

“WE HARDLY KNEW WHAT A GOOD NIGHT’S REST WAS THEN”

NEW SOURCES ON ARIKARA SCOUT SERVICE AND THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN

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INTRODUCTION

George Armstrong Custer and the Battle of the Little Bighorn continue to fascinate audiences. The same attention, alas, is not reserved for Custer’s Arikara scouts. Although the story of these scouts has been told before, most notably in the *Arikara Narratives* (1920 and 1998), the pension records of the Veterans Administration and the National Archives and Records Administration yield some additional sources of interest.¹

¹ Virgil D. White, Comp., *Index to Indian Wars Pension Files, 1892-1926* (Waynesboro, TN: The National Historical Publishing Company, 1987). White’s monumental index has been very valuable in retrieving the records of these scouts. Based on White’s book, I compiled the following list of Fort Berthold scouts who applied for pensions. The applicants are: BEARS BELLY (or ELKS FACE alias WAY-SCOW) SC-12963 ND 28 Feb 1921 serv 1874 [See White, pages 97, 455, and 1629]; BLACK CALF (alias BOY CHIEF) wid Bessie, SA-17814 ND 28 Feb 1921 WC-11284 ND 4 Aug 1924, srv, died 4 Jun 1922 Armstrong ND [See White, page 131, see also BOY CHIEF entry p. 158]; BLACK CHEST, (or TO SA NA SA PA or BLACK FOX) SC-13513 ND 2 Oct 1924, srv 1870-6 [See White, page 131, see also BLACK FOX entry p. 133]; BLACK CROW (alias LITTLE FLAG) wid Hunts to Dig, WA-167441[1] ND 28 Jul 1930, enl 187?, died 29 Apr 1922 at Elbowoods ND [See White, pages 131 and 924]; BLOODY HAND (alias ENEMY HEART) SA-17745 ND 28 Feb 1921, srv 1873-4 [See White, page 139, see also ENEMY HEART page 463 which has a different number]; CARRIES, MOCCASIN (alias JOHN MOCCASIN) wid Black Calf Woman #2, WA-15366 ND 1 Mar 1921, srv 1867-9, died 14 Mar 1914. [White, pages 242 and 1073]; COFFEE, wid Weasel Woman, WA-1615834 ND 28 May 1928, srv 1874-5, died 2 Oct 1926 at Eldonwoods [sic] ND [White, page 295]; COONOUGH TI CHO or RED STAR alias STRIKE BEAR, or SA CATI PA, wid Daisy D. Red Star, SC-12432 ND 28 Feb 1921, WA-1647925 ND 29 Jul 1929, srv 1876 & 1880, died 7 Jun 1929 at Ree ND [White, pages 319, 1274, and 1494]; CROW GHOST or KANGI NANAGI or Lawrence Crow Ghost, wid Agatha Zuyawin, SA-17162 ND 28 Feb 1920, WA-1619518 ND 16 Jul 1928, srv 1890-1, died 16 Sep 1927 at Mandan ND [White, pages 349 and 822]; EATON, HARRY A., wid Alb Yellow, SC-12017 ND 31 Mar 1921, WA-1577470 ND 11 Apr 1927, srv 1875-92, died 5 Dec 1926 at Elbowoods ND [White, page 444]; ELK FOREHEAD, alias BEARS BELLY, alias ELKS FACE, alias SCOW WAY, SC-12963 ND 28 Feb 1921, srv 1874 [White, page 455: see also BEARS BELLY]; ENEMY HEART, alias BLOODY HAND, SA-17795 ND 28 Feb 1921, srv 1873 [White, page 463: see also BLOODY HAND 139]; FOUR RINGS, or FOUR THORNS, wid Last Child, WA-1586748 ND 12 Jul 1927, srv 1874 & 1880, died 12 Feb 1926 [White, page 519]; HANDSOME ELK, or RED BEAR, SC-1167258 ND 13 Jun 1927 [White, page 636]; HIGH EAGLE, or WALKS THE FLAT, wid Sioux Woman, WA-15380 ND 28 Feb 1921, sol died 6 Oct 1914, Elbowoods ND [White, page 700]; HUNTLEY, SOLOMON, wid Cedar Woman, WA-1692592 ND 2 May 1931, srv 1870-4 3rd US Inf, died 20 Nov 1914, FT Berthold Res ND. [White, page 754; No Indian name listed, possibly a white man]; KANGI WANAGI, or CROW GHOST, Lawrence Crow Ghost, wid ZUYAWIN, SA-17162 ND 28 Feb 1920, WA-1619518 ND 16 Jul 1928, srv 1890-1, died 16 Sep 1927 Mandan ND [White, page 822 and 349]; LITTLE SIOUX, alias SIOUX (SEN NEN NET), SC-12434 ND 28 Feb 1921, srv 1875-80 [White, page 925], LITTLE SOLDIER, wid Sweet Grass Woman, WA-15374 ND 28 Feb 1921, srv 1872-3, died 13 Feb 1917 Elbowood ND [White, page 925]; NET A PAH, alias RED TAIL, wid Comes Back, SC-13766 ND 28 Feb 1921 WA-1649658 ND 27 Aug 1929, srv 1880, died 1 Aug

This article draws upon these pension records and includes a number of interviews, most of which have not hitherto been published. These interviews yield interesting details about Arikara scout service between 1865 and 1881, especially as they pertain to Custer's battle at the Little Bighorn.

It must be noted that these interviews were conducted in 1911, 1923, and 1925, thus between thirty-five and forty-nine years after the Custer battle. Consequently, the records contain some inaccuracies. Nonetheless, they are of value to scholars interested in the Plains Indian Wars, the Custer battle, and Native American scouts.

ARIKARA MILITARY SERVICE, 1865-1881

Before discussing the interviews, it is useful to provide some background information to Arikara military service and the reasons they joined the U. S. Army in what could be called a military alliance against the Sioux. Arikara relations with the Lakota Sioux in particular (these were called *Sanánat* by the Arikaras) were complex. Periods of war were interrupted by trading and even intermarriage. Still, by the mid-1800s, the Arikaras were surrounded by much stronger Lakota tribes with whom they were regularly at war. If Arikara warfare in the 1700s was still characterized by territorial expansion (at the expense of the Mandans and Hidatsas), by the 1800s they were on the defensive against the Lakotas. By this time, Arikara warriors (*naahukoósu'*) went to war for a number of reasons: to defend their home territory against invaders, to protect their hunting grounds, to avenge the death of a relative by enemies, to end the mourning period for a deceased loved one, to gain prestige by accumulating war honors, to accumulate wealth (horses and other plunder), to gain social status by giving away the spoils of war, to protect tribal trade interests, to capture women, to capture scalps for a special sacrificial ceremony, and to increase their prospects for marriage. Unfortunately, because of their small numbers and despite their bravery, the Arikaras tended to be at the mercy of the Lakotas.

1929 Elbowoods [White, page 1129 and 1274]; SOLDIER, SA-17797 ND 1 Mar 1921, srv 1868-81 Ind Scts USA, died 7 May 1921 [White, page 1449]; STRIKES TWO, or TA TA REE WE CHI, wid Plum Woman, SA-17796 ND 1 Mar 1921, WC-10933 ND 7 Nov 1923, srv 1876 Ind Scts USA, died 8 Sep 1922 Elbowoods ND, I-O#1326420 [White, page 1494]; YOUNG HAWK, wid Chief Lying Against, WC-10858 ND 2 Aug 1923, srv 1875-6 Ind Scts USA, died 16 Jan 1915 Elbowoods ND [White, page 1724].

This condition changed when the United States became embroiled with the Lakotas in the mid-1860s. Some visionary officers began to consider the employment of Arikara warriors as scouts and auxiliary forces. The first of these was General Alfred Sully who met the Arikaras on the Fort Berthold Reservation while searching for Dakota Sioux refugees from Minnesota in 1864. According to Sully, the chiefs and warriors were glad to see the troops and “offered their services to go out with me.” Sully declined their offer at this time, but he believed that the Fort Berthold tribes (which also included Mandans and Hidatsas, quite a few of whom would later serve as scouts as well) could form “a buffer against the Sioux.”² A year later, however, Sully enlisted the first Arikara to serve as a scout: *Tamena Way Way*, better known as “Bloody Knife.” Bloody Knife was actually of mixed Lakota and Arikara ancestry. Because of his knowledge of the terrain and the ways of the Sioux, Bloody Knife proved to be very useful on the campaign. Bloody Knife later achieved fame as one of Custer’s most trusted scouts. He was also one of three Fort Berthold scouts to be killed at the Little Bighorn eleven years later.³

The first systematic attempt to enlist Fort Berthold Indians as scouts was done by Colonel Philippe Régis de Trobriand of the Thirty-First Infantry Regiment. De Trobriand arrived at Fort Stevenson in August 1867 and quickly learned that his foot soldiers were quite powerless against the mounted Sioux. His inexperienced men were so frightened of the Sioux that “they think more of avoiding them than of fighting them.”⁴ In September, de Trobriand asked the Fort Berthold tribes for help. Arikara chief White Shield approved even though the warriors were needed in the defense of his village. After receiving authorization from the War Department, de Trobriand called up the first scouts in April 1868. The scouts enlisted for various reasons. Some sought revenge, some needed money to support their families, others were hoping to gain war honors.

De Trobriand’s experiment was a success. The scouts contributed significantly to the defenses of these military posts. The losses in horses and cattle due to Lakota attacks dropped

² Sully to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Northwest, *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol. 41, Part 1 (Washington, D. C.,: Government Printing Office, 1893), 150.

³ For a detailed biography of Bloody Knife see Ben Innis, *Bloody Knife! Custer’s Favorite Scout* (Fort Collins, CO: Old Army Press, 1973).

⁴ Lucille M. Kane, Trans. and Ed., *Military Life in Dakota: The Journal of Philippe Régis de Trobriand* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 60.

to almost zero. The scouts also carried mail between the different commands and escorted detachments through dangerous territory. In other words, scouts were essential in keeping the lines of supply and communication open between the different stations. They were so successful that Colonel David S. Stanley chose to keep them on after he replaced de Trobriand as the officer in charge in 1869.

But scout service was also dangerous. Several scouts were killed in skirmishes around Fort Stevenson and at other forts where they were stationed (including Fort Buford, Fort Rice, and Fort McKeen/Abraham Lincoln). Apart from the dangers of battle, the scouts were also exposed to the elements. For example, the scout *Na-shan Sahnish* ("Arikara Chief") "froze his fingers, hands and feet" while in the field during the winter of 1872. Despite his handicap, Arikara Chief continued to serve until 1874.⁵

Fort Berthold scouts accompanied several expeditions in the 1870s, including Col. Stanley's Yellowstone Expedition of 1872, the Yellowstone Expedition of 1873 (which included Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer, the U.S. Boundary Survey Commission expedition of 1873-74, the Black Hills expedition of 1874, and finally the Little Bighorn expedition of 1876.

Thirteen Arikara scouts accompanied Col. David S. Stanley's Yellowstone Expedition of 1872 to investigate the best route for the Northern Pacific Railroad (N.P.R.R.). During the expedition the Arikara scouts guided the troops through the land, located grazing grounds for the horse teams, and looked for signs of hostile Sioux. Sioux war parties under Sitting Bull and Gall skirmished with the troops on several occasions. Two officers were killed in these fights. The foot soldiers were unable to pursue the attackers. On October 15, 1872, the troops returned to Forts McKeen and Rice. The survey had been completed only partially. General Stanley reported that for the following expedition, cavalry troops were necessary to keep the Sioux at a safe distance.⁶

⁵ Agent Jonathan S. Murphy to the Secretary of the Interior, March 1891, NARA, RG 75, Comm. Records, Box # 516643, [Letters Received] 4 November 1890 to 14 April 1891. See entry on Ree Chief in *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956).

⁶ For a brief history of Stanley's 1872 expedition see Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993). While Stanley and the scouts were out on the expedition, Sioux war parties staged attacks against the remaining scouts at Fort McKeen. In these fights, five scouts were killed. *Te ta way rish* ("Amongst" or "Ree-Standing-Among-the-Hidatsa") was ambushed while scouting twelve miles from

The next year about forty scouts accompanied Stanley on yet another expedition along the Yellowstone River. Again the purpose was to investigate the best route for the railroad. This time, however, Stanley's expedition was assisted by Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry. This was the first time the Arikara scouts served with Custer, and the flamboyant Custer made a great impression on them. The scouts honored Custer with the name *ouxčes* ("Long Hair"). This expedition also ran into Sitting Bull who opposed railroad construction through this important territory. Several sharp battles and skirmishes were fought between the Indians and the troops. The Arikara scouts, especially Bloody Knife, distinguished themselves during this campaign.⁷

That same year, a number of Arikara scouts accompanied the United States Boundary Survey Commission that surveyed the border between the United States and Canada. The military escort was under the command of Major Marcus A. Reno. The survey was resumed the following year. Surprisingly, there were no serious clashes between the Lakotas and the expedition. The Arikara scouts provided important support by guiding the surveyors, carrying mail, and providing the expedition with fresh meat.⁸

About forty-one Arikara scouts accompanied Custer's controversial (and well-documented) expedition into the Black Hills.⁹ Apart from scouting the country and looking for

the fort on August 8. *Shiis-u-two* ("Spotted Eagle") was killed about twenty miles from the fort on August 26. *Coon-agh-wah* ("Red Bear"), *Ka ka naytan* ("Crow Tail"), and *[Nee]-noch-na-shaun-na* ("Young Man Chief" or "Boy Chief") were killed near the fort on October 2, 1872. *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956). In the *Arikara Narratives*, Strikes Two gave a brief account of what happened to the five scouts who were killed near Fort McKeen (later Fort Lincoln) in 1872. Strikes Two and others were just about to enlist as scouts when they learned about the deaths of their comrades. Please note that Strikes Two's account of the fight differs slightly from the official record. Keep in mind that Strikes Two told his story forty years after these events transpired. One of the scouts who was killed, Red Bear, was the father of Handsome Elk who later adopted his father's name and also enlisted as a scout. Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 188-189.

