestal, "Works of Sitting Bull," 277.

7) [W]e Wish to Speak to You as Man to Man. --October 1888

ON JULY 23, 1888 a government commission headed by Richard H. Pratt arrived at Standing Rock to obtain signatures for a land allotment treaty. Bull and his emissaries announced that they had vowed to *Wakan Tanka* not to sign. Bull was against the western boundary which the commissioners had selected for the Hunkpapa reserve, as it extended only eighty miles. He told the headmen:

Who made that line on the west? Was it a white man or an Indian? They say the lines of the old treaties, whether fixed by the red man or the white man, must stand. But I do not grant [or recognize] that treaty. [That land]... was stolen from us. We have paid for all they have done for us and more. They have never fulfilled a treaty. See the pitiful small land that is left us. Do not sign. If you sign we are lost.

The Pratt commission departed, deciding instead to treat with a Lakota delegation in Washington; however, Sitting Bull was included in the delegation. The chiefs discussed the government's "Sioux Bill," which was to procure eleven million acres of Lakota land for white settlement, and Bull made a long speech, favoring acceptance of the terms. But he wanted more money per acre than was being offered--$1.25 to be exact. He may in fact have suggested this only to frustrate the negotiation. Eventually, there was no agreement and on the final day of the visit Bull stated benignly:

> **My friends, I do not wish to make a long speech. I have but few words to say. I call you my friends because I am one of your people. I belong to the Government of the United States. As we have our own views of this new law, we wish to speak to you as man to man. I hope everything will be done in a quiet manner. This is all I have to say.**

The following spring (1889), with the treaty matter still unresolved, Bull was sick to the point of death, but he finally recovered. The *St. Paul Globe* joked about his brush with death:

> Sitting Bull maintains his reputation for obstinacy in refusing to die when everything seemed favorable to him to do so. The papers had commenced to publish obituaries and other cheerful fabrications about him, and the Indians were ready to gyrate and howl appropriately, but the old fellow seems to be disobliging enough to get well. One authority said he was dying of a broken heart. His pride was humbled at the dissolving power of his race and the dullness of the demand for his autograph at $1 per graph. Indian spirits are favorites with mediums. Perhaps some would willing to make a profitable engagement of this sort with SITTING BULL. It might pay him better than his present career.

Sources: Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 272, 274; (first speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 216-17; (second speech) *Washington Post,* October 16, 1888; *St. Paul Globe,* June 13, 1889.

8) [L]et Us Stand as One Family.... --July 1889

IN LATE JULY 1889 government commissioners, including the old Indian fighter, General George Crook, came to Standing Rock to try again to get the Indians to sign the new treaty. But Sitting Bull spoke eloquently, logically and convincingly against land cession:

> **Friends and relatives: Our minds are again disturbed by the Great Father's representatives, the Indian agent, the squawmen, the mixedbloods, the interpreters and the favorite ration-chiefs. What is it they want of us this time? They want us to give up another chunk of our tribal land.... They will try to gain possession of the last piece of ground we possess. They are again telling us what they intend to do if we agree to their wishes. Have we ever set a price on our land and received such a value? No, we never did. What we got under the former treaties were promises of all sorts. They promised how we are going to live peaceably on the land we still own, and how they are going to show us the new ways of living--[they] even told us how we can go to heaven when we die. But all that we realized out of the agreements with the Great Father was [that] we are dying off in expectation of getting things promised us.**
>
> **... [S]omething tells me that the Great Father's representatives have again brought with them a well-worded paper, containing just what they want, but ignoring our wishes in the matter.... Our people are blindly deceived. Some are in favor of the proposition, but we who realize that our children and grandchildren may live a little longer, must necessarily look ahead and flatly reject the proposition. I, for one, am bitterly opposed to it. The Great Father has proven himself an *unktomi* (trickster) in our past dealings.**
>
> **When the white people invaded our Black Hills country our treaty agreements were still in force. But the Great Father has ignored it--pretending to keep out the intruders through military force, and at last failing to keep them out, they had to let them come in and take**

possession of the best part of our tribal possession. Yet the Great Father maintains a very large standing army that can stop anything.

Therefore, I do not wish to consider any proposition to cede any portion of our tribal holdings to the Great Father. If I agree to dispose of any part of our land to the white people I would feel guilty of taking food away from our childrens' mouths, and I do not wish to be that mean....

My friends and relatives, let us stand as one family, as we did before the white people led us astray.

Source: (Speech) Vestal, *New Sources,* 303-4.

