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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:

- Description of the ceremonies associated with a Holy Lodge.

NOTE: The title of the original text is "Last Good Sundance." However, this appears to be an error, since the entire document deals with a Holy Lodge.

First Rider: Okay, this is the 15th day of the Liar Moon, 1970. I am going to tell a story. I am going to tell the story of the Holy Lodge in sequence. I want to illustrate it accurately. I think life is cut down in half. I (First Rider) am getting close to the age of 70; I am 67 years old now. I like to illustrate life accurately, so the future generation will know how my stories are. I (First Rider) am taking a great effort to know the words that I am saying real accurate, to tell the stories straight and to illustrate them accurately. I

am First Rider. I like to illustrate my work accurate.

I (First Rider) was in the Horn society. I was 25 years old. I owned the Associate Staff at that time. The elderly people take the sacred transferable bundles this way. Even if a person's father has long gone beyond he will purchase the sacred bundles that his father had purchased while he was living. People take them as for memorials; that is how they take them. My father's comrades are called Crow Carriers. When the Crow Carriers took over the Horn Society my father took the Associate Horn Society Staff. When I (First Rider) joined the Horn Society I purchased -- pursued which one of the staffs to take. The older men told me, "Your father is still alive and he owns the Associated Staff, has an Associated Staff. So take the Associated Staff." This Horn Society Associated Staff has a blade at the end. The Associated Staff is placed between the Swan Staff and the Staff with the Arm Band. The owner of the Associated Staff sits right in front of the main tipi support pole at the back. So I (First Rider) took the Associated Staff.

The circle encampment was located on the south side of a coulee; the coulee is called the Big Coulee. I (First Rider) was a Horn Society member then. That Holy Lodge was sponsored by First Charger; his wife is Rhubarb Woman. They sponsored a Holy Lodge that time. It is usual custom. The Horn Society control the circle encampment. Nobody will govern the circle encampment, not even a chief. The Horn Society members are the ones that give out orders. The Motoki Society will tell the Horn Society members what they (Motoki) should do. The Horn Society members will advise them what to do. The sponsorer of the Holy Lodge will tell the Horn Society what she should. The Horns will settle the plans with the sponsorer of the Holy Lodge. The Horn Society are the ones that announce what the procedures will be in the circle encampment.

I (First Rider) had a desire. I told my father, "I want to use my wife to go and cut the centre pole." My father said, "I cannot look after your wife," because the women are stripped

naked. My father cannot undress my wife. My father said, "Go and tell Wolf Old Man (Willie Scrapping White) to come and I will instruct him how to operate what he is going to work for you." I (First Rider) went to Wolf Old Man's (Willie Scrapping White) home. I (First Rider) told him (Willie Scrapping White), "Come to my home." Wolf Old Man came and my father told him (Willie Scrapping White), "My son (First Rider) is going to go to cut the centre pole. You will look after my daughter-in-law." Wolf Old Man (Willie Scrapping White) was instructed by Little White Weasel Calf how to operate the Horn Society; that was the first time he worked on the Horn Society. He never did that work before; that was the first time he officiated the secret ceremony (Horn Society). I (First Rider) trained Willie Scrapping White. He started to operate the Horn Society on account of me; that is why I am not shy at him because he got the job through me. It is dark at this time.

Willie Scrapping White went to Wings. Wings was my holy father; his friend is Calf Tail (Mike Eagle Speaker). They discussed the matter together. Wings agreed to go to my wife tonight and in the morning we will go and cut the centre Holy Lodge pole and Wings has agreed to co-operate. I (First Rider) did not drum that night; different men did the drumming. I sat by the doorway. My friend (Wings) sat at the back with my wife. My wife was advised by a woman; her name is Long Time Pipe. My wife was advised and instructed by this woman. That night the Horn Society did some chanting. As morning almost comes at any time only seven songs were sung and then the Horns danced. After they had danced the ceremony got underway. Before the ceremony started everybody went out to relieve themselves. When they came back inside the ceremony got underway. Wolf Old Man (Willie Scrapping White) officiated. We went and cut the holy lodge centre pole through two women, I (First Rider) and my wife. Low Horn and his wife sponsored the secret ceremony. Low Horn is older than me. He (Low Horn) is my opponent in criticism. He (Low Horn) doesn't like me to be above him; he is satisfied when we are equal in position. So that is why we had two women to go through the secret ceremony; that is why the pluck out stick is there. The pluck out stick is not a tamp stick. It is a stick that is given to the woman when she is sent out to entertain another man. That's what it is that is the meaning of sending out; a tamp stick is different.