⁷ For an excellent discussion of this campaign see Lawrence A. Frost, *Custer's 7th Cavalry and the Campaign of 1873* (El Segundo, CA: Upton & Sons, 1986).

⁸ The boundary survey has been the subject of two important books. An older history is John E. Parsons, *West on the 49th Parallel: Red River to the Rockies, 1872-1876* (New York: William Morrow, 1963). A more recent history is Tony Rees, *Arc of the Medicine line: Mapping the World's Longest Undefended Border Across the Western Plains* (Nebraska: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008).

⁹ The Arikara scouts who accompanied the expedition were: Bear (*Coon-ough*), Bear's Arm (*Coon-ough-wee-na*), Bear Bull (*Coon-ough-ho-cus*), Bear's Eyes (*Coon-ough-chee-ree*), Bear's Ears (*Coon-ough-et-ca-to-wa*), Bear's Robe (*Coon-ough-sa-hosche*), Big Bear (*Coon-ough-coo-soo*), Black Medicine (*Wau-we-ca-coct*), Bloody Hand (*Ish-ki-e-pat-too*), Bloody Knife (*Ne-se-ree-pat*), Broad Footed Beaver (*Ach-ca-toe*), Bull Neck (*Ho-cus-na-teew*), Carries The

hostile Indians, the scouts carried dispatches and letters between the command and Fort Lincoln. This was an extremely dangerous job as they were traveling through hostile territory without support from the cavalry. Only the bravest of men were selected by Bloody Knife to perform this important task. Unfortunately, only the names of a few of these couriers were recorded. They were: Skunk's Head, Bull Neck [Custer wrote Bull Bear], Lover, Horn In Front, Red Stone [Santee?], Left Hand number 1, and Left Hand number 2. Couriers received the best revolvers and carbines, and plenty of ammunition and rations for their journey. Professor Aris B. Donaldson, one of the scientists accompanying the expedition praised the work of the scouts:

As scouts, they are invaluable . . . they scoured the whole country over in advance of our marching column. If any hostile Sioux had been anywhere in front of us or on our flanks, these ubiquitous and cunning scouts would certainly have found them out. Where they scour the country, no ambush could be successfully laid. . . . White men could hardly equal them in the capacity of scouts.¹⁰

Moccasins (*Hu-naw-ne-ca*), Crow Bear (*Ca-ku-coon-ough*), Eagle (*Pe-aih*), Elk's Face (*Way-scow*), Foolish Bear (*Coon-ough-agh-wah*), Forked Horn (*Arree-chitt*), Goose (*Co-es*), Horn In Front (*Arriu-quis-co*), Lean Bear (*Coon-ough-ta-hish*), Left Hand (*Quigrhi*), Little Brave (*Ne-ho-cus-chee-ree-postah*), Lover (*Fa-wa-too*), Mad Bull (*Ho-cus-wa-ra-hau*), Medicine Wolf (*Schi-ri-wa-rouch-ta*), Pretty Wolf (*Schi-ri-noo-na-rah*), Rough Horn (*Arriu-sa-wough*), Sioux (*Leu-neu-net*), Sioux Stand (*Fat-hugh-na-ra*), Skunk's Head (*Ne-wit-pa-haw*), Strikes Two (*Fi-ta-ra-wi-chi*), The Bush (*Na-pa-raw-rough*), Vermillion (*Pa-haw-too*), Whistling Bear (*Coon-ough-ta-wa-na*), White Breasted Rat (*Cau-sa-ca*), White War Eagle (*Nay-to-cus-to-ca*), Young Bear (*Coon-ough-humm-ni*), Young Elk (*Wah-humm-ni*), Young Hawk (*Ach-sa-wee-coo-soo-humm-ni*), and Young War Eagle (*Nay-to-cus-humm-ni*). Their interpreter was Fort Berthold trader Frederick F. Gerard. The scouts were under the immediate command of Lt. George D. Wallace of the Seventh Cavalry. Lawrence A. Frost, *Custer's 7th Cavalry and the Campaign of 1873* (El Segundo, CA: Upton & Sons, 1986), 126. Young Hawk's list of the scouts who served in the Black Hills expedition is different from the official muster rolls. The differences might be explained by the fact that the Arikaras frequently changed their names during their lifetimes. Young Hawk's list includes: Angry Bear, Angry Bull, Black Rabbit, Bear Robe, Bear's Belly, Bear's Ears, Bear's Eye (second name, Wolf-Stands-in-the-Cold), Bull-in-the-Water, Bull Neck, Carries-the-Moccasin-about-the-Room, Charging Bull, Crow Bear, Dry Bear (Very Lean Bear), Enemy Heart, Foolish Bear, Goose, Growling Bear (Bear Growls), Horns-in-Front (Young Hawk's father), Left Handed, Little Sioux, Paint, Pretty Wolf, Pointed Hill, Red Bear, Rough Horn, Sees-the-Track, Standing Soldier, Strikes Two, String Ear-rings, Two Bulls, White Belly, Young Hawk himself. Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 50.

¹⁰ Herbert Krause and Gary D. Olson, eds., *Prelude to Glory: A Newspaper Accounting of Custer's 1874 Expedition to the Black Hills* (Sioux Falls, SD: Brevet Press, 1974), 72.

During the expedition the scouts pitched their camp ahead of the troops at the end of each day. At night they entertained themselves with gambling and singing. Occasionally officers and enlisted men stopped by to visit them. On days when the troops were not on the move, they went out hunting. Custer had taken the regimental brass band along. The band gave concerts almost every evening in front of Custer's tent. "Garry Owen" was Long Hair's favorite tune.¹¹

Although the Black Hills expedition was deemed a great success following the discovery of gold (according to Arikara oral tradition, the first gold was discovered by the scouts¹²), it set events in motion leading to the Great Sioux War of 1876-77 in which the scouts would also serve. Chief Son Of Star (a.k.a. Rushing Bear) had promised to support the U.S. Army in a meeting with President Grant. The thirty-eight scouts who eventually "touched the pen" in "Wounded Face's" (the Arikara name for Tom Custer) office are listed here:

List of Arikara Scouts in 1876

The first column lists the names as they appear in the *Arikara Narratives*. The second column lists the names as they appear in the muster rolls. The scouts who participated in the valley fight with Major Reno are marked by an asterisk. Those who joined in the charge but did not make it across the river are marked by the # symbol. Those who were back at the base camp or carrying mail are marked by the ^ symbol. The location of the scouts in italics is uncertain.¹³

<i>Bear's Eyes (aka Wolf Stands in the Cold)</i>	<i>Ku-nukh-chi-ri-ku</i>
#Black Fox	Chi-wa-ku-ka-tit
^Black Porcupine	Su-nu-ka-tit
*Bloody Knife (civilian scout at \$50 a month)	
*Bobtailed Bull (appointed Sergeant)	Hu-kus-ta-ri-kux
*Boy Chief (aka Black Calf)	Ha-ne-ka-tit

¹¹ Ernest Grafe and Paul Horsted, *Exploring With Custer: The 1874 Black Hills Expedition* (Custer, SD: Golden Valley Press, 2005), 114-115.

¹² Douglas R. Parks, ed., *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 277-278.

¹³ See also John S. Gray, "Arikara Scouts for Custer," *North Dakota History* 35 (December 1968), PAGENUMBERS.

#Bull	Hu-kus
#Bull [Stands] in the Water	Hu-kus-ti-ha-rit
#Charging Bull (aka Rushing Bull)	Hu-kus-tu-na-weg
<i>Charging up the Hill (aka Climbs the Bluff)</i>	<i>De-ra-wi-chi-to-nakh</i>
^Curley Head	Pakh-ka-ri-wi
<i>Foolish/Angry Bear (aka Bear or Crooked Foot)</i>	<i>Ku-nukh</i>
*Forked (Crooked) Horn	A-ri-chi-ta
*Goose	Ko-at
^Horns in Front	A-rin-guis-ka
^Howling Wolf (aka Barking Wolf)	Sch[i]-ri-ti-wa-na
<i>Left Handed (aka Left Hand)</i>	<i>Kukh-ke-khit</i>
*Little Brave (aka Bear's Trail or Little Soldier)	Na-hu-kus-chi-ri-psit
*Little Sioux (aka Sioux)	Sa-na-nat
*One Feather	Akh-ku-hi-tu
^One Horn	Akh-ku-ari-ku
<i>Owl</i>	<i>Wa-hu-ru</i>
*Pretty/Good Face (with mule train during charge)	Ska-re
*Red Bear (aka Handsome Elk or Good Elk)	Wa-ne
*Red Foolish Bear (aka Foolish Bear)	Ku-nukh-sa-khu-nu
*Red Star (aka Strikes the Bear or Strikes Bear)	Ku-nukh-ti-cha
#Red Wolf (aka Bush)	Na-pa-ra-nukh
^Running Wolf (aka Wolf Runs)	Schi-ri-ti-wa-na
^Scabby Wolf (aka Laying Down)	Schi-ri-ti-wa-na
#Soldier (appointed Corporal)	Hku-na-nish
#Stabbed (aka Stab)	Ka-wa-sag
#Strikes the Lodge	Te-ka-cha
*Strikes Two	Ti-ta-ra-wi-chi
<i>Tall (High) Bear (aka Long Bear)</i>	<i>Ku-nukh-ti-chis</i>
<i>Wagon</i>	<i>Sa-bi-ra-ni-wukh</i>

#White Eagle

Ne-ta-kus-ta-ka

^Wolf (Cha-ra-ta or Mandan or Howling Wolf)

Schi-ri-ti-wa-na

*Young Hawk

Ni-ku-ta-wix-si-hu-ni

*Frederick F. Gerard (interpreter).

The scouts were placed under command of Lt. Charles A. Varnum, who the scouts named “Peaked Face” or “Long Face.” Not all of these scouts were present at the Little Bighorn Battle. Some remained behind with Terry and Gibbon or were carrying mail back to the expedition’s base camp on the Powder River.

The story of the Little Bighorn battle has been told in detail before and does not bear repeating here.¹⁴ Three Fort Berthold scouts were killed in the battle: Bloody Knife, Little Brave (a.k.a. Little Soldier or Bear’s Trail) and Bob-tail Bull. Their corpses were mutilated beyond recognition. A fourth scout, Goose, was severely wounded but survived the ordeal on Reno Hill.

The loss of three of their best warriors and of Custer grieved the people at Fort Berthold. Years later, they composed songs in honor of their warriors and one for Long Hair himself. The Custer song told of how much they missed him:

Now I’m lonesome
I’m lonesome, I’m lonesome
Custer, he’s the cause of my being lonely

Despite the disaster at the Little Bighorn, and even though their confidence in the white soldiers was badly shaken, the scouts continued to serve loyally. Many continued to serve under Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry in a failed attempt to prevent Sitting Bull from slipping across the border into Canada. Five Arikara scouts, including Running Wolf who is featured below, also temporarily accompanied George Crook’s force in search of Crazy Horse. Crook’s aide-de-camp, Lt. John G. Bourke, later recalled that the Arikara scouts “proved to be of great

¹⁴ The scholarship on the battle has been an industry of its own. Arguably the best and most original treatment of the battle is still John S. Gray, *Custer’s Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Reconstructed* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

service while with the column.”¹⁵ Crook’s search led to the battle at Slim Buttes, but by then Running Wolf and his companions had been directed back to Fort Lincoln again.

In October 1876, the scouts served under Terry and Col. Samuel D. Sturgis of the Seventh Cavalry, and participated in a mission to dismount and disarm the Lakota Indians at the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Agencies. This mission, which was conducted in great secrecy, was a success. Although the scouts did not get to take revenge for the loss of their friends at the Little Bighorn, taking the horses and weapons from the Lakotas did offer some degree of satisfaction. Among the Arikara scouts who later drove the horse herd from Bismarck to Fargo, North Dakota, were Little Sioux and Red Star, both featured in the interviews below.¹⁶

Some Arikara scouts remained in service between 1877 and 1881. Bear’s Eye, Big John, Eagle Tail, Left Hand, Little Soldier, Only Brave, Vermillion, White Breasted Rat, Little Sioux, and Young War Eagle periodically served at the various forts in the area. They also patrolled the U.S.-Canadian border to prevent Sitting Bull’s followers from raiding in the United States. Mainly, however, they served as couriers between troops in the field and the military posts. Little Sioux, for example, carried mail for the army between 1878 and 1882. He earned \$25 a month.