9) I Want You to Hold These Lands. --August 1889

SITTING BULL told his people repeatedly that they should hol**d** on to their lands. Standing by the shores of Grand River (where he sometimes claimed he w**as** born), he said:

I was born near where I stand. I want you to hold these lands. I want you to follow me. I want you to pledge yourselves to do as I ask you. Keep your land. It will be worth far more. Keep it. Value it at twenty dollars a foot!

He also argued in another speech:

Our young people are at present still much too unfamiliar with the English language to be able to judge of this affair which affects their entire existence. I have been told that the interpretation of a few words sometimes led to violent arguments among the whites, even among people who taught and formed the English language.

In the face of these facts, what can be expected of my people, only a few of whom can read and write? In a short time, we ourselves shall have schools in which our young people can learn and be qualified to decide intelligently the questions which concern their future.

Have not the whites enough land for the time being? Are not many million acres of their present possessions still unsettled? Why do they come year after year to take away the little that remains to us? If they covet our land, why should our wish to keep it be less justified?

At the council Sitting Bull allowed John Grass to do most of the talking to the commissioners, but when it came time to sign the treaty, Bull s**ai**d in a loud voice: **"Heupo! Come, my friends, we will not sign. The whites never did live up to a treaty yet, and they will not stand by this one. Come on!"** The chief started out and **wa**s followed by every one of the Indians. Then the proud chief went around the camp circle and **br**oke into song, **"The nation wanted me, so I shall live courageously."**

Sources: (First speech) Vestal, *New Sources,* 278, 309; (second speech) Cr**ona**u, "A Red Napoleon," 9.

10) There Are Now No Indians Left But Me! --August 1889

GENERAL CROOK was so angered by Sitting Bull's display of authority that he wanted to send soldiers to arrest the chief. But McLaughlin argued against it and devised a different scheme to get the treaty signed. Meanwhile, Bull told his followers:

Once we had a mighty tract; now it is little. You have bought peace from the whites by selling your lands; now when you have no more to sell what will you do?

> **I have never entertained a treaty from the whites. I am opposed to this. I will not sign. Our lands are few and they are bad lands. The white men have shut us up in a desert where nothing lives, yet it is our last home. Will you break down the walls and let the white man sweep us away?**
>
> **You say we will have a great deal of money in return. How has it been in the past? How has the government fulfilled its obligations? Congress cuts down our rations at will; what they owe us does not matter. You have seen how difficult it is to raise food here. We need every blanket's breadth of our land if we are to live. I am getting to be an old man; a few years and I will be with my fathers; but before I go I want to see my children provided for. ... I will not sign.**

Unbeknownst to Sitting Bull, McLaughlin met in secret with John Grass and persuaded him to sign the treaty. Grass began to speak against the old leader: "[Sitting Bull]... is utterly worthless to us and keeps us back more than he helps us.... He never was a chief, and... all he seems to want is notoriety." Not only so, but Bull was not advised of the time of the final council with the commissioners. Although he belatedly arrived and made protest, Grass signed the treaty and Bull's men were unable to keep the Indians from following Grass's lead. Bull commented disgustedly, **"There are no Indians left now but me!"** He also said:

> **... [T]he palefaces are great in contriving treaties. They know how to deceive the Indians' eyes so that they take black for white. I am too old to follow the crooked ways of the whites. Persisting in the beliefs of my fathers, I shall some day enter the happy hunting grounds, where everything that the red man needs is provided, and where our life will be a far happier one, since no paleface will come to take that land away from us by cunning or by force.**

Sources: (First speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 218; McLaughlin to Paul, April 9, 1888, MP; Fiske, *Life and Death,* 26; (Grass speech) Kingsbury, *Dakota Territory,* 2:1279; "Sioux Reservation," *Senate Executive Documents,* 51 Cong., 1 sess., No. 51 (serial 2682), 213; (second speech) Cronau, "Red Napoleon," 9-10.

I) [Sitting Bull is]... the most dangerous Indian now living.... --St. Paul Pioneer Press, *December 20, 1890*

II) Sitting Bull is high priest and leading apostle of this latest Indian absurdity; in a word he is the Chief Mischief Maker at this Agency. ... [He]... is an Indian unworthy of notice except as a disaffected intriguer, who grasps every opportunity to maintain his power and popularity. He is... the most vain, pompous and untruthful Indian that I ever knew. His word is not believed by the more intelligent Indians of this Agency but he has, unfortunately, a tribal reputation gained by the generalship of others, and is therefore the idol of the disaffected and worthless element of the Sioux. He has been growing bolder and more aggressive through the past year and it is undoubtedly only a question of time (a few months at the most) until it will be necessary to remove him from among his people.... --James McLaughlin, October 17, 1890