I (First Rider) will sing all the songs and then at another time I will sing them at intervals. Right now I will sing one song. Now my wife has gone out. A different man took her out; the man's name is White Tail Feathers. Low Horn's wife was also taken out; the name of the man that took Mrs. Low Horn is Strangling Wolf. As they went out I (First Rider) filled my pipe and I approached Willie Scrapping White with the pipe. I

told him, "Okay, this is your smoke," and I told him, "May my trap be good." Low Horn also offered him (Scrapping White) a smoke; he (Low Horn) told him the same thing. He (Scrapping White) said, "Burn the incense." The owner of the Lighter Staff sat by the door. He was the one that burned the incense; then he prayed. I (First Rider) will illustrate the trapping. A trap is long and narrow. A coyote will step into a trap; the trap will spring and clamp together trapping the coyote on the foot. The coyote will have a difficult time to get his foot out. That is what the meaning of trap means. When the man has an intercourse with the woman, when he shoves his penis into her vagina, that means the woman is trapped. That is why the word trap is used. We were still in the tipi and they tried to start singing at this point. Here is how they started:

Hai-ai-i-i-i-iyi. Ah-a-hai-i-i-i-iyi. Shai-i-i-i-yai.
Ha-ah-hai-i-i-i-yai.*

There are four tries in starting the song, then they sang.

SONG: NO WORDS IN THE HORN SOCIETY SONG.

This kind of song is not sung out loud, it is sung in a soft tune. Those are the seven songs that are sung. I (First Rider) am just telling this story and I sang this song. I will be illustrating the songs in my next story. I (First Rider) am telling just the story. So this is where I leave off my story. So when they sang, that is how they tried to start the song.

We were still sitting in the tipi. The man that took the woman out jumped in. As he jumped in I (First Rider) asked a question. "White Tail Feathers, did you trap good?" "Yes, my friend, I made a good trap," he answered and the Horn Society members all gave thanks. At this point they sang on and on; seven songs were sung. My wife did not come back because they were having a sexual intercourse somewhere; that is why she did not return. The incense was burned again and another seven songs were sung at this point. The seven songs were not all sung when my wife returned.

A man sat outside; he is called the lookout. He watches which way the men and women went. He will see the women coming back to the tipi. They separated; they didn't go to the same place. One woman went to a different man and the other woman also went to a different. I (First Rider) went to Wings; Low Horn went to Little Pup (Percy Chreighten). That is how they operated. The lookout rushed in, "They're coming," and singing stopped.

*Sound of song at the start of the Horn Society song. The i's are as e's in the native alphabet.

So we sat there and listened. Suddenly someone spoke from the outside. The woman said, "White Tail Feathers, you have a facial painting." Everybody ran out from the tipi kissing the woman and making downward brushing motions on them from the head and down on both their sides, and then the two women were brought into the tipi. They were made to lie down and sleep.

In the morning my wife slept alone and I (First Rider) slept with my friend (White Tail Feathers). He never slept. He'd get up now and then to burn the incense. He (White Tail Feathers) was burning the incense until morning. So we all got up in the morning. Before the sun rose he (White Tail Feather) lead my wife up from her bed and took her out to relieve herself. She came back in and after she sits down she will never move again. The participants that are going to join the holy walk with Low Horn and the ones that are going to join me separated. Then the participants all went out to get their holy grandfathers who will paint them. I (First Rider) took Willie Scrapping White for my holy grandfather. My wife was painted by him (Willie Scrapping White) and Low Horn took Little White Weasel Calf for his holy grandfather and his wife was painted by Little White Weasel Calf.