THE STRUGGLE FOR PENSIONS

Years after their enlistment, many former scouts began to suffer from ailments which they attributed to the harshness of their years in the military. Both President Ulysses S. Grant and Lt. Col. Custer had promised that they would be looked after following their service.

¹⁵ James Willert, ed., *Bourke’s Diary: From Journals of 1st Lt. John Gregory Bourke, June 27-Sept. 15, 1876. Chronicle of the 1876 Indian War* (La Mirada, CA: James Willert, Publisher, 1986), 173. Charles M. Robinson III, ed., *The Diaries of John Gregory Bourke vol. 2, July 29, 1876-April 7, 1878* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2005), 89-90. John G. Bourke, *On the Border With Crook* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891/Columbus, OH: College Book Co., 1950), 361.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, we do not know for certain all of the names of the Arikara scouts who were with Terry during this campaign, but the register of enlistments for that month shows that the following scouts served at Fort Lincoln at this time: Barking Wolf, Bears Ears, Black Calf, Black Fox, Black Porcupine, Bull, Bull in the Water, Bush, Climbs the Bluff, Curley Head, Foolish Bear, Forked Horn, Good Elk, Good Face, Goose, Horn in Front, Howling Wolf, Left Hand, One Feather, One Horn, Owl, Rushing Bull, (Little) Sioux, Soldier, Strikes the Lodge, Strikes Two, Wagon, White Cloud (Dakota Scout?), Running Wolf, Young Hawk, Young War Eagle. *Register of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*. Volumes 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71. From Red Star’s pension records listed below, it is clear that he, too, was present in this mission under the name Strikes-the-Bear. For descriptions of this mission see Hugh L. Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928) and Rev. John E. Cox, *Five Years in the United States Army* (New York: Sol Lewis, 1973).

Instead, the post-war reservation years proved extremely difficult for the Fort Berthold tribes. Their reservation was reduced in size on several occasions. Their lands were allotted, and white settlers began to encroach on their territory. Worse, annuity payments and other government supports were inadequate. In his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1890, Agent Jonathan S. Murphy noted that the Arikaras were becoming increasingly bitter and impatient. One Arikara told Murphy that the government was treating its former enemies better than its lifelong friends:

The Sioux, he said, had fought the white man until they were driven to a corner and could fight no more, and as a mark of respect for their independence and bravery the Great Father now made them the distinguished objects of his favors in the way of large annuities, abundance of rations, and even sent special commissioners to treat with them. In view of the fact that the Indians of this reservation [Fort Berthold] have long been the friends and allies of the whites, and that during the Sioux wars of recent time the Rees furnished the best scouts the Army had, and lent all the aid possible at all times, never for a moment wavering in their friendship, the force of sarcasm contained in the remarks referred to is only too apparent, for it is a fact by no means to the credit of the Government that the Gros Ventres, Mandans, and Arickarees have been less regarded by it than any other tribes, and this notwithstanding that they have always deserved better at its hands than almost any tribes on the continent.¹⁷

In March 1891, Murphy wrote a long letter on behalf of the scouts to the Secretary of the Interior asking for some kind of support. Many of the former scouts were destitute and suffering. “Nearly all of those whose names and records are herewith shown received wounds while in the service of the Government or now suffer from ailments originating in the course of their service,” Murphy wrote. He added: “I would beg to urge that actions, and favorable actions be taken upon this matter, since the Indian scouts now living are rapidly nearing the

¹⁷ Jonathan S. Murphy to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 31, 1890. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 35.

end of their [lives].” Murphy also asked for the wives and children of scouts who had passed away. Unfortunately, it appears that the Interior Department did not do anything with Murphy’s plea.¹⁸

In 1910, Enemy Heart, Red Bear, Alfred (Bear) Young Hawk, traveled to Washington, D.C., to draw attention to the scouts. Congressman Louis B. Hanna, a Fargo-based lawyer and Congressman from North Dakota, picked up their cause. On July 19, 1911, Hanna introduced a bill in the House of Representatives, granting pensions for Indian veterans who had served as scouts for the U. S. Army in the Indian wars. Hanna then submitted the scouts’ discharge papers to government officials. Again, however, nothing came of the request. To make matters worse, it appears that the discharge papers were lost in the shuffle from one office to the next. Over the next few decades, the surviving scouts and their relatives tried to get the papers, which they regarded as “something to be treasured,” back. Unfortunately, they were never found. Without the discharge papers, filing pension claims became more difficult.¹⁹

Partly to provide an accurate account of their contributions at the Little Bighorn battle,²⁰ and partly to bolster their pension claims, the surviving Arikara veterans cooperated with Dr. orin Grant Libby, secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, to provide details of their military service. These interviews, conducted in mid-August 1912, were not published until 1920 under the title *The Arikara Narrative of the Campaign Against the Hostile Dakotas, June 1876*.²¹

¹⁸ Agent Jonathan S. Murphy to the Secretary of the Interior, March 1891, NARA, RG 75, Comm. Records, Box # 516643, [Letters Received] 4 November 1890 to 14 April 1891.

¹⁹ Herman J. Viola, *The Little Bighorn Remembered: The Untold Indian Story of Custer’s Last Stand* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 147.

²⁰ When they sat down to relate their version of the events at the Little Bighorn, the scouts wanted to do more than create a record of their experiences. Most of all, they wanted to set the record straight. After the battle, newspapers around the country published conflicting accounts of what happened on June 25-26, 1876. In the search for answers to explain the tragedy, fingers were pointed in various directions: some blamed Custer, while others accused Major Reno. A few papers suggested that the scouts bore responsible for the disaster. The accusation received further support at the Reno Court of Inquiry, when Lt. Varnum, who had commanded the scouts during the campaign, implied that the scouts had deserted the battlefield shortly after the fight began. In the anti-Indian atmosphere of the time, Varnum’s claim received widespread attention. Nobody, however, asked the scouts for their perspective on what happened.

²¹ On August 2, 1912, Libby received permission. According to the letter from the supervisor in charge at Fort Berthold: “The following persons are permitted to meet in a feast to last not over five days beginning on August 15th: Strikes Two, Boy Chief, Red Bear, One Feather, Red Star, Soldier, Running Wolf, Young Hawk, Little Sioux, Sitting Bear, Hand, Snow Bird, Peter Beauchamp, and the following named persons are permitted to attend for two

After the Libby interviews, the surviving scouts and their relatives organized a society called the “United States Volunteer Indian Scouts.” Membership was not restricted to the scouts, but to any Arikara who had served his country in war. The society organized dances and feasts in honor of Arikara veterans of World War I. It also continued to appeal to the government for pensions for the old scouts and their families. Society members composed several songs in honor of their comrades who had died at the Little Bighorn. In 1920 its officers were Red Star (Commander of Scouts), Red Bear (First Vice-President), Bear’s Belly (Second Vice-President), Four Rings (Color Sergeant), Little Sioux (Treasurer), Albert H. Simpson (Corresponding Secretary), Alfred Bear (Recording Secretary), Rev. Aaron McGaffey Beede (Chaplain), Floyd Bear (Assistant Chaplain), and Snow Bird and Hiram Price (Announcers).²²

meals one at the beginning and one at the end of the feast: Young Eagle (Standing Soldier, Little Soldier, Three Foxes, Red Tail, Bears Belly, Enemy Heart, Crow Ghost, Two Bulls, White Man Above, Four Rings, Moccasin, White Face, Butterfly. This meeting will be under the supervision of Orin Grant Libby and is permitted for the study of ethnological and historical facts.” A copy of this letter is in the [Melvin Gilmore Papers] at the SHSND archives, Bismarck, North Dakota. Orin Grant Libby (1864-1952) received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he studied under Frederick Jackson Turner. In 1902 he accepted a position as Assistant Professor and Chair of the History Department at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks. Libby began to study North Dakota history and became secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota. He fulfilled this position from 1902 to 1944. From 1906 until 1926 he edited the *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota* and its successor, the *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, from 1926 to 1945. In 1945 he also retired as Chair of the Department of American History at UND. He died on March 29, 1952. Gordon Iseminger, “Dr. Orin G. Libby: A Centennial Commemoration of the Father of North Dakota History,” *North Dakota History* 68:4 (YEAR), 2-25; George F. Shafer, “Dr. Orin G. Libby,” *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 12:3 (YEAR), 107-110. When Libby arrived at Fort Berthold, he met with the remaining Arikara Scout veterans, including Sitting Bear, Soldier, Young Hawk, Red Bear, Boy Chief, Red Star, Strikes Two, Running Wolf, and Little Sioux. (Although there is a photograph of One Feather in the *Arikara Narrative*, there is, however, no interview with him in the book.) They met at the house of Bear’s Belly at the Arikara settlement of Nishu (Armstrong). Also present were Goes Ahead, a Crow Scout who also had fought at the Little Bighorn, and Frederick F. Gerard who had acted as interpreter for the scouts in the campaign. Finally, Aaron McGaffey Beede, a poet, linguist, lawyer, and Episcopal Missionary to the Indian tribes of North Dakota was also there. For four days the veterans talked about their experiences. Their words were translated by Peter Beauchamp, a young Arikara who had graduated from Hampton Institute in Virginia. Each of the scouts gave his rendition of what happened during the campaign. According to Libby, they were “very scrupulous to confine themselves to just that portion of the common experience to which they were eye witnesses.” While the scouts spoke, Beauchamp translated their words and Libby wrote down all that was said. After the interviews, the story was read back to the scouts so inaccuracies in the translation could be corrected and discrepancies in the accounts could be clarified.

²² According to Melfine Fox Everett, the Old Scouts’ society was founded shortly after Orin G. Libby’s visit to Fort Berthold in 1912. Herman J. Viola, *The Little Bighorn Remembered: The Untold Indian Story of Custer’s Last Stand* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 140. My records seem to indicate that the society was founded around the time the first Arikara veterans of World War I returned to the reservation. This would set the date back to around 1918 or 1919. However, the absence of records must be offset with Arikara oral tradition. Therefore, I gladly defer to Melfine Fox Everett on this matter.

In 1919, the scouts organized a homecoming celebration for the returning veterans of World War I. Ever since, the society has led annual celebrations honoring those who served for their country. Today, the ceremonies are held on Memorial Day on the last Monday of the month of May. The ceremony takes place at the Old Scouts' Cemetery, seven miles west of White Shield. It is a very solemn event and it includes songs in Arikara for Bloody Knife, Bobtail Bull, and Little Brave, who died at the battle of the Little Bighorn. There are also songs in honor of General George Armstrong Custer, and for two horses that returned from the battlefield. One of these horses belonged to Little Brave, the other to Bloody Knife. Despite many wounds, Bloody Knife's horse found its way back to the Arikara people. In honor of their fallen comrade, the Arikaras never rode the horse again. The Arikaras remember this event in a song that expresses the loss they felt after the battle: "This wounded buckskin horse is standing there waiting for his master."²³

After years of trying to get a pension, some of the veterans passed away while others simply gave up. A third group, which included the scouts listed below, continued to fight for their pension rights. Their claims were complicated because their current names did not match the names under which many had served. Complicating matters further was the fact that mustering officers often gave imperfect spellings or inaccurate translations of the names. Nevertheless, the Pension Office made genuine attempts to establish the correct identity of the scout-applicants. On several occasions it sent special examiners to interview the claimants. Sadly, the wheels of the Washington Bureaucracy were turning slowly, and many scouts passed away before their claims were settled.

Although the pension application process was a source of frustration (and injustice) for the Arikara veterans, they did result in a unique source on the lives of these scouts and on their service at the Little Bighorn in particular. Of special interest are the interviews conducted by special examiners M. J. McGirr (1911) and Ernest W. Young (1923 and 1925). The following interviews are selections only. There were many more interviews whose purpose was to help identify the claimants. In these cases, the interviews yielded little new information and were,

²³ Herman J. Viola, *The Little Bighorn Remembered: The Untold Indian Story of Custer's Last Stand* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 141.

thus, not selected for inclusion here. Each interviewee is here introduced first and the interviews follow.