III) The Government should... [send] Sitting Bull and three or four other leaders away from each other.... Better sacrifice a few than that the whole race be exterminated.... A few years in prison learning English and a good trade would have a quieting influence upon the old man.., whereas if he dies, he will still be worshipped as a martyr. --Mary C. Collins

IV) But there is a generation coming that shall reverse this judgement of ours. Our children will build monuments to those who we stoned, and the great aboriginals whom we killed will be counted by the future American as among the historic characters of the Continent.... --Willis F. Johnson

Sources: (First quote) *SPPP,* December 20, 1890; (second quote) Burdick, *Last Days,* 91; (third quote) Louise P. Olsen, "Mary Clementine Collins, Dacotah Missionary," *North Dakota History* 18 (October 1951): 78; (fourth quote) Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 201.

2) Bring Me Proof. --October 9, 1890

LATER THAT SUMMER Sitting Bull began to hear of the "Messiah craze." During the previous winter Kicking Bear and Short Bull had gone to Nevada to see a Paiute Indian named Wovoka. They arrived back at the lower reservations in April 1890 and said that an Indian Christ had come to the earth who would see to it that justice was done for the Indians, that the so-called Ghost Dance should be performed so the Indians could go to see *Wakan Tanka* and their dead relatives. But although Wovoka taught that there must not be any fighting involved in this, Kicking Bird gave the whole matter a decidedly anti-white flavor. He instructed the dancers to wear Ghost Shirts, which would protect them from soldiers' bullets. The craze swept up the western tribes and caught on especially with the more traditional Lakota bands. The young Oglala, Black Elk, described the dance: "... Kicking Bear offered a prayer, saying: 'Father, Great Spirit, behold these people! They shall go forth today to see their relatives, and yonder they shall be happy....' Then we began dancing, and most of the people wailed and cried as they danced, holding hands in a circle.... Now and then someone would fall down like dead.... [T]hey were having visions."

After learning that chiefs Little Wound, Hump and Big Foot were endorsing the dance, Sitting Bull could not ignore what was happening and invited Kicking Bear to come to Standing Rock. Arriving on October 9, Kicking Bird began dances adjacent to Bull's cabin. He soon gave Bull a message from the "Father," saying, "All the people to the south are dancing my dance. Will the chief of all the Lakota walk behind his nation?" Bull replied:

> **When my son.., or one of my trusted warriors can go to the spirit world and return to tell me it is true, then I may believe. If this religion is true, all other deeds are worthless. Bring me proof. My ears are open, my eyes are not yet dim. If these songs are true, then I shall weep on more. If they are not true, then I wish to die. Let us hold a dance tomorrow.**

A reporter later described the dancing at Sitting Bull's village: "In the morning those who purpose taking part in the afternoon ceremonies undergo the purifying sweat.... Then they paint their faces... and by 2 p.m. are ready to begin, donning as a last preparation the white sheeting which gives them the proper garb of ghosts. Sitting Bull, with those of the older chiefs and medicine who do not intend to dance, take up a position... in front of the medicine lodge and Bull invokes the expected Messiah.... From 150 to 200 men, women and children form a ring with hands clasped.... A dog trot to the left is then commenced and accompanied by the usual 'ki-yis,' 'hi-yas,' etc., which syncopate the... beats of the tom-tom. Faster and faster, furious and more furious the circling grows.... Soon someone weaker than the rest. .. falls unconscious to the ground. But the circle closes instantly; the dance must go on.... The fainting one is mumbled over by Sitting Bull... and the old chief works the oracle by announcing that during the trance the fallen one has seen or talked with the Messiah."

Sources: Rex Alan Smith, *Moon of Popping Trees* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1975), 70-75; John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 204-5; *SPPP,* December 7, 1890; (speech), Garland, *American Indian,* 239.

3) [T]he Trance Does Not Come to Me. --October 1890

SITTING BULL ghost danced for a time, but received no visions. In spite of this, he strongly contended with the whites for the religious freedom of his people. In turn, McLaughlin maligned the chief, calling him the "high priest" and "leading apostle" of the craze, when this could really only be said of Kicking Bear and Short Bull. He also sent the Indian police to tell Kicking Bear to leave. Then he was angered because Bull had announced that he would keep the snow from falling and prevent any cold weather that winter, so that the Ghost Dance could on without discomfort for those involved. Bull was likewise irritated with the agent's presumption to tell them what religion they could or should have. He commented: **"Are we dogs to be silenced by kicking? You say to the agent that the white men have beaten us and left us naked of every good thing, but they shall not take away our religion."**

