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:

- Tells of the acquisition of the Holy Hand Game.

George First Rider: Okay, we will tell a story about the holy hand game, how it started. It didn't come from us Blackfoots and the Bloods. The holy hand game came from a different tribe. It came from the Eastern Crees. They explained it to us good. The owner of the game gave the game bundle and he explained to me where they came from and this is what we are going to explain. That is what they said, the Eastern Crees.

There was a man and this man was not a very ambitious man. In those times a man that is a good provider is looked after, so this man that is a good provider is looked after. So this man got sick. He is the kind of a man that will not be dancing around at a dance. He is shy. He will not attend at a hand
game and to be performing in a hand game he is not very useful. Nobody looked after him when he took sick. He is sick and he died. He was just put down at his burial place. He was laid by a tree. Some ghosts were already there. He came back after four days. His home was in the camps. It was not a home any more. He came back to his campsite; the people saw him walking around. They approached him. They were afraid of him. The man said, "Just come right over. There is nothing wrong with me and where is my home?" He had two wives. "Where are my wives and my children?" "Yes, their camp was transported for them and they are at the camps." The women, the widows are now separated. They are gone to their relatives. They told the women, "Your husband is over there. He came back." The women were scared to go to him so finally they went up to him. The man told his wives, "Why aren't you glad to see. I am the kind you will say, 'He came back from the dead.' I am all right." They then greeted him. The women were told by their husband, "Don't bother me yet too much. Pitch up our tipi. After you get it up then cut some birch and bend them and I will have a sweat bath." The women were in a rush. The man told his wives, "I will be sitting here for a while and don't let anybody come to me." The man sat at his campsite.

The women got together again and they got help from their relatives and they pitched up their tipi. The tipi was up in no time. They had everything in order. Some of their things were missing. The people in the past will take what he wants from a dead person's property. The things that were taken away were given back to him by his relatives. Others didn't give back what they took. They gave him some other things instead. His tipi was erected. The women got their relatives to help them and they went and cut some willows. They cut 12 willows and they also cut one forked stick and some rocks and one forked stick. This forked stick is for scooping the rocks to be put inside the sweat lodge into the dugout. The forked stick is also used inside the tipi. It is used in cooking. It is used for cooking in the fire. It is used for cooking a gut. We will say it is used for cooking a Crow Indian gut; this is the forked stick. The incense tool is different. The sweat lodge is complete at this point and it was dug. They told the man, "There is the sweat lodge. How do you want it to be dug?" He said, "Dig it in a circle." So it was dug in a circle and the grass was cut and white earth was spread around the inside. They didn't say how many rocks there were. Only the Holy Woman's sweat lodge has one hundred rocks. Maybe the rocks were not very many. The rocks were heated. The woman went to the man and told him, "Who are you going to have a sweat bath with?" The man said, "I am not going to have anybody to have a sweat bath with me. It's me that is going to have a sweat bath. I'll ask the ones that are going to have a sweat bath with me." When the stones were red hot the women got their helpers and the man was called. They didn't mention his name to me. So he was called, "The rocks are cracking apart. You are going to have a sweat bath and pause with this." That is what he was told.
The man started walking. He came in through the door, he sat down, and after he sat down he came out again and stood at the south side of the door and gave his invitation call. He invited the ghosts. He told the ghosts, "There is going to be a game. You are invited to it," and then he walked around to the southwest side and stood there. He called the ones that he knew and that are dead a long time ago. He told them, "You are going to have a sweat bath in the sweat lodge. The stones are burning apart. Come and attend." He then walked to the northwest side and stood there. He called for women that are dead long ago. He told the women, "There is going to be a game. You are invited to it. Come and attend." And then he stood on the northeast side and he invited the mystic eyes (ghosts). "Come, you are invited to a game." He told them, "Bring your games." Then he went inside and sat down.

He said, "I will have my sweat bath so that I may get sobered," as he is still in his dead body, "and when the door is open then the elderly men can come in to join me but first I'll have a sweat bath with the ones that I invited." The door was closed. He sang. The songs that he sang were the stick-tapping songs. He sang one song four times over. He sang the other stick-tapping song; he also said it four times. He sang the other stick-tapping. He sang it four times over and he also sang the other stick-tapping song four times. The fifth time he sang fast; he performed a hand game while he was singing. He ordered the door to be opened and the door was opened. All the songs he sang, some people were helping him with his singing from the inside of the sweat lodge. There were some women singing and where did the drums come from that sounded when the door was opened? He was alone. There was nobody in there with him. He said, "If any of the old men wanted to have a sweat bath with me they can come and I'll have a sweat bath with them." He said, "All you women that have children, bring them to me and I will paint their faces."

Nobody came in to give him some ochre. He was sitting there as before. He had a sweat bath. He didn't take his clothing off and there was no water inside for him to throw. To throw is to have some water to sprinkle the rocks with which he had a sweat bath; that is what it means. It was said the people that don't hesitate brought their children in. He painted the faces of the boys with seven paint and the girls with real paint. The facial painting was just on the forehead, not all over the face; that is how he painted their faces.