BEAR'S BELLY

Bear's Belly did not serve as a scout during Custer's fateful campaign on the Little Bighorn. However, he did serve as a scout with Custer's Black Hills expedition of 1874. Bear's Belly was born at Fort Clark, Dakota Territory, around 1856. His father was Blackbird, who served as a scout at Fort Stevenson in the late 1860s or early 1870s.²⁴ On May 11, 1874, Bear's Belly himself enlisted around age eighteen under the name of "Elk Forehead" or "Sore Elk Forehead." However, the mustering officer recorded his name as *Way Scow* or "Elks Face." Sadly, this imperfect translation led to much confusion when Bear's Belly applied for a pension later in life. After scouting in Custer's Black Hills expedition, Bear's Belly left the service on September 2, 1874 and never re-enlisted. Around 1884 he married Corn Stalk a.k.a. Corn Tassel Woman and had several children, only one of whom, Burton Bell, survived to maturity.²⁵

Bear's Belly gave his discharge papers to his father, Black Bird, for safe-keeping. But when Black Bird died while Bear's Belly was out on a hunting trip, the discharge papers were buried with his father, complicating Bear's Belly's application for a pension. He formally applied for a pension on February 19, 1921, but his claim was rejected on the grounds that the Registers of Enlistments did not show a scout named Bear's Belly or Elk Forehead. However, after several investigations by the Pension Office, Bear's Belly was identified as the scout who enlisted under the name "Elks Face" in 1874. Unfortunately, the Black Hills expedition was not covered by any of the pension laws at the time. Bear's Belly had to wait until Congress enacted

²⁴ I have been unable to locate a reference to a scout named Blackbird in the *Registers of Enlistments*. Although it is possible that he served as early as 1864 or 1865 under General Alfred Sully, it seems more likely that he enlisted under another name at Fort Stevenson in the late 1860s or early 1870s. Fort Stevenson was constructed in 1867. See *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956).

²⁵ Fort Berthold Census, June 30, 1902, Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, National Archives and Records Administration, M595, roll 132.

a new Pension act on March 3, 1927. He finally received a pension at \$30 a month in May 1927. Bear's Belly died at Nishu, on the Fort Berthold reservation, North Dakota, on April 22, 1933.²⁶

DEPOSITION OF BEAR'S BELLY IN SUPPORT OF LITTLE SIOUX'S PENSION CLAIM, JUNE 16, 1925.

Case of Little Sioux, Inv. Org. No. 17793

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, but in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of pensions personally appeared Bear's Belly, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 68 years, my postal address is Elbowoods, N. D., am a farmer.

I was a U. S. Scout only one time and I then got discharged. That time was when Gen. Custer first came to Ft. Lincoln. Little Sioux, who was in here before you a few minutes ago, was in at that same time. He was in before I was. I went that time from this Reservation, went alone by boat down the Missouri River to Fort A. Lincoln, where I was sworn in, given uniform, gun, horse. I was in the service 6 mo. Bloody-Knife was my chief Scout and directly over me. He could not speak English. He was killed while a Scout. He was killed just a few days after I left.

A white man called the roll of the Scouts morning and evening. A Sioux who could speak English told Bloody Knife when my name came and Bloody Knife, who understood Sioux, told me and I answered.

Q. What was the name called when you answered? A. Sore Elk Forehead (This witness gives this sound which, the nearest I can get it, is represented in English by the sound shown [in] this word: Wah-neegah-go-ah. My present interpreter gives it thus: War-negar-go-art. – EWY, Inspector). That was the name he always called in calling the roll, for me.

I did scouting about Fort A. Lincoln while I was in the service. I never went up the river to the Powder Horn or up that way; but I did go on the expedition to the Black Halls, under General Custer. Little Sioux was with us on that trip. In our language [his] name was just Sar-na. (This is the nearest I can represent in English the sound this witness gives. – EWY, Insp.).

²⁶ Bears Belly Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 15.7.4, Records of the Veterans Administration, "Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files"

That is the only name I know of his having while a Scout.

I am not related to him and have no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted to me by Albert Simpson and it is correct.

Attest: Floyd C. Lyon

Albert H. Simpson

Bear's Belly

Deponent.

Thumb-mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this deponent by me while under oath to give such interpretation.

Albert Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young, Inspector.

BEAR'S BELLY'S DEPOSITION, JUNE 16, 1925

Case of Bears Belly, (Elk Forehead), IOS. No. 17815

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, but in county of McLean, state of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Bears Belly, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 68 years, my postal address is Elbowoods, N. D., am a farmer.

I was in only once as a U. S. Scout and I then got a discharge that time. It was when Gen. Custer First went to Fort A. Lincoln. I went from this Reservation down the Missouri River alone in a boat to the Fort, where I was sworn in, and was given a gun, uniform and horse. I turned in my gun and horse when I got my discharge. I came home with some neighbors who were down there at or about the Fort.

It was early in April when I enlisted, about the time the ice breaks up on the river here. I was in 6 months. Bloody-Knife was my Chief Scout and was directly over me. He was killed on

the Custer battlefield where Gen. Custer himself was killed. I was not in the service at that time, but here on this Reservation. Men in the service with me were Red-Bear and Little Sioux, both here today. All my service was rendered at and about Ft. A. Lincoln. When the roll was called, twice a day, my name was called and I answered. Bloody-Knife could speak some Sioux, and a Sioux who could speak English spoke it to Bloody-Knife. This name, as I answered to it, was in English. When I enlisted they put it down in English, with the Arikara name right after it. The name in English was Sore Elk Forehead. This name in my language is Wah-nee-gah-go-ah. (This is the nearest I represent in English the sounds as this witness gives it. My present interpreter writes his idea of it thus: War-ne-gar-go-art. – EWY, Inspector). I never was up on the Little Big Horn River.

If it is stated in my application that I enlisted July 13, 1875, and discharged No. 11, 1876, that is wrong. I was in but 6 mo. And went in at the time I have herein stated - - when the ice was breaking up in the river. I had a discharge paper and left it with my father for safe-keeping. And while I was of[f] on a hunting trip, father died; and this paper being found among his things, was, as was the Indian custom, buried with him as one of his valuable possessions.

I was aged 19 years when I enlisted and was at that time full grown. (Make exact measurement of this witness with moccasins on and it is 5' 41/4". – EWY. Insp'r).

In the service with me were old acquaintances Red Bear and Little Sioux.

I was born on the south side of the Missouri River near Fort Clark. I do not know the name of the man who called the roll. He was a white man. The first officer over us was a tall slim man, name to me unknown [possibly Lt. Wallace?].

I had no brother who was a U. S. Scout. His name is Bluebird, he [is] not now living. Blackbird was my father, a U. S. Scout before I was, enlisted at Fort Stevenson. I enlisted one year after father's discharge I enlisted. He did not again enlist.

I have had but one wife and she is still living: Cornstalk Woman. She has been my wife 41 years, by Indian custom, never by white man's ceremony.

I have but one living child, its name [is] Burton Bears-Belly. I always had the name Bears Belly, from childhood; the interpreter did not seem able to translate it when I enlisted, so [I] was given the name Sore Elk-Forehead, a name I have not used since discharge.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted by Albert H. Simpson, and it is correct; and I never had any other name than as herein stated.

His

Attest: Maggie W. Ross

Bears Belly

Albert H. Simpson

alias

Sore Elk-Forehead,

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

The foregoing is a true interpretation by me under oath.

Albert H. Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young

Inspector

BOY CHIEF/BLACK [BUFFALO] CALF

DEPOSITION BY BLACK CALF (BOY CHIEF) IN SUPPORT OF RED BEAR'S DISABILITY CLAIM, AUGUST 24, 1911.

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 24 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Black calf, now known as Boy Chief, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 53, occupation farmer, P. O. Elbowoods, McLean Co, N. Dak. c/o Byron H. Wilde.

I served as Indian Scout under general Custer. I was not a scout at Fort Stevenson but was around there at the time my brother Red Bear, or Handsome Elk, was about there.

I don't know how he got his eye injured. I was not there when it happened. When I went over there he was in the hospital. It was three days after the injury when I saw him. He was in his own quarters when I saw him; not in the hospital. I was just a boy at that time and they did not tell me how it happened. I don't know now how it happened. I don't know how long he had to stay in bed. I went to see him just once while he was in bed. His eye was not tied up but he had them eye glasses on.

Q. When did he go blind of that eye?

A. he went blind right when he got it hurt. Yes he was blind when he came back from Fort Stevenson, before he went to Fort Lincoln. I think he could see a little with the injured eye later. I do not know how the eye appeared as he wore the glasses all the time. I [hated] to look at my brother's eye. I could not say whether it was the right eye or the left eye that was injured. It was about one year after he came home from Fort Stevenson that the other eye began troubling him.

No he never got any injury of either eye except the one he got at Fort Stevenson.

It is about a month ago that he got so that he cannot see out of either eye.

I don't know of any trouble he has except with his eyes.

I have no direct interest in this claim.

I have heard this statement read. I understood your questions and my answers are correctly recorded as read.

His

Boy X Chief

Mark

Witness

Clarence L. Soldier

Another witness not available.

Subscribed and sworn before me this 24th day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

DEPOSITION BY WHITE FACE IN SUPPORT OF RED BEAR'S DISABILITY CLAIM, AUGUST 25, 1911.

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 25 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared White Face, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 70, no occupation, P. O. Elbowoods, N. Dak.

I was in the service at Fort Stevenson about a year when Wah ne entered there and that is when I got acquainted with him. He is the same man who is now known as red bear.

We were working on the hay and he got some grass or something in his eye and since that time until today I have seen him wearing goggles. I was on the same stack when it happened but at a different wagon. I have forgotten which eye it was.

Two men were on the stack pitching the hay [illegible] to the ground and two pitching it from there to the sleigh. Wah ne was pitching from the ground to the sleigh.

He remained right in his quarters for a week or more. His face was swelled up and he had it bandaged for a while and then later on he began wearing goggles and has been wearing them ever since. I think the eye went blind right then. No he would not let me see the eye after he took the bandage off.

I do not belong to the same tribe as red Bear and have seen very little of him since we left Fort Stevenson. I just lately learned that the other eye was getting bad too.

I do not know of any other injury or disease that he had at Fort Stevenson.

I am not related to Red bear and have no interest in his pension claim.

I have heard this statement read. I understood your questions and my answers are correctly recorded as read.

His

Boy X Chief

Mark

Witness

Byron H. Wilde

Another witness not available.

Subscribed and sworn before me this 23rd day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

ENEMY HEART/BLOODY HAND

DEPOSITION BY ENEMY HEART (BLOODY HAND) IN SUPPORT OF RED BEAR'S DISABILITY CLAIM, AUGUST 24, 1911.

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 24 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Bloody Hand, now known as Enemy Heart, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 63, occupation farmer, P. O. Elbowoods, N. Dak.

I served under General Custer under the name Bloody Hand. I never was a scout at Fort Stevenson. I knew of Handsome Elk before he enlisted at Fort Stevenson. While he was at Fort Stevenson, after his enlistment, he stopped with my mother and stepfather. I could not say how long he stopped with my mother and stepfather. I was not around there when he got his eye injured but one time I went there Handsome Elk had had his eye injured. They did not tell me how the eye was injured and I was not inquisitive enough to ask. We consider it bad manners for a stranger to ask questions. Only a relative should ask how it happened. I saw him at fort Stevenson when he had a black cloth over his eye. I think it was the right eye that was bandaged when I saw him.

I never examined his eye after he came home from Fort Stevenson but judging from the fact that he wore glasses all the time and the way he walked I don't think he could see very well. He wore glasses (goggles) when he was under General Custer and after he came back. I

noticed that while we were with General Custer that Red Bear could not distinguish an object beyond a quarter of a mile so I judged by that his left eye was afflicted too. I don't believe that he has ever been able to see with the right eye since he came back from the Custer campaign.

Before he went on the Custer campaign I could never get close enough to him to tell whether he could see with that eye, after he left fort Stevenson.

I judge that at the time he enlisted under General Custer that his left eye was all right, but just after we came back, in passing the pipe, he would reach for it in the other direction.

No I never knew or heard of him incurring any injury to either eye except the one I heard about at Fort Stevenson. I have known him ever since the Custer campaign; we have both lived here on the reservation.

I am not related to this claimant and have no interest in his pension claim.

Yes, I know that the man now known as red Bear is the same who served as handsome Elk.

I have heard this statement read. I understood your questions and my answers are correctly recorded as read.

His
Enemy X Heart
Mark

Witness

Byron H. Wilde

Another witness not available.

Subscribed and sworn before me this 24th day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

LITTLE SIOUX

Little Sioux was the son of Small Brave, a Dakota Sioux Indian (although he may have been part Arikara), and Young Holy Woman, an Arikara woman. In his statements to the

Pension Office, Little Sioux estimated that he was born around 1857, but in fact it may have been a few years earlier. His boyhood name was One Wolf. His parents died when he was still young. In 1874, around the age of eighteen, he married Young Big Horn Woman. According to the *Registers of Enlistments* he first enlisted on May 1, 1873. He served in the Black Hills expedition, the Little Bighorn battle, and the follow-up campaigns of 1876-77. It appears that he continued to be employed as a scout and mail carrier until 1882, delivering mail between the various military posts in North Dakota at \$25 a month.²⁷

According to Little Sioux's own testimony, he was married twice. His first wife's name was Sea Gull, which may have been another name for Young Big Horn Woman. She died in the mid-1880s at Fort Berthold. He later married Sioux Woman. Who was about ten years younger. According to census records from 1902, Little Sioux and Sioux Woman had four children: Reuben Duckett (age 17, possibly adopted), Philomena (age 7), Emily (age 3), and Susie (6 months).²⁸

On February 19, 1921, Little Sioux filed a pension claim with Indian Agent E. W. Jermark. The Pension Office at this time did not find a scout who had enlisted under the name "Little Sioux." Little Sioux gave several depositions on his own behalf as well as on the behalf of several other scouts in 1923, 1924, and 1925. In 1925 he was awarded a pension at \$20 a month which was increased to \$30 in 1927 and to \$40 in 1929. Little Sioux requested but failed to an invalid's pension because of injuries sustained in the service. Once he had been thrown from his horse causing a fractured scapula and left collar bone, as well as injuries to his jaw and face. These injuries troubled him much in old age together with trachoma, arterio sclerosis, an irregular heart beat, pyorrhoea, and articular rheumatism. Despite his poor health, Little Sioux did not get an invalid's pension, even though his payments were raised to \$50 in 1931.