Meanwhile, Mary Collins heard rumors that Bull intended to use the Ghost Dance "cloak of religion" to get enough followers to make an outbreak. One day she found the chief in his tent, adorning the ghost dancers with paint--he was putting bright red and blue crescents on their foreheads, cheeks and chin, and a cross on their nose or between the eyes; Bull himself had a red, green and white face, and yellow and green hands and wrists. When she told him that he should lay aside these "evil ways," Bull replied that he was only asking his people to pray. Yet she reported the chief as speaking to the effect that he was obstructing civilization in order to protect his prestige as a chief: **"They did not regard my wishes in selling the lands and opening the reservation. I will be chief. I can only be chief by keeping the people in a savage condition. If they become civilized, I shall go down."** Bull also received a visit from the nearby government school teacher, John M. Carignan, and told him:

> **Our religion seems foolish to you, but so does yours to me. The Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians and the Catholics all have a different God. Why cannot we have one of our own? Why does the agent seek to take away our religion?**
>
> **My race is dying. Our God will soon die with us. If this new religion is not true then what [does it] matter? I do not know what to believe? If I could dream like the others and visit the spirit world myself, then it would be easy to believe, but the trance does not come to me. It passes me by. I help others to see their dead, but I am not aided.**

Because the Ghost Dance was being practiced by so many of the tribes, General Nelson Miles visited reservations in Utah and Montana. He reported that he found Sitting Bull at the Cheyenne Reservation and ordered him to get back to Standing Rock. Upon Miles's return to Chicago, he also said, "Among those who have [taken up the craze]... none are more ardent than Sitting Bull, who is intensely Indian in all his ideas."

Sources: (First quote) Garland, *American Indian,* 249; (second quote) Olsen, "Mary Collins," 76-77; (Miles's report) *SPPP,* November 7, 1890; (speech) Virginia I. Armstrong, comp. *I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1971), 128-29; McLaughlin to T. J. Morgan, March 10, 1891, cited in Burdick, *Last Days,* 123; *SPPP,* December 3, 1890.

4) [Y]ou Will Be Torn Asunder. --October 1890

SITTING BULL grew increasingly depressed during this period. He was still mourning for his daughter, Walks Looking, and he did not have visions as others did, leaving him in a quandary as to the validity of the religious craze. Furthermore, his white friend, Catherine Weldon, who was living in his home, seemed to be turning against him. Bull heard a rumor that she and McLaughlin were plotting to destroy him by talking of the dance as a prelude to an outbreak. Actually, Weldon wished to avert trouble and warned Bull again and again that if the dancing continued, troops might be sent, and people would be killed. Bull despondently replied, **"If the soldiers kill me, I will be glad. Our old way of life is almost gone. Now I want to die."** Weldon left the reserve and wrote McLaughlin, "Even Sitting Bull imagines that I seek his destruction.... His brain is so confused that he does not know friend from foe...."

Part of Bull's depressed state was the result of an omen that he would be killed by his enemies and that his people would suffer greatly. He said: **"My people, forty years after my death, you will be torn asunder. You will be all confused and at a loss, broken into factions, quarreling with one another. You will not know which way to turn. The white men will cause all this trouble."**

Matters became even more sensational when a Lakota woman arrived from Canada, announcing that she was the "mother of Christ." She said that Christ was upon the earth making preparations for it to belong solely to his Indian children who performed the Ghost Dance. She said too that the whites would disappear, and then there would be a resurrection of all the Indians who slept. McLaughlin placed her in the guardhouse. About this time Bull spoke of his hope that the Ghost Dance promises were true. He said to his friend's white-educated son:

I desire this new earth. My people are in despair, their hearts are utterly gone. We need help. My warriors will soon be like the Chinamen at the fort, fit only to wash windowpanes. Our rations are being cut off. What is there to look forward to? Nothing! I saw in the east many poor people. They worked very hard and wore ragged clothes. All were not rich and happy. Among the white men my people would be only like other poor people, ragged and hungry, creeping about, eating scraps of food like hungry curs. I fear for them, therefore my ears are open to the words of this new religion which assures me that the old world--the world of my fathers--is to return. You say the agent is displeased. Is there anything I can do which does not displease him? The white men have their religion--they pray and sing. Why should not we sing if we have heart to do so? Go ask him if he is afraid that the Messiah has come of a truth, and that the white man is to be swept away. ... Go tell him what you have seen. Say to him that it is a peaceful dance. There are no weapons here; there is no talk of fighting. It is a magical prayer....

Sources: (First quote) Vestal, *New Sources,* 151; (speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 250; Miller, "Sitting Bull's White Squaw," 232-33; Smith, *Popping Trees,* 110; *SPPP,* November 15, 21-22, 24, 1890.