We went to the tipi. As we came out we paused four times on the way and we entered the tipi. We all sat down and then we went out and we ran in all directions. We had already notified

our holy grandfathers beforehand; we told them to go to the Horn Society tipi. As I (First Rider) went to my selected holy grandfather, his name is Dog Ribs, he was at a Medicine Pipe dance. The Medicine Pipe was opened in the morning. He (Dog Ribs) sat with the participants on the north side. I (First Rider) got to his tipi. His wife was alone; her name is Black Bear Woman. I told her, "Where is the old man?" She said, "He (Dog Ribs) was invited to that Medicine Pipe dance which is about to start. That is where he went." So I jumped back out and there was an old man; his name is Blue Wings. I (First Rider) told him, "I will ask you a question. My holy grandfather is in that Medicine Dance. What shall I do?" He said, "He is your holy grandfather. Just go in the medicine singing." I (First Rider) stripped myself. I wore my holy moccasins and my breechcloth and my robe. That was all the property I had. So I went to the Medicine Pipe dance. The canvas was raised in the east side of the shade that was erected adjacent to the tipi. I (First Rider) walked in.

The people inside were already seated. As soon as they saw me they sat back, making room for me where to walk. As I got into the main Medicine Pipe tipi I was still holding my robe. I (First Rider) looked at him (Dog Ribs). I thought I'd just

tell him, "Come over here." Scrapping White* sat by the door. He told me, "Okay, young married man, who are you going to ask?" I told him, "I am going to ask Dog Ribs." The man said, "Son, put your robe here and remember how you proceed." The man told me, "You will know the former Horn Society members that are seated on this side. You will make downward brushing motion on them except the woman that is sponsoring the Holy Lodge." So I started. I (First Rider) left my robe behind and I walked low. I made a downward brushing motion on the first Horn Society woman that I came to and on to the next person and so on like that.

I (First Rider) stopped by the owner of the Medicine Pipe. His name is Has Many Back Fats. Lone Medicine Pipe Owner (Bob Tail Chief) was the ceremonialist. When I (First Rider) stopped by the owner of the Medicine Pipe, Lone Medicine Pipe Owner told me I must step over the incense. So I (First Rider) stepped over the Medicine Pipe incense burning place. Lone Medicine Pipe Owner (Bob Tail Chief) was also a former Horn Society member. I made downward brushing motions on him from his head and down on both sides and I did in like manner to the other former Horn Society members down to my holy grandfather (Dog Ribs). I picked up a stick and I told him (Dog Ribs), "This is your horse**," and I gave him the stick.

I told him (Dog Ribs), "You will go to Wings' tipi." He (Dog Ribs) didn't say a word. I came back to my robe and picked it up and wrapped it around me. I (First Rider) jumped out and I started running. Most of the participants are back in the tipi. When I (First Rider) entered the tipi I took my robe off and I put it down. Our holy mother sat by the door. We will kiss our holy mothers and our holy fathers. We will act that we are

not at all mad at the man that had sexual intercourse with the wife during the night and we will be very happy so that the other participants will know that the person did not care that his wife was sexually intercoursed. If I (First Rider) sit very quietly and lonely the other participants will know and think, "First Rider is mad over his wife." That's what it is. That is why the women that sponsor Holy Lodges don't join the Horn Society.

*This Scrapping White that is mentioned in the story is not Willie Scrapping White. He is the former and foster father of Willie. So Willie Scrapping White was named after his foster father (Scrapping White).