²⁷ Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 191-193. For an overview of Little Sioux's enlistment history to 1877, see *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956).

²⁸ Fort Berthold Census, June 30, 1902, Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, National Archives and Records Administration, M595, roll 132.

However, at the time of his death on August 31, 1933, he apparently received only \$45 a month.²⁹

DEPOSITION OF LITTLE SIOUX, JULY 17, 1923

Case of Little Sioux, Inv. Org. No. 17793

On this 17 day of July, 1923, at near Ree, in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, a Special Examiner of the Bureau of pensions personally appeared Little Sioux, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 67 years, my postal address is Ree, Mercer Co., N. D., and I live on that side of the river; do a little farming for my own use.

I served as a United States Scout under Gen. Custer and was in that service and with Custer's command on the day the General was killed. I was not in his presence when he fell, as I was among those ordered to take away from hostiles their horses, and I was looking after stampeded horses some two miles from the spot where the battle was in progress. I saw the smoke and heard the firing. Custer fell in that battle, not in a war council. (The witness laughed heartily at the question of a council. None of these scouts will tell any other story than that Custer was killed in battle. – EWY, Spl. Exr.).

In my first service, I went from my home on this reservation to Fort Lincoln below Bismarck, to enlist, just when the grass was beginning [to] grow] in the spring of the year before Custer was killed. If Custer was killed in 1876, then I enlisted in the spring of 1875.³⁰ Then I was there at Fort Lincoln during that first enlistment, summer of that year, scouting right around Ft. Lincoln. And 5 of the Indian Scouts are known to have been killed there by attacking hostiles.

I reenlisted when my time was out in the fall and remained there thru the winter and when I enlisted this second time the Fort [McKeen] had been moved from the top to the bottom of the hill and I went down with the rest. And when my time was up in the next spring,

²⁹ Little Sioux Pension File, XC 896-806, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁰ This seems not quite correct. According to the Registers of Enlistments, (Little) Sioux first enlisted on May 1, 1873. See *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956).

I enlisted a third time. After the fort was moved to the foot of the hill, I went with gen. Custer to the Black Hills in the summer time, and when we returned the trees were taking on their autumn colors. We were gone on that expedition some 3 mo.

After I had been in the service a full year, I enlisted a third time and that term of enlistment was the time I went with Custer's command to the Powder Horn, in which expedition he was killed in battle. Upon the end of that expedition, we returned to Ft. Lincoln and there, at [the] end of that third term I enlisted a fourth time, and that term I served about Ft. Lincoln. And I kept on re-enlisting until Ft. Lincoln was abandoned when we all went home. I had discharge papers from all of these services, but a man was up here and took all of our papers to send to Washington. He took mine, and I have never been able to get them since, he, I believe L. B. Hanna, then in Congress, took them to get some claim thru for us. The only name I had in my connection with my army service was little Sioux, and that is the name called on the roll always.

I went in my own wagon to the Agency at Elbowoods to make out pension application for pension on account of the service which I have herein above told you of. Many were there. Do not remember whether in winter, but before you here before. Jermark did not prepare the papers. That was done on a typewriter by his clerk Davis. When he had it all written out, I signed it by thumb-mark in the presence of Davis. Jermark was not in the office we were in, but in his own office, same building. He did not do anything to the papers. Did not swear me. Sid it was intended to get a pension and that Davis would fix them for us. Left paper with Davis. Red Star made out his application same time I did mine and in just the same way.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read by you and interpreted by Peter Beauchamp, and it is correct.

His

Attest: Charles Ross

Little Sioux

P. H. Beauchamp

Deponent.

Thumb-Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this witness made by me while under oath so to interpret.

P. H. Beauchamp

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17 day of July, 1923, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,
Special Examiner.

AFFIDAVIT BY LITTLE SIOUX, FEBRUARY 13, 1924

Invalid Division

I. S. O. 17793

Little Sioux

Indian Scouts

U. S. A.

Question. Who were your immediate officers?

Answer I cannot give any of the English names, only Custer. We knew them by Indian names, one named Red Nose or Red Face [Gibbon, MvdL], and a Captain, we knew as Pointed Face.

Question. How much did you receive per month?

Answer. Twenty-five dollars per month. The officers came to our camp every two months, and delivered our checks, they were strangers to us. I cannot speak English, therefore I cannot give their names.

Question. Have you any other name but Little Sioux?

Answer. No.

Question. What does Little Sioux mean?

Answer. It means just what the word implies. Little Sioux.

Question. What were your duties?

Answer. When I first enlisted at Bismarck I carried the mail across the river, the second task assigned me was to go out on the hills, scouting, watching for warring Indians; I was again detailed to carry the mail, wherever I was sent with it, I was later sent to the Black Hills with

Custer on a scouting expedition, and I was down there about three months. We came back and I carried the mail, and did whatever work was assigned me. After two years I was detailed to go back to the Black Hills, the Custer Massacre occurred at that time and Custer was killed. When we came back from Custer's last fight I was sent down along the river to bring back some horses, from the enemies. I gathered them up and turned them over to the white soldiers. After turning over the horses to the soldiers we were taken across the river to Fargo in wagons, and from there back to where we were stationed.

At that time the rest of the Scouts were discharged, but I was still retained. I staid [sic] at camp one year after all the others were discharged. Then I was taken up the river in a boat up Elk river, and was sent scouting along the railroad track. We came down quite a way and met those who were laying the track working up from the other way. I came back with them to where the town of Dickinson, North Dakota is located. I came back to our camp where we were stationed, I do not know just how long we were there but three wars occurred before we separated, the whites going east and I was discharged. General Custer used to tell us that if we could win the battle, Custer's last stand, he (General Custer) would see that we would get something out of it.

I, Little Sioux, do hereby solemnly swear that the above questions and answers have been interpreted to me, that the information contained therein is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, SO HELP ME GOD.

His

Witnesses: Edythe Blonde

Little Sioux

Ruth M. [Repeth]

mark

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 13th day of February, 1924.

Stella Eagle

O Charles Ross do hereby certify that I acted as interpreter for Little Sioux, that to the best of my knowledge and belief the foregoing is a true and correct interpretation.

Charles Ross

DEPOSITION BY LITTLE SIOUX, JUNE 16, 1925

Case of Little Sioux, Inv. Org. No. 17793

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, but in county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of pensions personally appeared Little Sioux, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

I was born in this state across the Missouri River from where Washburn is now built. My postal address is Ree, N. D. You have examined my claim before this.

When I went in as a U. S. Scout the first time, twenty of us went. We went on horseback from this Reservation to Ft. A. Lincoln, just below Bismarck. A recruiting office[r] came out to get us. Only three of the twenty are now living - - Red Bear and Bear's Belly, besides myself. There I was sworn in. Then they took my measure and other items of personal description, gave me a gun, and a uniform. (This witness stand up and he measures some 2 inches shorter than I; and in barefeet I stand 5' 7 ½". He appears slightly stooped and I have high heels and heavy soles on my shoes. EWY, Insp.)

My first term of service I carried mail across the Missouri from the Fort to Bismarck, and up to the old village on this Reservation. We did a little scouting, also, about the Fort, but out only a few miles.

My second enlistment was right upon discharge from the first. I was in six enlistments in all. This second enlistment we made an expedition to the Black Hills, and back to Ft. Lincoln in the fall. But at the end of my first term I was allowed to come home before I started in on the second [sic]. It was a 30-day period.

When I was thru with my second enlistment [sic] and they gave my discharge paper, before I got out of the office they asked me whether I would enlist again. And I did enlist right then and there.

I am not certain whether it was my third enlistment that I was with Custer when he was killed. I remember a General whom the white soldiers I was with called Terry. I was not with the crowd camped at the mouth of the Little Power [sic] Horn, as we were camped on the other side east of that. It was when we were after Sitting Bull.

I have had only the name I use now, ever since my service as a U. S. Scout. I had my six terms of service pretty close one after another to the last. The roll was called twice a day by the sergeant, a white man. He was just call my name Sioux and I would answer, "Uh", it was in our language Sen-nen-na. (This is the spelling of almosy the precise sound this witness gives in his own language. I asked my present interpreter to write in English syllables the name as best he can express it in English, and he writes Sar-na-pe-che-ree-parsit [Sioux Little], the first two syllables being the word Sioux, the rest of them being little. – EWY, Inspector).

I have had two wives only: First was Sea Gull, who died on this Reservation some 40 years ago while I was living with her. Then I took as my wife the present wife whose name is Sioux Woman.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted to me by Albert Simpson and it is correct.

	His
	Sioux (Sen-nen-net)
Attest: Floyd C. Lyon	known as
	Little Sioux Thumb-mark
Albert H. Simpson	Deponent.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this deponent by me while under oath to give such interpretation.

Albert Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,
Inspector.

DEPOSITION BY LITTLE SIOUX IN SUPPORT OF RED STAR'S PENSION CLAIM, JULY 17, 1923.

Case of Strike-the-Bear, alias Red Star, Inv. Org. No. 17788

On this 17 day of July, 1923, at near Ree, in county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, a Special Examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Little Sioux, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 67 years, my address is Ree, N.D.

I had several enlistments of 6 mos. Each, before my enlistment for the tern [sic] during which I made the expedition under General Custer to the Powder Horn, on which expedition he was killed in battle on the Little Bighorn. I was camped with Custer's command during the night for the enemy. I was enlisted under the name Little Sioux. Strikes-the-Bear or red Star, and I were neighbors and of the same tribe of Indians, and we enlisted that spring together. I know that he was one of those who were sent out that night scouting for the enemy. I know, too, that the following morning about sunrise we heard a long whoop, which was the imitation of a coyote's call, and it was the signal that a messenger was coming. When they rode up, I saw they were this same Red Star now here present and a young man, also a United State[s] Scout in Custer's command, named Bull. I was present when they rode into camp. Red Star had a message for General Custer, and I heard then and there Red Star's story that that morning early they had seen from a height what they at first thought to be a fog rising from the river, but which they later discerned as smoke from the enemy camp. It was this same Red Star here now present who was that messenger, and his enrolled name at that time was Strikes-the-Bear, my then neighbor at home and the man who enlisted that term with me. Red Star was discharged that time before I was. He and I were both paid by the United States as Scouts, \$50 for two months of service.

I was present when he made out his pension claim at the Agency at Elbowoods. I made mine out the same day in the same office, Davis, the clerk, writing out the papers for him and me and all of us there. Jermark had nothing to do with the preparation of the papers. That was all left to Davis. Jermark did not swear me to my application or red Star to his. And Davis swore him to his application the same as he had the rest of us to ours. That is, that we were

expected to tell the truth and that we should hold up our hands, and red Star did that in his claim as we did in ours, but only by and before Davis - - not Jermark. When Davis was done with the papers and we had signed them, we left them all there in the possession of Davis and did not see them again. But I understood that they were to be sent by Jermark or Davis to the United States Pension Office in Washington.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read by you and interpreted by Peter Beauchamp, and it is correct.

Attest: Florence Ross

His

P. H. Beauchamp

Little Sioux

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this witness by me while under oath to so interpret.

P. H. Beauchamp

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17 day of July, 1923, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,

Special Examiner.

DEPOSITION BY LITTLE SIOUX IN SUPPORT OF RED STAR'S PENSION CLAIM, JUNE 16, 1925.

Case of Strike-the-Bear, or Red Star, Inv. Org. No. 17788

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Little Sioux, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 70 years, my postal address is Ree, S. D. [sic], a farmer.

I served 6 terms as a U. S. Scout. Red Star was with me in the service as a Scout several times. The first time I recollect seeing Red Star as a Scout was during my fourth term of service. It was during the time that Gen. Custer was killed. We were Scouts together, and he was in that

time under the name Strikes-the-Bear. I do not remember whether he was ever in under any other name.

We were both in the Custer battle, and after that were sent south together and were to get the property of the hostile Sioux [1877, confiscating horses at Standing Rock and Cheyenne River]. Then I was of those who were guarding the Northern Pacific Ry., as they build westward from Bismarck. At that time Red Star was already back home on this Reservation.

When I completed that service of guarding the railroad builders, I returned to Fort A. Lincoln and there found Red Star in as a Scout again. And he and I were at the Fort all thru the rest of Red Star's service, and when he was discharged I had some time yet to serve. That is the same man who is here to-day. He is married and his wife's name is Daisy red-Star.

His only other wufe [sic] was Lizzie Plenty-Fox, who died while he was living with her.