5) [T]hey Will Not Get Me. --November 1890

SITTING BULL continued his wide network of secret consultations with his people and other tribes--now in regard to the Ghost Dance. In mid-October he sent White Gut to visit the Canadian Hunkpapas under Black Bull, and the Yanktonai and Gros Ventres at Camp Porter, Montana. White Gut preached the Ghost Dance message and gave the tribes instructions to join Sitting Bull and Kicking Bear at Bear Butte, near the Black Hills, in the spring--that there was a possibility of war and they thought they could muster more warriors now and more guns than they had during the Custer fight. Trader Joe Culbertson, who was aware of White Gut's travels, guessed that Sitting Bull wanted to assemble as large a force as possible, so that if divine assistance did not come as promised by the Ghost Dance leaders, then he would be able to stand off the troops for a time, and if necessary make his way back to Canada. One of the Gros Ventres also commented that Bull's heart was particularly "bad" since the death of his child, and that if Bull's people should start a disturbance or outbreak, a party of Gros Ventres would surely join them.

By the end of October it was reported that Sitting Bull had enlisted several hundred warriors to go to war at his bidding. Furthermore, Mary Collins said that the chief was claiming he could miraculously feed his followers. But several of the other chiefs were said to have objected to Bull's plans and informed McLaughlin of Bull's plots and schemes. Lieutenant Colonel William F. Drum sent two scouts to keep an eye on any hostile activity that might be going on. When the two arrived at Grand River, Sitting Bull's scouts brought them in for questioning. Suspecting that they were spies, he told them that he understood that there were 2,000 troops at Fort Yates ready to take him. Going on, he boasted:

But I have runners coming and going every day and know everything that is going on there. And as soon as these soldiers come, I will take my family and ponies and those that will follow me and leave, and they will not get me. You see we have abandoned the white men's houses and are living in our native tepees... [W]e will not return to the houses nor to the agency.

Bull later told a friend:

I will obey the orders of the great war chief, but I will not be ordered about by this agent. He has used me like a dog. The Great Father at Washington said to me: "Sitting Bull, you are the head of the Sioux nation, and I hold you responsible for the conduct of your people. Keep the peace." I promised him I would do this, but the agent has always turned his back to me or has thrown words at me that are like stones or mud. He has lied about me and his letters have made the settlers angry. He now wishes to shut me up merely that he can smile

and say, "I am a great chief; I have conquered The Sitting Bull." This I will not permit him to do.

Sources: (First speech) *St. Paul Herald,* November 29, 1890; *St. Cloud Daily Times,* October 29, 31 and November 22, 1890; (second speech) Garland, *American Indian,* 267; Olsen, "Mary Collins," 78.

6) I Will Demand That They Show Him to Us. --November 19, 1890

THE SPREAD OF THE GHOST DANCE elicited fears among the whites that there would be a Sioux uprising: Calls were made for troops to be stationed at the agencies. Standing Rock already had soldiers at Fort Yates, but McLaughlin wanted to handle things his own way. He visited Bull's village on November 19 and urged the chief not to "lead his people astray." But Bull challenged the agent to go with him to find the Messiah:

Father, I will make you a proposition which will settle this question. You go with me to the agencies in the west and let me seek for the men who saw the Messiah; and when we find them, I will demand they show Him to us, and if they cannot do so, I will return and tell my people it is a lie. And that will be the end of it. If, on the other hand, these things are true, you will let the dance go on.

McLaughlin replied that Bull should come to the agency, and Bull would not commit to this, saying that he would first have to consult with his people. The chief later told his nephew, **"There's nothing to it.... Our own religion is best for us, no matter what Kicking Bear and the others say. This new religion belongs to tribes far to the west. They should have kept it over there."** Also, contrary to public opinion, the nearby government schoolteacher, John Carignan, said that Sitting Bull was non-committal about the craze.

In late November the newspapers charged that McLaughlin had lost control of Sitting Bull, putting the agent on the defensive. When he learned that General Miles had sent William F. Cody to bring Bull in, he immediately succeeded in getting President Benjamin Harrison to countermand the orders, even as Cody was en route to Bull's home on November 29; he claimed that Cody would have "precipitated a fight." Carignan commented on this turn of events: "Bill [Cody] was mad... when he was ordered back to the post.... He maintained until the day of his death that... had he been allowed to proceed, he could have induced his old friend.. . to come in. He... believed he could have averted the fight that followed."

