GEORGE FIRST RIDER

George First Rider of the Blood Reserve was born in 1904. He had no formal schooling but became an accomplished horseman and worked for a time on the rodeo circuit. After working as a farmer he ended up in jail as a result of alcoholism and theft. He attributes his reform to his conversion to Christianity.

He prides himself on his ability as a storyteller and on his knowledge of Blood culture, particularly the holy societies many of which he joined as a young man.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Gives the practical and ceremonial uses of sweetgrass, cedar and sage.

George First Rider: Okay, now we are to tell a story. We are searching for the truth. It's very good to talk straight just how we know the subject so the new generations will know about life.

Now there is the swamp grass, there is the joint grass (Scouring Rush), there is the lake grass -- these all existed. The sweetgrass is found... the sweetgrass grew in the swamp grass. The swamp grass grew all over; they look alike. The sweetgrass are red at the base. They are not bright red; they are faded red. They're plucked with the roots. If the roots are broken off the sweetgrass will just dry up. It's the roots
that give the sweet smell. If they are broken above the roots they will be just like ordinary grass and they'll burn like grass. They just go up into a lot of smoke.

If the sweetgrass is pulled out with the roots it will stay moist. It's the water that they drank and it will dry up and the sweet smell stays. A sweetgrass will be in the swamp grass. Those that gather sweet will lie down. I pick them too. I'd sit on the (?) and I'd brush the grass down and I will see the sweetgrass. They are a little red. They are pulled. They are pulled straight up so that the roots will be pulled out too. If they are pulled sideways the roots will break off. They are no good if the roots break off. They'll be pulled out straight up. The sweetgrass is held in the left hand. We'll look for some more and another one is found and they are held together evenly and another one is also found. They are very slow to pick. We have to look for them. Sometimes two will stand together and both of them will be pulled out and they will be put away.

When a lot of them are held in the hand we'll take a strip of cloth and we'll tie the cloth where they are held. It will be tied into a loop and we'll stick our foot into the loop with the sweetgrass held on the sole. They are tied in a bunch. They are not trimmed yet. The roots are still on; they are not trimmed off. They are held and the foot is inserted into the loop and then they are braided. When they are braided down to the end a narrow strip of cloth is torn off. They are tied like braided hair. So they are tied and they are put away.

We start picking some more. Sometimes we pick a lot and sometimes they are scarce. We have to look for them for a while and they are found when they are tied. When they are all braided then we go home with them. They are not dried by the fireplace; they are dried in the sun. They'll be brought inside if it is going to rain. They are wrapped. If the rain hits them they are hung outside. They'll be there and when they are dry we'll feel the ones that are under. They'll be put away when they are all dry.

If they are put away before they are dry they'll get moldy. They are no good if they are braided too thick. When they are real dry, we'll be testing them. When we are able to break off the end, that means they are dry; then they'll be put away. When they are dry they are to be put away; then the roots are cut off and they are put away. The cloth is unwrapped before they are put away. A strand is taken from the real thread (sinew). A real thread doesn't have to be tied; it will just be pressed on and it will dry up hard. The end will be tied with a protruding strand of sweetgrass because they're not going to be like that all the time. Then they are trimmed off; the roots are put away.

The root leaves all the scent in the sweetgrass. If the root is broken off the sweetgrass will just dry up and they burn like hay; they have no smell in them. A person that is lazy will break them off. With the grass all he wants is to have a
lot and his sweetgrass are no good. So they are put away. When they are set they are put into separate places. Some are put onto the Horn Society bags (parfleches). They are also put onto the bags of the Motoki. Wherever they are going to be put to all the sacred bundles the sweetgrass are there ready.

The others are medicine; they are also good for treating sore eyes. Others boil the sweetgrass and they use them for hair tonic and the hair will smell like sweetgrass. If we want to put away something that is our property it will be wrapped with sweetgrass. When it is unwrapped we'll smell the scent of the sweetgrass. They are also deodorants. Okay, all sacred artifacts are incensed with them, incense of sweetgrass. When it is unwrapped we'll smell the scent of the sweetgrass; they are also deodorants. Okay, all sacred artifacts are incensed with them. Incense of sweetgrass is burned for a sick person, the way the sweetgrass are used.