I am not related to Red Star and have no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted by Albert H. Simpson and it is correct.

Attest: Floyd C. Lyon

His

Albert H. Simpson

Little Sioux

or

Sioux,

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this deponent by me while under oath to give such interpretation.

Albert H. Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,

Inspector

DEPOSITION BY LITTLE SIOUX IN SUPPORT OF BEAR'S BELLY'S PENSION CLAIM, JUNE 16, 1925.

Case of Bears Belly, (Elk Forehead), IOS. No. 17815

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, but in county of McLean, state of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Little Sioux, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 70 years, my address is Ree, N. D., a farmer.

I was six times a U. S. Scout, under name Sioux. It was during my third term as a Scout that I saw Bears Belly in as a Scout. This was at Fort A. Lincoln, near Bismarck. I was, by that time, able to understand some English names when the roll was called, and his was Sore Elk Forehead. We were acquaintances before our service. That is the man here before you to-day.

We were Scouts here together at the Fort. And it was during his term of service that we made the expedition to the Black Hills, and Bears Belly was with us on that expedition and back again.

I was in six months each time, and this was during my third term.

I am not related to Bears Belly and have no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted by Albert Simpson and it is correct.

His

Attest: Floyd C. Lyon

Albert H. Simpson

Little Sioux

or

Sioux

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation by me under oath.

Albert H. Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young, Inspector

LITTLE SOLDIER

DEPOSITION BY LITTLE SOLDIER IN SUPPORT OF RED BEAR'S DISABILITY CLAIM, AUGUST 24, 1911.

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 24 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Little Soldier, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 60, occupation none, P. O. Elbowoods, McLean Co, N. Dak.

I served as Indian Scout; enlisting when I was eighteen years. I served one year at Fort Yates and then came back and served about nine years at Fort Stevenson. I did not serve under General Custer.

Red Bear (Handsome Elk) and I entered the service at fort Stevenson about the same time. We went there about the time the ice was breaking up. We served our enlistment of six months and then reenlisted. I am not sure whether it was the first fall we were there or the second, we were feeding the cattle when red Bear got a piece of grass in his eye. I don't know what kind of grass it was. I was working with him at the time. There were four of us – two on the wagon and two of us pitching – handsome Elk and I were pitching. When he spoke up and said he got something in his eye he did not quit right away. We sat down for a little while but came back and went pitching again but his eye kept running all the time. We went and fed the cattle and then went back to our quarters and that night his face began to swell up. I could not say exactly, but I should judge that it was about four or five days that his eye was swollen. After he got up from bed he went around with his eye bandaged, but I could not say how long; it don't seem to me that it was so very long. He left the service because he could not use his eye any more and I consider that it was blind then. I am pretty positive that he was blind of one eye when he left Fort Stevenson. I could not say which eye it was and I don't know which of his eyes is affected now.

Yes I have known Handsome Elk ever since I came back from the service. I noticed that his eyes were troubling him at the time he came home after the Custer massacre and have been ever since. When I saw him that time he had goggles on.

No I would not be able to say when the other eye became affected. I noticed at the time he came back from the Custer campaign that he walked as though he did not see well with either eye; just when the other eye got real bad I could not say.

I am distantly related to red bear, I have no interest in his pension claim.

Yes sir I know that red Bear is the same man who served as Indian Scout at Fort Stevenson under the name of Handsome Elk.

I have hear this statement read. I understood your questions and my answers are correctly recorded as read.

His
Little X Soldier
Mark

Witness

Clarence L. Soldier

Byron H. Wilde

Subscribed and sworn before me this 24th day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

RED BEAR

Red Bear was also present as a scout at the Little Bighorn battle despite the fact that he was suffering from poor vision as a result of a severe eye injury contracted while working outside of Fort Stevenson. Red Bear was born around 1853. At that time his childhood name was Handsome Elk or Good Elk. His mother was White Corn Woman. His father's name was Red Bear (ca. 1824-1872), but he was also known as "Red Man" or "Rabbit Wounded In The

Belly.” Handsome Elk’s father had also been a scout and had died in a battle with the Sioux near Fort McKeen (the predecessor of Fort Abraham Lincoln) in 1872.³¹

Shortly after his father’s death, Handsome Elk adopted his father’s name during a Sun Dance ceremony. That same year he enlisted as a scout at Fort Stevenson. He re-enlisted at Fort Abraham Lincoln in 1876 and took part in the Custer battle.³²

Red Bear’s marital history is not easy to piece together. It appears that he was married several times. His last wife was Julia Champlain Bull Neck with whom he had several children: Anna (1898-1911), May (b. 1900), White Bear Woman (ca. 1902), Mabel (1904), and Eleonore (1904).³³ Red Bear was a highly respected man in the Arikara community at Fort Berthold. In 1910 he traveled to Washington, D.C., on tribal business, and in 1915 he was appointed tribal judge. Red Bear was relatively fortunate in the fact that he received a pension much earlier than many of his friends. In November 1904, he filed for an invalid claim with the Pension Office. After a long process, he was awarded an invalid’s pension in 1911 at \$17 a month.³⁴

Red Bear lost an eye when a piece of hay was lodged in his right eye while haying outside of Fort Stevenson. The other eye also suffered from a disease, forcing him to wear goggles. He wore these while scouting for Custer and there is an Arikara ledger drawing, probably from his own hand, showing a goggled man delivering a message to Col. William B. Hazen, commanding officer at Fort Buford, Dakota Territory. A doctor who examined Red Bear in 1906 in support of his pension claim, concluded: “Right eyeball totally destroyed – nothing left but a tiny mass of tissues. Left cornea deeply clouded, shows chronic [keratitis] – iris is

³¹ Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer’s Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 200-202. *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956).

³² Red Bear Pension File, XC 922-970, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois.

³³ Red Bear’s pension file lists several different wives, some of whom may have had multiple names. They include Good Goods (a.k.a. Pretty Goods Woman), Shell Woman, “Omaha Woman” (probably “Sioux Woman” or “Yankton Woman;” not to be confused with Little Sioux’s wife by the same name), Rose Wash, Rough Horn, Silk Corn Woman, and finally Julia Champlain Bull Neck. Another problem are the birthdates for Mabel and Eleonore who were born twenty-three days apart. Unless this was a typo in the original document, it is possible that one of the children was adopted by Red Bear. Red Bear Pension File, XC 922-970, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁴ Red Bear Pension File, XC 922-970, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois.

seen as a blackened patch. Can not distinguish a match at a distance of one inch from left eye – at five inches can recognize table knife.”³⁵

In 1927, Red Bear filed for a regular pension under the Pension Act of March 3, 1927. It was approved later that year at \$50 a month. Red Bear died on May 7, 1934, at the age of 85 of cerebral embolism caused by arterio sclerosis.³⁶ Reportedly, one of his most-prized possessions was a photograph of Lt. Col. Custer, signed by Elizabeth B. Custer.³⁷

RED BEAR’S DEPOSITION, AUGUST 23, 1911

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 23 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Red Bear, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says: I am about 59 years of age; my post-office address is Elbowoods, McLean Co., N. Dakota (c/o Byron H. Wilde).

Occupation none.

I first enlisted as Indian Scout at Fort Stevenson, Dakota territory, under the name of Wahne – handsome Elk, and served two years before the accident to my eyes. I stayed two years after the accident to my eyes but did not perform any duty on account of being near-sighted. My house burned about seven years ago and my discharge certificate was burned with it.

After I left the first service I was around for a year or more and then enlisted again for two years. I enlisted at the same place as I did the first time. I only enlisted twice, and both times under the same name.

My eye was injured in my first service. It is the right eye that was injured and in the following manner. It was close to thanksgiving and we had orders to feed the stock. We hitched up an ox team and went to get a load of hay. We were on the shady side of the stacks,

³⁵ Red Bear Pension File, XC 922-970, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁶ Red Bear Pension File, XC 922-970, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁷ Boy Chief Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 15.7.4, Records of the Veterans Administration, “Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files.”

the wind was blowing and a piece of “fox tail” went in my right eye. I was on the wagon building the load while the others were pitching it on. An Indian Scout named left Hand, now dead, was pitching the hay. From there, after the foxtail got in my eye, they led me to our Scout Quarters and laid me on my bed and the doctor, a man with side whiskers (none on his chin) treated my eye. I think I was under the doctor’s care about seven days. My face all swelled up and then extended to my head. After the first seven days there were two doctors treating me until the time the snow thawed in the spring. A number of officers came to inquire about me but I could not see who they were. I was not taken to the hospital – was kept in my own quarters.

Q, When did you lose the sight of the right eye?

A. Right after the injury – my eye was affected right then. They kept my eye bandaged as long as the swelling was in my head and face and I was never able to see out of the right eye after the bandage was taken off. When I got my discharge from that service the officer sent a message along that I could reenlist if I wanted to.

My left eye did not begin troubling until after my second discharge – I should judge about two months after. It got real bad about eight years ago. Up to eight years ago I could see to drive a team alone but since that time I can’t go alone at all on account of not being able to see.

No I do not remember of ever having any injury of either eye before my enlistment. I don’t remember of ever incurring any injury of either eye at any time except when I got the foxtail in my eye as described before.

Running Wolf, across the river, Black Calf, now known as Boy Chief, also across the river, Strikes Two, here at Armstrong, One feather, also in Armstrong, Soldier, Little Sioux, Elbowoods, Little Soldier, across the river, and Red Star all were with me and know about my injury.

White Face is the only one of the list that I can remember. He knows about my eye trouble in the service. I enlisted twice at Fort Stevenson, and the last time when I served with General Custer, I enlisted at Fort Lincoln, Dakota Territory.

Between the time of my last discharge at Fort Stevenson and the time I enlisted at Fort Lincoln I was around the village here.

After the service under General Custer I came back here and have been here ever since.

All of those who enlisted with me – that I named above – knew me between the time I was discharged the second time at Fort Stevenson and the time I enlisted at Fort Lincoln and know that my eye was blind at that time.

I have no disability at this time other than my eye trouble.

I was always known as Wah ne (Handsome Elk) until after I came back after the Custer massacre.

I have been married five times. My first wife “Good Goods” died here about fifteen years ago. She left me and went with another man which left me free to marry according to Indian custom. I had never been married to her by any Indian or other ceremony. The next wife was Shell Woman. I was not married to her by any ceremony. We only lived together a couple of months. She died a long time ago. The third wife was named Corn Silk Woman. I married her by Indian ceremony. She only lived about two years after our marriage which took place I don’t know what year. The next was Omaha Woman. I did not marry her by any ceremony. She died about [no number given] years after our marriage. My next wife is my present wife Julia Champlain [sic?]. We were married by the Indian Agent at Elbowoods and afterwards by a Catholic priest. We were married fourteen years ago. This wife is still living.

I have two children living. May, born, May 1, 1900; and Mabel, born April 7, 1904. I had no children except by my present wife.

I do not desire to be present at the further examination of my claim.

I have made no contract with any one for services in prosecuting my claim.

I have made no payments to any one except to the notary at Elbowoods for putting the seal on the papers.

There are no witnesses elsewhere that I desire examined.

There is another man here, Young Hawk, who knew me in the service.

I have heard this statement read, I understood your questions and my answers are correctly recorded as said.

[signed]

Red Bear

Deponent

Witness

Byron H. Wilde

Another witness not available

Subscribed and sworn before me this 23rd day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

DEPOSITION BY RED BEAR IN SUPPORT OF RED STAR'S PENSION CLAIM, JULY 17, 1923.

Case of Strike-the-Bear, alias Red Star, Inv. Org. No. 17788

On this 17 day of July, 1923, at near Ree, in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, a Special Examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Red Bear, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to *him* during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 69 years, my address is Elbowoods, N. D., have retired, formerly stock-raiser.

I enlisted as a United States Scout and for two years served at Fort Stevenson. Then, owing to loss of eye, I was out two years. Then enlisted for another term of 6 months and went with Gen. Custer to the Black Hills. Was then discharged and home two winters. Then again enlisted at Ft. Lincoln, as I had the second time. I went, on this enlistment, with Custer to the Powder Horn, on which expedition he was killed, and was with his command the day on which he was killed.

The night before the battle, in the late afternoon or early evening, was seen in the far distance a blue mountain. It was suspected the enemy might be over that way. A scouting party was sent out, one of the scouts being Red Star, here present now. He was then enlisted as Strikes-the-Bear. After they had gone, the command was ordered to follow. The scouting

party was expected to find a lone scout who had been sent out and was expected back before that hour. They were to take food and to find him. But they missed, as he returned on the opposite side of the river. When he came in the command started after the scouting party. The lone scout was Bob-tail Bull, who was killed in the battle next day. I was with Custer's command in the night march. We camped early in the morning. And as Bull-in-the-Water and I were getting breakfast together, he looked up and saw two men hurrying toward camp along some low bushes. There were this same Red Star and Bull. Red Star had a message for gen. Custer, who was lying down asleep, but as soon as the messenger was announced he jumped up and received the message, then called Gerard, whom I knew, a man of my own people, as interpreter, and questioned red Star very closely and told him to be very careful in telling what he knew and what he saw. I know to a certainty that this was the same Red Star who is here before you to-day. I am now a pensioner under the name red bear, so known to the Pension Office, but my enlisted name was Pretty Elk.