That same day it was reported that Bull was more determined than ever to fight, that if troops came for him he would try to join the Pine Ridge ghost dancers. It was also rumored that he had his eyes on the cattle belonging to the settlers on the Cannonball River--that if the Indians raided the settlers, they could then surrender to the soldiers and be forgiven, and this would cause other settlers not to venture into that territory. But he sent a letter to Colonel Drum to allay the whites' suspicions, saying, that **"while he was constantly praying, he never prayed to kill."** On December 1 McLaughlin told a reporter that he had his *own* plans to capture the chief: "There is no reason why Sitting Bull should not be arrested as soon as he comes within reach of the agency. He has broken his promise to send his children to school, and he did not come in last ration day as ordered."

Sources: (Speech) Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 288-89; Fiske, *Life and Death,* 33, 39-40; Smith, *Popping Trees,* 148-49; *SPPP,* November 29, December 2, 4, 7, 1890.

7) You Should Say Nothing against Our Religion. --December 12, 1890

IN EARLY DECEMBER Bull was invited by Short Bull to come to the "Stronghold" of the ghost dancers in the (South Dakota) badlands to be on hand to greet the Indian Christ. After discussing the matter with the Silent Eaters on December 11, Bull dictated a letter to the agent:

***Wakan Tanka* made you--made all the white race and also made the red race, and gave them both might and heart to know everything in the world, but gave the whites the advantage**

over the Indians. But today *Wakan Tanka,* our Father, is helping us Indians, so all we Indians believe. Therefore, I think this way: I wish no man to come to me in my prayers with gun or knife.

Therefore, all the Indians pray to *Wakan Tanka* for life and try to find out a good road and [are doing]... nothing wrong in their [lives].... This is what we want.., to pray to *Wakan Tanka.* But you did not believe us. You should say nothing against our religion for we said nothing against yours. You pray to God. So do all of us Indians, as well as the whites. We both pray to only one God who made us all.

Yet you, my friend, today you think I am a fool, and you gather up some of the wise men among my people on your side, and you let the white people back east know what you think. I know that, but I do not object; I overlook that because I am foolish enough to pray to *Wakan Tanka.*

Therefore, my friend, you don't like me. Well, my friend, I don't like it myself when someone is foolish.... You don't like me because you think I am a fool, and you imagine that if I were not here all the Indians would become civilized, and that because I am here all the Indians are fools. I know this is what you publish in the newspapers back east....

When you were here in my camp, you gave me good words about my prayers, but today you take it all back again. And there is something else I want you to know. I am obliged to investigate the Ghost Dance religion.... The policeman told me [that] you intend to take all our ponies and our guns too. So I wish you would let me know about that. Please answer soon.

McLaughlin received the letter on December 12, the same day that Colonel Drum received orders to secure Sitting Bull's person. McLaughlin and Drum began to plot the best time to take Bull with the Indian police: They thought that December 20, ration day, would be best. But the plans changed on December 13 when they were informed by Carignan that Bull was preparing to join the hostiles in the badlands: "Sitting Bull... has sent you a letter asking your permission, and if you do not give it, he is going to go anyway; he has been fitting up his horses to stand a long ride...."

Sources: (Letter) Vestal: *Sitting Bull,* 283-84; Fiske, *Life and Death,* 44; Carignan to McLaughlin, December 14, 1890, cited in Burdick, *Last Days,* 152; *SPPP,* November 22, 1890; Smith, *Popping Trees,* 150-51.

8) Why Should the Indian Police Come against Me? --December 13, 1890

WHEN MCLAUGHLIN SPOKE to the Indian police of arresting Sitting Bull, a number of them resigned--realizing no doubt that the result of their action could be civil war. But McLaughlin shrewdly promised pensions to those who might be killed or wounded in the attempt, and Bull Head, Red Tomahawk and forty-one others were found willing to do the agent's bidding. When Sitting Bull heard word that McLaughlin was going to use the "Metal Breasts" to get him out of the way, he felt that he could not submit to such an outrage. He preferred to have U. S. soldiers take him:

Why should the Indian police come against me? We are of the same blood, we are all Lakota, we are relatives. It will disgrace our nation, it will be murder, it will defile our race. If the white men want me to die, they ought not to put up the Indians to kill me.

I don't want confusion among my people. Let the soldiers come and take me away and kill me wherever they like. I am not afraid. I was born a warrior. I have followed the warpath ever since I was able to draw a bow.

White Hair [McLaughlin] wanted me to travel all around and across the sea, so that he could make a lot of money. Once was enough; after that I would not go. Then I would not join his church. Ever since then he has had it in for me.

Long ago I had two women in my lodge. One of them was jealous. White Hair reminds me of that jealous woman. Why does he keep trying to humble me? Can I be any lower than I am now? Once I was a man, but now I am a pitiful wretch--without country or horses or guns worth having. Once I was rich; now I am poor. What more does White Hair want to do to me? I was a fool ever to come back down here. I should have stayed with the Redcoats in Grandmother's Land, even though I starved.