Then he had another sweat bath. He was heard when he told the old men, "Sing one song that you have confidence in." One of the old men that sat next to him sang and the next also sang. It wasn't said how many men that he had a sweat bath with. After they sang, he then sang. He sang the holy hand game songs. He was heard making a sound like an owl. While he was performing nobody saw him but he was just known to be performing. After he got through singing, the door was opened and they came out; the sweat bath was over. The ones that we built sweat lodges for will go out through the door on the west side; himself he came out from the east door.
Then he said, "We will have a game. Here are some games." He showed the games. He said, "We will play with these. When darkness comes we will have a game. Enjoy the game that is going to be held; it is a ghost game." The people announced, "We are going to have a game. Come with your wives." As it was said that the game will start at night, before it was even dark the tipi was full. The man sat at the head of the crowd. He had dirt spread out on the ground, he had the altar built like a Medicine Pipe altar, and he had a crosspiece over the two sticks. They were small forked sticks; he had them stuck into the ground. Some of the counter sticks were painted with real paint at one end. An owl feather and a plume were attached and some rolled tins (tinklers) are strung at the end with beads strung to the tinklers and that made the end heavy. Those are the 20 count sticks. The guessing stick is wrapped with an otter. It is like a Medicine Pipe with beads strung from one end to the other end and at the handle of the guessing stick it is just like a Medicine Pipe. It had feathers tied in a row; that is the handle at one end. The main feather of an eagle is attached with a long string. The string was bind; that is what is called quilled work. This is the guessing stick. The guessing stick is laid by the painted forked stick. The others are on one side are painted yellow; the other guessing stick also has feathers tied in a row to it. The feather on one end is made the same way; it is also quilled. Where the guessing stick has the feathers in a row tied to, it also has some tinklers and there are some at the main end.

When the guessing stick is swung the tins will jingle and there are also folded tins in the middle and when it is moved there will be a loud noise from the tins. This guessing stick is painted yellow. The count sticks are on the crosspiece, ten on one side and ten on the other side. There are 20 count sticks and there are four drummers and there will be four drummers on the other side.

When everybody was seated the men sat on the north side inside the tipi and the women sat on the south side. The count sticks were laid against the altar inside the tipi. Before he headed them out he started to pray. He prayed to the dead as he just came from them. He demonstrated the game. He hasn't transferred it. He told the people, "You will move these feathers like this, just like whipping. You will see which way the feather is moving and you will point on both sides. You will hold the guessing stick in the centre and move it like this forward and you are pointing to both sides. You will point to the centre with it and the same with you women. Here it is. Be wise." The word 'wise' is our word. He told them, "Those are your ears, those are your ears. Don't slip the dice to your other hand. It will not take long for the person to die that slips his dice to the other hand. Okay, take courage. We will win one person at every game. We'll have one person." It means a person will die and whoever slips his dice to the other hand will also die; this is the restriction. The drummers just sat with their drums and he sang a stick-tapping
song*, eight stick-tapping songs. They did a fast drumming and the holy hand game songs were sung. When the man sang he held the pink-painted count sticks in his right hand and the dice and the guessing stick, and on the other hand he held the yellow-painted count sticks, the dice and the guessing stick and he stretched his arms with them.

The drummers had learned the stick-tapping songs at this point. They kept singing and then he will cross his arms and holds the sticks against his shoulders and when the drummers start singing again he does the same performance. He stretches his arms again and towards the end of the song he holds them against his shoulders. On the fourth song he shook them and finally he got up. When he got up he stood in the middle of the tipi. He gave the pink-painted count sticks to the one that sat nearest to him. He told him, "Distribute them. Each one of you will take one. He also gave the yellow-painted count sticks to the women. He told them, "All of you will take one and as soon as you take them start moving them." When the drummers stop singing he told them, "Which one is going to do the pointing for you?" They picked out the person that is going to do the guessing. He didn't sit down, he kept standing up. He gave the other guessing stick to the woman. He gave it to her in the same manner. He held the guessing stick four times over the incense and then he told the participants which one is going to perform. Two men performed and two women; that makes four performers. The performers will hide their dice in any way they want as they are not to slip the dice to the other hand. The guessers were watching the feathers and will point in the direction the feather was pointing.

Then he said, "We will beat the women first." So the women lost the first game. "Now the men will lose the second game." So the men lost the second game. They played four games and the game ended. I didn't mention this. Four beef tongues were boiled; they played for these tongues. The men won and they took the boiled tongues and they dished them out and gave a share to their wives. He said, "We will play for four nights. Whoever wants to take the game sticks will take them." A man said, "I will take them." So they were transferred to him right there. He hasn't gone back to his wife at this point. When he came to the camps he wasn't carrying anything. The mystery part is, when he got into the sweat lodge his game sticks were all there. The game sticks were transferred to the man and a plume headpiece was also given to him. They were here a real paint.
<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>STORIES AND STORYTELLING (GENERAL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- games and contests</td>
<td>IH-AA.053</td>
<td>HOLY H GAME</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>