I am not related to this claimant and have no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing read by you and interpreted by Peter Beauchamp, and it is correct.

Attest: Strieby Horn

His

P. H. Beauchamp

Red Bear

Deponent.

THUMB-MARK

I hereby certify that the contents of the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this witness by me under oath to interpret correctly his language.

Peter Beauchamp

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17 day of July, 1923, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,

Special Examiner.

DEPOSITION BY RED BEAR IN SUPPORT OF BEAR'S BELLY'S PENSION CLAIM, JUNE 16, 1925

Case of Bears Belly, (Elk Forehead), IOS. No. 17815

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at *near Ree, but* in county of *McLean*, state of *North Dakota* before me, *E. W. Young, Inspector*, the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared *Red Bear*, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to *him* during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 72 years, my postal address is Elbowoods, N. D., a farmer.

I was a U. S. Scout thrice. I enlisted at Fort Stevenson about the latter part of March, year I do not know; but it was before Gen. Custer was killed. I served two years at Ft. Stevenson, then owing to bad eyes, I was out of service two years when I again enlisted at Ft. Lincoln. This was along about April and I served 6 mo. During this service the expedition to the Black Hills under Custer was made. Upon return from that expedition, I was discharged at Ft. Lincoln. I then was out of service two winters, when I enlisted a third time and was with Custer's command to the Big Horn, the expedition on which he met death. I was in that battle. And I was discharged when it began to freeze up that fall. I was enlisted under the name Good Elk, and am pensioned, but do not remember what name is in my pension [sic] certificate, which is in the vault at the Agency at Elbowoods. It may be either Good Elk or Red Bear. My name is on the Agency rolls as Red Bear, and am there known by that name.

Bears Belly and I were [sic] old acquaintances on this Reservation. It was while I was on the expedition under Custer to the Black Hills that he was in as a U. S. Scout with us. It is the only time he was in with me. It is the same man who is here to-day before you in his claim. He was in under the name Sore Elk-Forehead.

Only relation is that he married my cousin. I have no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read to me by Albert Simposn [sic], and by him fully and plainly interpreted to me and it is all correct.

His

Attest: Floyd C. Lyon

Red Bear

Albert H. Simpson

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation given by me under oath.

Albert H. Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925 and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young

Inspector

RED STAR

Red Star (ca. 1857-1929) was present at the Little Bighorn battle. His boyhood name was White Calf, but at age fifteen he adopted the name Strikes-the-Bear. He adopted his father's name "Red Star" later in life. His father (1828-1860/61) died when White Calf was three years old. A few years later, a Sioux war party murdered his mother Woman Goes Into Every House and his five-year old-sister. At age eighteen, he enlisted as a scout under the name Strikes-the-Bear. He changed his name to Red Star in honor of his father after the 1876 campaign in a naming ceremony conducted by an Arikara doctor named Paint.³⁸

Red Star was one of several Arikara scouts (including Running Wolf) who briefly accompanied General George Crook's expedition which resulted in the Slim Buttes battle in 1876. In November 1876, he was among the troops that dismounted and disarmed the Sioux at the Standing Rock Agency.³⁹

After leaving military service, Red Star married Seed Woman in 1891. She died in 1901 and a year later Red Star married Lizzie Plenty Fox. They divorced in 1910 and in 1913, Red Star

³⁸ Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 195-200. For an excellent overview of Red Star's attempt at getting a pension see Herman J. Viola, *Little Bighorn Remembered: The Untold Indian Story of Custer's Last Stand* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999), 146-151.

³⁹ Red Star Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 15.7.4, Records of the Veterans Administration, "Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files."

married Daisy Duckett.⁴⁰ A census taken in 1902, listed seventeen year old Alex Hand as his (adopted) son.⁴¹ Between 1898 and 1901, Red Star served as a tribal policeman.⁴²

Red Star filed for a pension in February 1921. He was at first rejected because there was no scout listed under that name or under the name Strikes-the-Bear. But after a thorough investigation, which included a number of interviews published here, Red Star was finally granted a pension in 1925. He passed away on June 7, 1929.⁴³

Red Star's testimony is especially significant for its detail of his observations at the Crow's Nest and for the fact that he was the one who notified that the enemy camp had been found.

DEPOSITION OF RED STAR IN SUPPORT OF LITTLE SIOUX'S PENSION CLAIM, JUNE 16, 1925.

Case of Little Sioux, Inv. Org. No. 17793

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree but in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of pensions personally appeared Red-Star, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 67 years, my postal address is Ree, N. D., farmer.

I was a U. S. Scout twice: First time was during the battle in which Gen. Custer was killed and I was in that. That was a six-month enlistment. I was discharged and then it was nearly a year before I enlisted the second time. The first time went in just when the grass was beginning to come up in the spring. The second time was winter time that I enlisted.

When I went to Fort A. Lincoln the first time to enlist, Little Sioux was already there. I was a neighbor of his and we knew each other.

⁴⁰ Red Star Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 15.7.4, Records of the Veterans Administration, "Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files."

⁴¹ Fort Berthold Census, June 30, 1902, Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, National Archives and Records Administration, M595, roll 132.

⁴² Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 198.

⁴³ Red Star Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 15.7.4, Records of the Veterans Administration, "Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files."

At my second enlistment, we did not go together. He was already there at Ft. Lincoln when I reached there that time to enlist.

I know that he was a U. S. Scout. He was called Sioux in the service. I called him Sen-nen-net. That was what we called him in the language of the Arikara.

I am not related to him and have no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted to me by Albert Simpson and it is correct.

Attest: Maggie W. Ross

Albert H. Simpson

His
Strike-the-Bear
or
Red-Star,
Deponent.
Thumb-Mark

The foregoing deposition is a true interpretation from the language of this witness by me under oath.

Albert Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,
Inspector.

DEPOSITION BY RED STAR (STRIKES BEAR) IN SUPPORT OF RED BEAR'S DISABILITY CLAIM,
AUGUST 23, 1911.

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 23 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Strike Bear, now known as Red Star, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories

propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 54, occupation none, P. O. Elbowoods, McLean Co., N. Dak.

I served as Indian scout under General Custer. I was serving at the time he was killed. I did not enlist at Fort Stevenson but was around there when Red Bear, this claimant, got his eye injured. I visited him two or three times a day while he was in bed with his eye bandaged. I was not right present when the eye was injured but his brother came and told me about it and I went to see red Bear the same day. From the time his eye was injured to the "muddy time" in the spring he kept his eye covered. The eye was injured late in the fall – there was snow on the ground. It was about the time that the green grass was coming up that I first saw him without having his eye covered up; he then had green goggles on. When [sentence missing] over [his] eye and he then told me that he could not see with that eye at all. He was still in the service at that time. I never knew him to be able to see with that eye since. He was very bashful about that eye ever after. I have often tried to look at it but he would not let me. He used to go in a round-about way to wash his face and only then would remove his goggles. Yes sir, he wore goggles at the time he served under General Custer. This the right eye that was injured.

The first I heard him complain of his left eye was while we were out with General Custer. We hardly knew what a good night's rest was then – we used to have to be out scouting night and day and I noticed him complain of his good eye then. We used to have medicine along for it. At first after we came back his left eye was a little better than while we were in the service, but after a couple of years everybody began to notice how he would stumble over things and from that time on the eye has been growing worse until now he is almost blind in that eye too.

I must have been about 13 or 14 years of age when I first knew red bear and have known him ever since. I never knew or heard of his getting any injury of either eye other than the one he got while a scout. His brother told me that he (Red Bear) was hauling hay and that a piece of hay got in his eye.

This claimant is my cousin; I have no interest in the pension claim.

I have heard this deposition read, I understand your questions and answers are correctly recorded as said. . .

His
Red X Star
Mark

Witness

Byron H. Wilde

Another witness not available

Subscribed and sworn before me this 23rd day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

AFFIDAVIT BY RED STAR, FEBRUARY 13, 1924

Invalid Division,

I. S. O. 17788

Strikes the Bear

Indian Scouts.

U. S. A.

Question. What were the duties performed by you?

Answer. I enlisted and was taken immediately to the Black Hills where I engaged in Custer's last fight. I was the first man to see the enemy's camp before the battle. After the battle we went west to a place called Yellow Head, from there we went back down the river to where we were stationed. In the fall of the same year I was detailed to take horses away from the enemies, from there I went to Fargo in a wagon and from Fargo sent back to camp. I was then discharged. After two years I again enlisted and my duty was to hunt for deer and meat

for the soldiers. At that time I was scout for six months before I was discharged for the last time.

Question. How much pay did you receive per month?

Answer. Twenty-five dollars per month.

Question. What were the names of the officers who paid you at the time of your discharge or discharges?

Answer. I cannot name the officers in English. I cannot Speak English. They used to come from a different place to pay us every two months. I do not know the officers names.

Question. What names are they known by?

Answer. Strikes the Bear meaning "if you see the bear, strike it" or Red Star "That was my father's name, and the name was given after the star we see in the morning, which changes colors, red, et cetera.

I, Strikes the Bear (or Red Star), do hereby solemnly swear that the above questions and answers have been interpreted to me, that the information contained therein is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, SO HELP ME GOD.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 13th day of February, 1924.

His

Witnesses:

Red Star

[Edyth L. Blondu]

or Strikes the Bear

mark

Stella Eagle

I Charles Ross do hereby certify that I acted as interpreter for Strikes the Bear, that to the best of my knowledge and belief the foregoing is a true and correct interpretation.

Charles Ross

DEPOSITION OF STRIKES THE BEAR OR RED STAR, JULY 17, 1923

Case of Strike-the-Bear, alias Red Star, Inv. Org. No. 17788

On this 17 day of July, 1923, at near Ree county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, a Special Examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared *Strike-the-Bear, al. Red Star*, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to *him* during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 66 years, my postal address is Ree, Mercer Co., N.D., I raise some horses and cattle and a little farming for myself. I served twice as Scout for the United States Army.

The first time I went I was aged 18 years; then I went in two years later again, as a Scout for the United States Army, both times as a Scout. The first time I enlisted at Fort Lincoln, below Bismarck, then marched up past here but on the other side of the Missouri. Gen. Custer was at the head of the men I was with. We marched, all of us mounted, to the mouth of the Powder Horn, and there across the Powder Horn River we saw a camp of United States soldiers [Gibbon's troops?]. And from where we were we went out to the battlefield on which Gen. Custer lost his life. We crossed two rivers and in the evening, instead of giving the orders to camp, Gen. Custer ordered the scouts, I among them, to do scouting duty all the night to find the hostiles. We did so, and in passing some Crows, they told us where the Hostile Sioux were, and that by going to a certain high hill we could see them. At daybreak, in the dim light, we saw what we thought was a fog rising. After watching it for a time, we concluded that it was the smoke from the hostile camp. And looking back the direction from which we came we then saw the smoke of our own camp rising, and we knew then surely that the smoke from the other direction was from the camp of the hostiles. The white man in command of us scouts sent back a note to Gen. Custer, and I was the bearer of that message, the rest of the Scouts remaining there where they were. I arrived in camp just as there [sic] were finishing breakfast. I was drinking coffee when Gen. Custer came to me and asked me what I had seen with my own eyes, and whether I had seen tepees. I told him what I had seen. He order [sic] the soldiers to break camp, and march. I guided them to the other Scouts where I had left them. Gen. Custer asked the opinion of the Crow Scouts as to the best plan of attack. They told him. He thought [sic] he would camp there for the day and surround and attack at night. The Crows told him that would

be too late, as the enemy had had scouts out, two of them had passed me on my way but I had not seen them, neither did they see our other scouts, who said they passed so near that they could have shot them.

So Custer concluded to, and did, attack as soon as he could get ready. The United States force was divided, and that is how I escaped. Custer was not killed while holding a council. He was killed in battle, and I heard constant firing from where I was. Before the battle began, we scouts were ordered to advance and get all the horses of the enemy possible so that they would not be mounted. We crossed a stream and got what we could and were returning with them, when the U. S. command, thinking we were the enemy began firing and killed one man's horse before we could make them understand who we were. And by that time, the battle was general against the U. S. main force, and it was in that the Gen. Custer was killed.

Soon after that we returned to Fort Buford, and in about 40 days after the Custer battle we were back to Ft. A. Lincoln. And as my time was not quite out we then went out in the other direction from Lincoln and then was discharged there and came home that fall. That enlistment was in the name Strikes-the-Bear.

Some two years later I again enlisted at Ft. Lincoln, this time under the name of Red Star, the name by which I am now wholly known here. (This claimant I measure to-day by comparison. Standing in moccasins [sic] he is about 3 ½ inches shorter than I am standing in shoes with medium high heels. And in bare-feet I measure 5' 7 ½". – EWY, Spl. Exr.). I was born near Ft. Stanton [Clark?], D. T., between here and Bismarck. This second enlistment that I had was not during any expedition. I enlisted this second time in the fall, little before cold weather set in, Little Sioux, now here, and I going together from this Reservation where we now live to Ft. Lincoln. And we made all our service right there about Ft. Lincoln. And we made all our service right thru there about Ft. Lincoln, where we enlisted. I was there thru the winter; was in 6 months, came home, and was never in again after that.