**The given stick represent the horse that First Rider is giving Dog Ribs for taking him for a holy grandfather.

The holy grandfathers started to come in and they sat on the south side. I (First Rider) sat by the door. The holy ceremony started at this point. It is the time when we receive holy communion. The participants and the sponsorers of the secret ceremony drink holy water too. At this point we had holy communion and a holy drink. The priests drink wine and we drink water. It's a Horn Society holy communion and it's a Horn Society holy drink.

After these were all fulfilled then we were initiated into smoking. After everything was over and after we got through smoking we went out and walked around the camp circle. At this point my wife was given the stick. Those are the sticks that are used in holy ceremonies. So my wife was given the stick and we all kissed my wife.

White Tail Feather took the lead of the procession. Behind him (White Tail Feather) was the person that carried the ochre and then there were the participants. I (First Rider) walked behind at the rear. My wife was given back to me at this point; then we went out. We went home. We walked around our tipi and we went inside; we all sat down. We haven't eaten yet but we had our holy communion. Low Horn and his group also came. They sat down and then we all went out in one group.

White Tail Feather led the procession and my wife was behind me and Strangling Wolf walked close behind my wife. Low Horn and his wife walked at the far end. We stood in line outside and we started walking. When we walked out through the east opening in the camp circle we walked a few paces to the right and we sat down and people started to bring forth their offerings and we pray for the persons that brought offerings to me and some will come and offer us smokes. We started walking again and again we stopped and we sat down on the west side of the camp circle and more offerings were brought out and we were offered smokes. We prayed for the person that offered us smokes. We got up and started walking again and we stopped at northwest side of the camps and again we sat down and more

offerings were given to us. It's not only me (First Rider) that is given offerings; the participants and the women received offerings. So we started walking again. Now there are a lot of offerings.

When we came close to the east side opening of the circle encampment we sat down again. Now that is our last stop. We will be going to the centre. Some have started to dig post holes for the Holy Lodge. We went back to the tipi. We went around on the south side of the tipi and we all put the offerings on the west side of the tipi and then we all went inside empty-handed. As we got inside saddle ponies were

brought to the tipi. My father hitched his nicest team out on a buggy. White Tail Feather rode with my wife in the buggy; Strangling Wolf and Low Horn's wife also rode together in the same buggy. We (First Rider & Low Horn) rode on horseback and the rest all got their horses. We all started off. There was Bear Hat. He is the one that is going to shoot the centre pole. So we all went down in the valley and we stopped at a certain place and Bear Hat rode away. We stood in a semi-circle. A rider came running and shouting and here we clapped our hands and sang.

SONG: NO LYRICS.

The rider came out into the open. There was no drumming, just the clapping of hands. There was a pile of branches with leaves set up like as if they were to be burned. Strangling Wolf met the rider.

Okay, to lead on this man that has returned. This was in the year of 1914. The First World War, I (Strangling Wolf) joined the army. We went overseas and at our first attack I (Strangling Wolf) took five rifles that were left behind by the Germans. The second time I came up to a German that was killed I also took his sword and I (Strangling Wolf) threw the sword into a bloody pool of water. In our next advance I (Ben Strangling Wolf) was hit with poison gas. There was a net wire fence. I was the tenth man to crawl through. I made it safely, so that I may lead on this man in life. During the four years of war I never sat idle. I (Strangling Wolf) I was hearing gun shots continually, so that I may lead this on in life.

He (Strangling Wolf) counted four war coups. He (Bear Hat) said, "The enemy is close by and they didn't tie their horses," and the small pile of branches were wrecked and we all jumped in and grabbed a branch like as if we were taking something from the enemy. As we grab a branch we say, "I got a horse. It has such a color."

We all went to the selected would-be centre pole and we sat down by it and incense was burned and we started to pray. Then the Horn Society members sang a song. They sang four songs and then they danced. The first time we went to cut the centre pole -- that was the first time I (First Rider) joined the Horn

Society -- we did not dance. And then it got different. This time we danced and the centre pole was cut down.