Okay, a Horn Society lodge, a single Horn Society lodge, a Horn Society bundle is in there. The sweetgrass are all put with it. Let's say as room or the woman gets up she will get a hot charcoal from her fire and she burns the incense. Now the woman in the other tipi has built a fire and the other woman in the other tipi hasn't built a fire yet; she had nothing to make a fire with. She will go out and she looks at the tipi. She'll say, "Fire is built in that tipi." The woman will go there and she'll tell the woman, "Let me take some of your fire." Some will forbid to take some of their fires out and others will say, "Take some." A hot coal is taken from the fire by a sweat lodge to burn the incense in the sweat lodge.

There are a lot of uses with the sweetgrass. When the woman gets up in the morning, she will burn the incense and then she'll take her bundles outside so they are outside. In the evening she burns the incense again and then she will take her bundles inside and they are hung up. Before she goes to bed she burns sweetgrass for incense. She prays and she goes to sleep. That's how the woman will operate every day of the year. She burns incense every day; that is why there are a lot of sweetgrass. The other one will have no more to burn the incense with. She will go to the other women for some sweetgrass. Some pay for them. There are women that...

A storage container, the storage containers are not just for putting something in them. There are food containers and the storage containers. There are a lot of sweetgrass in the storage containers. A person uses them for curing someone that got hurt. Someone that got cured will be fumigated with sweetgrass. They are medicine and they are used in holy ceremonies. Let's say our quivers, a sweetgrass will be crushed and they'll be put in the quiver and when the arrows are taken out you will smell the sweetgrass. They are used in a lot of ways. The sweetgrass is used to burn the incense three times a day in a Horn Society lodge.

The Beaver Society uses them a lot. The Beaver Society burn a
lot of incense. A Beaver Bundle owner invited his friends. When the ones that he invited entered his lodge he burns incense for any one of the men and the men sang. He'll say -- he'll burn incense for the man and he'll tell him, "Sing the Still Sitting Yet song." The man will sing the Still Sitting Yet song. He will tell him, "Burn the incense again," and the incense was burned again, then he'll sing the smoking songs. I just said them that way for an example. They'll sing them any ways they want to sing them.

Okay, the sweetgrass are used in a Group Smoking ceremony. Incense is burned for everyone that is going to sing. They sing four songs and the incense is burned for them four times and the bunch of sweetgrass got very low. Those are all lives; they all existed. Sweetgrass are boiled and they wet their hairs with them and their hairs will smell like sweetgrass. Sweetgrass will be burned for a person that has a nose bleed.

The sweetgrass are in the storage bag for a very long time. In the Horns the sweetgrass are tied around at the bottom of a Horn Society staff. Those are not dry any more, they are deteriorated. The people call on those for help. They say, "Help me, O sweetgrass. You deteriorated on the Horn staff. May I live like that. May I deteriorate unto my life." Those are their prayers; that's what they are. We pray to the sweetgrass, anyone that is going to pray will say, "O thing that is used for incense, O sweetgrass." It's the ones that are tied around the Horn staff at the bottom. Those are used that way. So that's how come they are used in many ways.

Okay, there are others that are used for incense; they are called cedar needles. The ground juniper is different. The cedar needles are also used. The cedar tree. We'll go to the forest. We get to the forest where the cedar tree is, we get its scent, then its scent hits us. We go in the direction where the scent came from and the person will see it. He'll recognize it even if he hasn't smelled it yet. The branches of the cedar are up; the leaves of the real pine are downward. The leaves of the cedar are turned; the leaves of the real pines are pointing outward.

There are a lot of them -- the bare pine, the curly pine. The trees in a ravine are different. Let's say the pines in a forest, even if we go to a thick forest, still we'll smell them and we'll look for them and we'll find the one. New growths are not good; a new growth of cedar are big in size. Now the white man calls them needles. Us, we'll say, "It's got quills." That's a big size. And we'll say, "The leaves sprout out very nice." The cedar needles will get moldy if they are too big; they are real good if they are thin.