I do not know that I was ever at Red Cloud Agency. I was never enlisted there. I was never was [sic] discharged there. Nor was I ever at Camp Sheridan or Camp Robinson, Neb.

The first enlistment I had was for about 6 months, and I went from home that time to enlist just about the time the grass was beginning to grow (this might be about April or May in

this section. – EWY, Spl. Exr). That time, also, I went from this Reservation. Among those who went with me that time are: Little Sioux, Running Wolf, and red Bear, all yet living; also, those dead were Peter Beauchamp, father of this present interpreter, who was the interpreter then; Little Brave, Bobbed-tail Bull, and Bloody Knife, all of whom fell on the Custer battlefield when Custer was killed. Also Young Hawk, Strikes Two, Goose, and others. And my only name then was Strikes-the-Bear.

My second enlistment was under the name Red Star, and among those who enlisted that time was Little Sioux, the only one living; also, Red Tail, Three Foxes and still living. Others were none. Just these few were in the second time.

(My interpreter, Peter Beauchamp, informs me that some 6 or 7 years ago, O. G. Libby, of the North Dakota Historical Society, came to this Reservation under authority of said Society and spent several weeks here talking over the history of the old 7th Reg't, General Custer's, with all the Scouts then living; that one of the chief sources of original information was this claimant; and that this present interpreter was Professor Libby's interpreter on that occasion, and that this claimant was a prime source of his information on the matter of Custer's last fight, in which he was killed. – EWY, Spl. Exr.). I remember Libby being here. And the only names I gave him for myself are as you have them: Strikes-the-Bear and Red Star. When a child I had the name White Calf. And once when out on a hunting expedition we came across a bear and I attacked it first and from that time got the name Strikes-the-Bear. I was at that time aged about 15 years. The bear was in its den. But from that time on I dropped the name White Calf.

I went to Elbowoods and there made out an application for pension on account of my service as a Scout as herein-above stated to you. It was in winter. I went in my own wagon. I know that it was a full year before you were here the other time. The "lean" clerk at the Agency wrote out my application. Alfred Young Hawk and Milo Gillette were there and signed as my witness to my thumb-mark, which I made when the "lean" clerk (this well describes H. J. Davis, and the present interpreter says that is the way the Indians describe him. – EWY, Spl. Exr.) had finished writing out the paper. He then took it into the office of Mr. Jermark. I did not see Jermark. Do not know whether he was in there. I did not swear to that paper, which was left in Jermark's office and I never saw it again.

I correct lines 51-52 next above: I did see Jermark in his office; but he did not come into the office where I was and where the clerk wrote out the paper. I do not know whether Jermarck [sic] signed the paper. I have heard the foregoing deposition read by you and interpreted by Peter Beauchamp and it is correct.

Attest: P. H. Beauchamp

His

[G. M Londenback?]

Strikes-the-Bear, or Red Star

Thumb Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true interpretation of the language of this witness by me while under oath so to interpret.

P. H. Beauchamp

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17 day of July, 1923, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,

Special Examiner.

DEPOSITION BY RED STAR, JUNE 16, 1925

Case of Strike-the-Bear, or Red Star, Inv. Org. No. 17788

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Red Star, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 67 years, my postal address is Ree, N.D., a farmer.

I was a U. S. Scout twice. I was on the battle-field when gen. Custer was killed. That occurred during my first term of service. I was in 6 mo. The first time, discharged, and then there was nearly a year before I enlisted the second time. This second time was in the winter that I enlisted and was in 6 mo. Both times I went from this Reservation, and both times to Ft. Lincoln to enlist. I went on my own horse, both times; and came back both times on my own horse. A large number [were] with me the first time. Only Three Fox[es] and I went together the last time.

At Ft. Lincoln I was given blankets, gun, and uniform. These blankets and uniform I was told I might keep at discharge; but I had to turn in the gun. I do not know that I was allowed anything for the use of my horse. I was paid every two months for my services, and then each two months \$40, which I suppose was \$20 a month.

My chief Scout was Cerah, an Indian who could speak English. A white man called the roll once or twice a day, name not remembered. I answered to the name Ku-ru-da-cheh. (This is the nearest I can represent this in English. The final syllable simply fades away till it wholly disappears. – EWY, Insp'r) (My present interpreter writes it thus: Goo-nough-de-cha. – EWY, Inspector). I did not have the name Red-Star while a Scout, the first time. But the second time I was in as Red Star. This is the time Cherah was my Chief Scout. Bob-tail Bull was my Chief Scout the first time until he was killed in the Custer battle in which Custer himself was killed.

In my second service I was not called by my Arikara name, but by the name in English - - Red Star. The Arikara for that is Sa-ca-na-part. (This is the best representation in English that I can give this sound. My present interpreter puts it thus: Sar-Kar-na-par-toh [Star Red]. – EWY, Insp'r). I did not know Scout Vear-Come-Out; but I knew the Scouts named Bears Eyes, Bear Bull, Foolish Bear, Whistling Bear, and Kill-the-Bear, and Bears Ears.

I was born near Ft. Clark, in this State, on the opposite side of the Missouri River from here. After the fatal Custer battle, I was sent with Bull-in-the-Water out with mail. We had to swim our horses and we ourselves across the river, made a raft of logs and bark and laid the mail on that to get it across. It required two days and nights, travelling [sic] all the time, to make this round trip. We started back, when we met two messengers who told us we were to go the other way. We ran short of provisions and after we were stocked up we started to get to the Missouri and then back to Ft. A. Lincoln, and then were sent northward again and while out there my time expired and I came home. It was winter.

The second time I spent at and about Ft. Lincoln all the term.

Peter beauchamp was the interpreter when I first enlisted, and he spoke both my language and the English well. And at that time I had the name Strike-the-bear, which was put down in my own language. The second time the interpreter was Geraun [sic. Gerard] and he did not speak well my language. He was my Chief Scout. It was that and not Cherah.

I know of nothing else I can do.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted by Albert H. Simpson and it is correct.

Attest: Floyd C. Lyon

His

Albert H. Simpson

Strike-the-Bear

or

Red Star,

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

The foregoing deposition is a true interpretation by me under oath.

Albert H. Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,

Inspector

RUNNING WOLF

Born around 1856 at Fort Clark, Running Wolf was the son of Gun-Pointing-To-Breast and Chief-Woman-Village, both survivors of the 1837 smallpox epidemic that killed many Arikara people. As a young man, Running Wolf joined the War Dance Society. Around 1872, at the tender age of sixteen he married Young-Red-Calf-Woman, quite remarkable for a man untested in war. Two years later, around 1874, he fought his first battle with the Sioux.⁴⁴ He enlisted as a scout under the name *sci-ri-tu-nuch* ("Wolf Runs") at Fort Abraham Lincoln on May 9, 1876. He was discharged on November 11, 1876, serving only one term as a scout.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Orin G. Libby, ed., *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 204-205.

⁴⁵ *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914*, vols. 150-151, 1866-1877, Indian Scouts, M233, Roll 70-71 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1956). According to Agent Murphy's letter of March 1891, Running Wolf "Served (he says) about one year. Was with Reno at the Little Big Horn. Lost one horse. Is a good Indian." Agent Jonathan S. Murphy to the Secretary of the Interior, March 1891, NARA, RG 75, Comm. Records, Box # 516643, [Letters Received] 4 November 1890 to 14 April 1891. However, in an interview with Walter Mason Camp on February 6, 1913, Running Wolf denied he was in the battle. Camp's notes state:

The census record for 1889 listed him as the head of the family, looking after his mother-in-law Owl Woman, his eleven year old brother-in-law Crow Tail, and his sister Brown Woman. A year later, however, he was married with Distributes Goods (a.k.a. Good Goods). The census for 1890 listed that he had four children, possibly from Distributes Goods' earlier marriage. They were Yellow [Owl], Young Weasel, Black Bear, and Crow Woman. It appears that a few years later all these had received "Christian" names of Milo (or Miles) Jones, George Gillette, and Agnes Gillette. After a marriage of more than twenty years, Distributes Goods passed away. Running Wolf remarried twice, first to Bug Woman, a Mandan, around 1915 and before 1930 to Maude Gillette, an Arikara.⁴⁶

Although he was not actually present at the Little Bighorn Battle, Running Wolf's brief service straddled two important campaigns: Terry and Custer's and George Crook's leading up to the Slim Buttes battle.

DEPOSITION BY RUNNING WOLF IN SUPPORT OF RED BEAR'S DISABILITY CLAIM, AUGUST 24, 1911.

Case of Red Bear, No., 1,328,131

On this 24 day of August, 1911, at Armstrong, County of McLean State of N. Dak., before me, M. J. McGirr, a special examiner of the Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Running Wolf, who, being by me first duly sworn to answer all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 56, occupation farmer, P. O. Elbowoods, McLean Co, N. Dak.

I served as Indian Scout during the Custer campaign – I don't know what year it was. I enlisted at Fort Lincoln, Dak ter. I never served as scout at Fort Stevenson.

I knew Handsome Elk before he went to Fort Stevenson – we both lived here in the same village. I don't know how he got his eye trouble. He went to Fort Stevenson with a good

"[Running Wolf] Says Tom Custer was called "Wounded Face" by the Rees. Says four of the scouts at the Crow's Nest were: Red Star, Strikes Lodge, Little Brave, Bull-Wkos. Says he (Running Wolf) went with Custer to the point up the Rosebud where the Sioux trail was struck. From there he was sent back to Powder River camp with the mail. Says Three Wolves among the scouts were Red Wolf—Schiri Tipaht, Howling Wolf—Schiri Tiwahua, Running Wolf—Schiri Dunhc." Walter Mason Camp papers, unclassified envelope 77, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

⁴⁶ Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, National Archives and Records Administration, M595, rolls 132-136.

pair of eyes and when he came back I noticed that there was something wrong with his eyes. I noticed that he had goggles on. I don't know whether either eye was blind at that time or not. He has been wearing goggles ever since he came from Fort Stevenson up to the present day. I should judge that it is four or five years ago since I noticed that the right eye was totally blind. How I found it out was [illegible] we were learning to plow and Red Bear would not get back to where he started from so I concluded that he could not see.

I never hear of him incurring any injury to either eye. The eye trouble which he has originated at Fort Stevenson but I don't know how.

No I don't know of any disability that he has but the eye trouble.

I know that Red bear and Handsome Elk are the same man.

I am not related to him and have no interest in his pension claim.

I have heard this statement read. I understood your questions and my answers are correctly recorded as read.

His

Running X Wolf

Mark

Witness

Byron H. Wilde

Another witness not available.

Subscribed and sworn before me this 23rd day of August 1911, and I certify that the contents are fully made known to deponent before signing.

M. J. McGirr

Special Examiner

DEPOSITION BY RUNNING WOLF IN SUPPORT OF RED STAR'S PENSION CLAIM, JUNE 16, 1925
Case of Strike-the-Bear, or Red Star, Inv. Org. No. 17788

On this 16 day of June, 1925, at near Ree, in the county of McLean, State of North Dakota before me, E. W. Young, Inspector, Bureau of Pensions, personally appeared Running Wolf, being by me first duly sworn to answer truly all interrogatories propounded to him during this special examination of aforesaid claim for pension, deposes and says:

My age is 70 years, my postal address is Ree, N. D., farmer.

I was a U. S. Scout once, only. It was for 6 mo. I enlisted along the middle of April at Fort Lincoln, near Bismarck. It was when I was aged about 21 years. It was the year of Custer's fatal fight. But I did not get into the battle. Just as they were moving forward to the battle, I was given the mail to take to another camp on Powder River, and there I got mail to take the battle and when I returned the battle was all over. I turned the mail over to the survivor officer.

I did not see Red Star that day and not till several weeks after the battle. They were scattered after the battle. And when I did not see Red Star he had the mail. He and I had been Scouts together before the battle and were old acquaintances before our service together. It is the same Red Star that is here to-day before you.

He was in as Strikes-the-Bear. I know of no other name for him in the service. Before his service he was called Black Calf.

At the roll-call each day I answered to my name. Do not remember how the man said that name in English. He called my name in English. The name in my language is in the Arikara. (He undertakes to pronounce it, but positively I fail to get any sound for which I find any English equivalent. My present interpreter gives it thus: Ses-che-ree-do-nakh (Wolf Running). – EWY, Insp'r). I never had any other name. Now that you say it, I recollect that my name was on the roll as Running Wolf.

I am not related to Red Star and havd [sic] no financial interest in his pension claim.

I have heard the foregoing deposition read and interpreted to me by Albert Simpson and it is correct.

Attest: Floyd C. Lyon

His

Albert H. Simpson

Running Wolf

Deponent

Thumb-Mark

I hereby certify that the foregoing deposition is a true interpretation by me while under oath.

Albert H. Simpson

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16 day of June, 1925, and I certify that the contents were fully made known to deponent before signing.

E. W. Young,

Inspector