I did not start this Ghost Dance. Kicking Bear came here of his own accord. I told my people to go slow, but they were swept into this thing so strong [that] nothing could stop them. I have not joined the sacred dance since I was told to stop.

McLaughlin was not unaware of Bull's feelings. Weldon had urged him to allow her to bring Bull in, writing: "Do not send the police or soldiers, and I will induce Sitting Bull to come to you of his own accord. He will surely accompany me to the agency; but please do not detain him; his brain has suffered...." But his brain was not gone--Bull privately told Catch-the-Bear and Black Wolf, **"To fight now is to die. The white man will crush us like flies.... [But] if the agent comes with his renegades to arrest me I will resist to the death.... [L]et no one interfere in my behalf.... I am your head--they will visit their punishment on me."**

Sources: (Speech) Vestal, *New Sources,* 309-10; Miller, "Sitting Bull's White Squaw," 231; (last quote) Garland, *American Indian,* 264.

9) I Call upon My Friends to Kill You Now. --December 15, 1890

WRITING IN REGARD to his justification for having Sitting Bull arrested, McLaughlin said, "... 'Sitting Bull,' who was constitutionally a bad man without a redeeming quality, has been growing worse during the past year, so that his aggressiveness had assumed proportions of open rebellion against constituted authority, notwithstanding that every honorable means to change him from his imprudent course had been resorted to." He went on to say: "[Sitting Bull]... broke his pipe of peace, which he had kept in his house since his surrender as a prisoner of war in July 1881. When asked why he had broken that pipe, he replied that **he wanted to die and wanted to fight.**" (The chief's fatalism was due in part to several premonitions of death, one of which came from a bird which said that he would be killed by his fellow Lakotas.)

McLaughlin, in collaboration with Colonel Drum of Fort Yates, ordered his police to take action in the early morning of December 15. The written orders contained a postscript which became Bull's virtual death sentence: *"You must not let him escape under any circumstances."* To help the police stiffen their courage, McLaughlin sent along a wagon load of whiskey. By five o'clock forty-two policemen had rendezvoused at Lieutenant Bull Head's cabin. After getting drunk, they charged over to Sitting Bull's house and awakened Bull from his sleep. But by the time they got him dressed, a crowd of the chief's followers had gathered about. Bull began to talk to the police:

You are all Indians, and the blood that runs in your veins is the same as mine--you are my own people.

I have repeatedly cautioned all Indians to have no faith in the government. I have refused to give our lands away. Now,.. [our lands] are gone and we have received no pay. My own children now come as agents of that government to arrest me and stand ready to shoot down their own flesh and blood to assist that government.

You have no right to do this. You are cowards to come to my house in the nighttime. You are dogs to raise your hands against your own people, and you do not deserve to be called

Lakota or to live. I call upon my friends to kill you now.

It was still dark when Catches-the-Bear called out to Lieutenant Bull Head, "Let him go! Let him go!" Finally, Bull said, **"I am not going! Come on! Take action!"** Catches-the-Bear shot Bull Head. But as he fell, Bull Head turned and fired a shot which killed Sitting Bull; another policeman shot Bull in the back. In the fight which followed a number of policemen and Hunkpapas were killed. The police also murdered Bull's seventeen-year-old son, Crowfoot. The fighting ended when troops under Captain Edmond Fechet came up and several hundred Hunkpapas of Bull's band fled towards Pine Ridge.

Sources: Burdick, *Last Days,* 57, 134, 125; (speech) Smith, *Popping Trees,* 152-53; Miller, *Ghost Dance,* 303. John G. Neihardt uses Bull's death premonitions in his chapter on Sitting Bull, in *Twilight of the Sioux,* 71-89.

10) My Uncle Was Killed without Cause. --December 1890

OF SITTING BULL'S DEATH, McLaughlin wrote: "The causes which produced the former outbreak... have been removed by the death of 'Sitting Bull,' who was the chief leader of disaffection here...." Later, he added proudly: "Sitting Bull's medicine had not saved him, and the shot that killed him put a stop forever to the domination of the ancient regime among the Sioux of the Standing Rock reservation." The white public generally gloated over Sitting Bull's death as well: A St. Paul editor commented, "[Sitting Bull]... posed as a savage John the Baptist... How he refused to obey the orders of the agent, and while he talked peace talked war, is recent history. He was the most dangerous Indian now living and his death cannot be deplored from any point of view. None will rejoice in the fatality more heartily than will the large majority of Indians at Standing Rock."