So, they are cut down. The same thing is done to them. Now there are some that dry by the fireplace. The cedar needles will get overheated and will have no more sweet odor. When they are used for incense, they will just make a lot of smoke.
They are dried in the sun. When they are red -- the time they were taken they were green. The roots where they grew from are put upwards. That's how they are dried and when they are dry, oh, they'll be yellow; they are not good yet. They put canvas under when they turn red; the people of the past put tanned hides. They are covered and they walk on them and the needles drop off.

They take a stick which is half-dry. They got them from the forest because there are all kinds of wood; that is why they take them from there. The half-dried stick is cut a little bit long. They are lifted and they are hit softly with the half-dried stick and now they threshed. After they are threshed with the stick then the Hates To Go South are picked out. There are no Hates To Go South on the cedar. The cedar cones are picked and put away. They south (?) in Blackfoot, are threshed with a stick.

The cedar needles are dried again in the sun. When they are all dry the women will walk on them. They are all broken; they are really dry at this point. They are really dry and then they are put in separate places. A Medicine Pipe owner is told, "Okay, your skin bag." Spotted backs are made into skin bags. These spotted backs are the young ones of blacktail deer; they have spotted backs. Those are skinned; cedar needles are put in there. Some put their cedar needles in a bladder. Now a membrane is a paint pouch. Okay, they are put on the bladders. Some cedar needles are in the fawn skin bags, the fawn skins. The pipe bags are different. Cedar needles are put on the fawn skin bag for the Medicine Pipe owner and they are put away.

The Medicine Pipe lodge is incensed with cedar needles. Cedar needles are burned for incense before the Medicine Pipe owners are going to dance. Again incense is burned before the Medicine Pipe owner is going to sing. Incense is also burned before the participants are going to dance and they also spray their feet with the cedar needles that they chewed. That's the only time they set foot on the ground; they are going to perform a holy dance. Incense is burned for the ones that are going to drum and then they can do the drumming. There are four drums; incense is also burned for the drums. Then they'll sing. All the ones that going to dance will spray their feet with cedar needles. The singers will burn the incense before they are going to sing.

We red-ochre ourselves with cedar needles. A person that is dying his/her mouth will be smoked with cedar needles. Okay, it comes to ghosts. A person that is mysteriously shot, someone is haunted by ghosts, his/her mouth will be smoked with cedar needles. Incense will be burned with cedar needles for him and he/she will come to. It's not from a dream, it's just a discovery. That's the reason why that those that are haunted are treated that way.

Okay, a race horse will be treated with cedar needles then it
will be given the medicine and it will win the race by that. They are also used in cursing. Cedar needles are burned for incense. When we are going to put a curse on a person the cedar needles will be burned for incense; the person is killed by the cedar needles. Then it occurs a person that is knocked out by a fall, incense will be burned with cedar needles for him and he'll come to.

Okay, a person that is too proud, the cedar needles are boiled, he soaks his hair with them, then he applies them on his body and he smells like cedar needles. Another person just takes some of the cedar needles and chews them and he sprays his clothes with them and he'll smell like cedar needles. They also perfume themselves with them. Okay, the Medicine Pipe owners they meet with the cedar needles. As they meet, the Medicine Pipe owner -- the other is also a Medicine Pipe owner and the other one is a former Medicine Pipe owner -- he won't talk to him ahead of time, he just burns the incense for him. "Okay, the smoke is drawing to you." The man sits and he starts to sing Medicine Pipe songs. It's not the dance, it's just the singing. The people all use those.

Okay, when he is going to paint himself with red ochre he'll paint himself with cedar needles. The ochres are smelly; it's on account of the fat they have a scent. A person that ochres himself with cedar needles, his robe will not be smelly with grease. Some people perfume their horses with cedar needles; they perfume their beds with cedar needles. And now, the Medicine Pipe owner just sits at the back. The cedar needles are their precious property. A decoration is made out of them. A decoration will be made for a person that has hemorrhage; this is curing. A person will make a decoration by his supernatural power; that is why he's going to make a decoration for the person.