But many others were also aghast, especially when a reporter for the *New York Herald* wrote that Sitting Bull had been set up for killing: "It is stated today that there was a quiet understanding between the officers of the Indian and military departments that it would be impossible to bring Sitting Bull to Standing Rock alive.... There was therefore, cruel as it may seem, a complete understanding from the Commanding Officer to the Indian police that the slightest attempt to rescue the old medicine man should be a signal to send Sitting Bull to the happy hunting ground." In apparent support of the conspiracy theory, Captain Fetchet said that Colonel Drum had told him rather cryptically before leaving for Sitting Bull's capture, "You know the object of the movement. Do your best to make it a success." Even old Red Cloud, who had no love for Bull, said that anybody would have known that the old chief would resist arrest under such conditions: "The fight at [Sitting Bull's]... arrest would have been made for anyone arrested in the same way. If he was a little man, he was a man, and should not have been murdered uselessly.... If the army had wanted to arrest him they knew how to do it, and never would have done it in that way...."

Sitting Bull had foreseen his death and in his own prideful way commented simply, **"Great men are usually destroyed by those who are jealous of them."** Viola Leonard, a niece of the chief who was living in Wilmington, Delaware, said:

> Our people have been robbed, ruined and persecuted by the white people, who have driven us from the lands which were formerly ours, and, not content with this robbery, they have now killed my uncle in cold blood. This country was owned by our people before any white men came. Now they have killed the chief, taken his body, and white men come to his family to look about his history. You shall hear nothing. His history will be published and the world will get it. My uncle was killed without cause or provocation, and it is natural that we should feel it strongly.... My uncle's body, I understand, will be brought to Washington within the next few days. I have written to the secretary of the interior for permission to see his body, but I have not got an answer.

Sources: McLaughlin, *My Friend,* 221; (Viola's speech) *SPPP,* December 16, 20, 1890; Smith, *Popping Trees,* 154; (quote) Vestal, *Sitting Bull,* 263, 299-301; Marvin and Dorothy Rosenberg, "'There are No Indians Left But Me,'" *American Heritage* 15 (June 1964): 111; Moquin, *Great Documents,* 266.

11) I Would Die for My People and Country.

CAPTAIN FECHET surveyed the scene in and around Sitting Bull's cabin after the desperate fight: "In front of the house, and within a radius of 50 yards, were the bodies of 8 dead Indians, including that of Sitting Bull, and 2 dead horses. In the house were 4 dead policemen and 3 wounded, 2 mortally. To add to the horror of the scene the squaws of Sitting Bull, who were in a small house nearby, kept up a great wailing." While the soldiers were still milling about, a relative of one of the dead policemen came up and smashed the chief's face in with a neck yoke. Bull was then thrown into a wagon, and the dead policemen were piled on top of him. After being transported to Fort Yates, his body was wrapped in canvas, placed in a wooden coffin and laid to rest in the post cemetery without fanfare.

The following speech has not been printed in reference to its origin, time or place, except that it appeared in one of the first biographies written about Sitting Bull by Willis F. Johnson. Yet it is Sitting Bull oratory at its very best and the speech concludes poignantly with the statement, "**... I would die for my people and country**":

> **What treaty that the white has made has the red man broken? Not one. What treaty that the whites ever made with us red men have they kept? Not one.**
>
> **When I was a boy the Lakota owned the world. The sun rose and set in their lands. They sent 10,000 horsemen to battle. Where are the warriors today? Who slew them? Where are our lands? Who owns them? What white man can say I ever stole his lands or a penny of his money? Yet they say I am a thief. What white woman, however lonely, was ever when a captive insulted by me? Yet they say I am a bad Indian. What white man has ever seen me drunk? Who has ever come to me hungry and gone unfed? Who has ever seen me beat my wives or abuse my children? What law have I broken? Is it wrong for me to love my own? Is it wicked of me because my skin is red; because I am a Lakota; because I was born where my fathers lived; because I would die for my people and country?**

Johnson was personally outraged at the news of Sitting Bull's death and wrote: "[T]hey went to kill--had killed him, and I said--understanding the conditions and circumstances better than some--I said: ‘That is murder.’ And then I read in a great journal that ‘everybody is well satisfied with his death.’ And I cried out against the saying as I had against the deed. I read that they have buried his body like a dog's--without funeral rites.... That is the deed of today. *That is the best that this generation has to give to this noble historic character....*"

Sources: (Speech) Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull,* 201; Utley, *Lance and Shield,* 303-6. This speech recently appeared in Lee Miller, *From the Heart: Voices of the American Indian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 252-53.

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