A lodge -- the owner of the lodge is going away. He'll burn incense with cedar needles and when he comes back he'll open the door and the odor of cedar needles will come out. The cedar needle smudge will not make his belongings dirty. Okay, clothings that are going to be put away for a long time will be treated with cedar needles so that bugs will not get into them. There are a lot of ways to use the cedar needles. They are not all over; they are scarce. Now a man by the name of Running Bird lives five miles straight west from my home. Every day in the evening if the wind blows, from that distance of five miles, when he burns incense the odor of his incense blows down to my place. We smell the cedar needles. They have a very strong odor. So that is how the cedar needle smudge is used.

Okay, the sage, there are many different kinds of sages. Sage is just a name, but there's the man sage, big sage and the gum weed. The man sage are used in a lot of ways. The sage is used this way. They are used for incense but they are not used generally for incense. Sage is burned for incense where there is going to be a tanning of a bear skin. The Horns will burn
sage for incense when they are going to put a curse on somebody. Sage is used to strengthen our body and to wipe away bad life; the sage is rolled into a ball and we cleanse ourselves with them. Sage is used on an offering. There are the man sage, the woman sage, the big sage, and next are the gum weeds. They are sage but they are called gum weed, the big sage are used in many ways. Sage are tied on each ends of the cross stick of an offering and at the bottom and that is the crucifix. That is why the offering is clothed. The offering may be a shirt and sage are tied on each sleeve. Sage are also tied at the bottom. The feathers are different.

Okay, the Horns also rolled the sage into a ball and cleansed themselves with it. When they have a dance they'll take some sage and put them in the hole where the staff is stuck in. They put tobacco in the hole then they cover it with sage. There are many ways of using the sage. We cleanse ourselves with sage in a sweat lodge. Sages don't have to be pulled out neatly; they'll just be pulled out where they grow. They are also good for coughs. A person that has a liver trouble he/she will make a decoration of sage and he/she will drink the liquid. If a person's horse is coughing he'll use sage. If a person's horse has nasal gleet he'll smoke his horse's nose with sage.

In the summer when there are a lot of mosquitoes, sage is used to smoke them away. Okay, a person will use sage as for carpet in his sweat lodge. A person that is going to put up a Sun Lodge, the tongue will be put on some sage. A person that is going to go through the self-torture, sage will be tied on his ankles and on his wrists. Sage will be tied around his head. That's the chief's headband. Sage is used on the hide that is going to be cut. Sage are tied at one end on the strip of hide that is tied onto the centre pole. Sage are tied to an offering. They are used mostly for cleansing ourselves.

As the people of the past don't have a bath they'll fumigate themselves with sage and they'll smell like sage. The prairie deer that they eat feed on sage and they'll say, "Its stomach will taste like sage." As my story is about eating, the food tastes like sage. There is sage in their holy ceremonies. There is sage on their offering; they pray to the sage. Okay, in the other way it's bad. People that have stink feet will wipe their feet with sage. Okay, a person that excreted will use sage to wipe his/her rectum. The sage is in everything, the way it's used. The sage is used in any ways we want. So there are stories. I told a story about three subjects -- the sweetgrass, the cedar needles and the sage.

Okay, I am just going to say something different. It is good for someone to give a good illustration of the story that he is going to tell so that the new generation will know what is told. So that's what it is.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEX TERM</th>
<th>IH NUMBER</th>
<th>DOC NAME</th>
<th>DISC #</th>
<th>PAGE #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEREMONIALISM - cedar</td>
<td>IH-AA.088</td>
<td>SMUDGES</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEREMONIALISM - sage</td>
<td>IH-AA.088</td>
<td>SMUDGES</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEREMONIALISM - sweetgrass</td>
<td>IH-AA.088</td>
<td>SMUDGES</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>