When the centre lodge pole was loaded onto the wagon we all rode off in disorder. When we came in sight of the camps then we all stood in line. The Horns took the lead with the centre

pole. Four Horn Society members sat on the centre pole. The ones that sat on the centre pole are as follows: there is Crazy Bull, Wolf Child, Low Horn and First Rider. The other Horn Society members lead our mounts behind them.

The drumming started. Close behind us are the women and behind the women were the ones that are painted and the ones that were not painted rode at the rear. Still there is only one song.

SONG: THERE ARE NO WORDS IN THE HORN SOCIETY PARADE SONG.

There was no shooting or any sort of thing to be done. They were just singing. There were still a lot of wagons at that time. People climbed on wagons; everybody stood outside to watch and to listen. Some of the old people sat outside of their tipis. Let's say the ochre that we were painted with was just greasy. We paraded on the inside of the camp circle. I am First Rider; I start the singing; I carried on the Horn society members. We paraded around on the west side of the camp circle. When we came back to the east entrance of the circle encampment we drove to the centre. The posts were up and the crossbeams of the Holy Lodge, and the centre pole was unloaded and the horses were led away.

When we got into the tipi, we didn't eat; we were just cleaning the ochre off ourselves. After we cleansed ourselves things got ready. Our holy father told me (First Rider), "Eat your facial paintings before dark." The Horn members that were left behind at the camps had already built a sweat lodge. The groups that were in the secret ceremony all went into the sweat lodge and they had a sweat bath.

During the four openings of the entrance and the exit some of the men will crawl out and others will go in the sweat lodge. So they all had a bath and then we all went home to the Horn Society tipi and we all put our clothes on, and the centre pole was immediately raised after.

The Horn Society helped with their singing and their prayers.

SONG: NO WORDS IN SONG.

It was a joyous time when the people stood forward singing. They stood on the inside of the camp circle. After they sang they came forward a little ways. They all sang again and when they got through singing they came forward and they stood by the Holy Lodge. They sang again and when they got through singing again they entered the Holy Lodge and the centre pole was raised.

The ones that raised the centre pole were shooting and blowing on their whistles and shouting. The Horn Society members were just praying. The sponsorer of the Holy Lodge sat on the nest. He had a black robe. When he jumped down he left his robe on the nest. The Horn Society prayed with the offerings that they took. They give them to the sun; they offer them up into the heavens. The people that donated offerings to the Horns were prayed for. That is the reason why the Horn Society took part.

All the various societies sat there. The Horn Society sat there, the All Brave Dog Society sat there, the Pigeon Society sat there and the Brave Society also sat there. There were four different societies that sat by the holy lodge. Where we (Horn Society) sat, as the Horn members were all slicked up in their ceremonial facial paints, that was the time I saw a man by the name of Calling First. He offered the Horn Society a smoke in his Medicine Pipe. A person will not hold the Medicine Pipe. The owner will hold the pipe and the would-be smoker will pretend to puff on the pipe and pretends to exhale the smoke. All the Horn Society members were initiated into smoking with the Long Time Pipe. The Horn Society were also initiated into smoking with my father's (Little White Weasel Calf) Utility Bag Pipe. The Medicine Pipe of Owns Many Back Fats was also used in offering a smoke. The late Scrapping White's Black Covered Pipe was also used to initiate the Horns Society into smoking. That pipe is a Black Seizers pipe. So I (First Rider) saw all these pipes that were used in offering a smoke at that time. It was late when the ordinary offerings of smoke took place. We said, "It is getting dark. We will have the dugout dance tomorrow." So everybody dispersed. The All Brave Dog Society, the Pigeon Society and the Brave were singing the fancy lodge songs. People were sent out from the Holy Lodge and children were not allowed to go near the Holy Lodge because no ceremonies and performances have taken place yet in the Holy Lodge.

I (First Rider) was told, "You just chewed exceedingly." Chewed exceedingly means, "You just gained dignity. Your wife just had a facial painting." That is what it means. I (First Rider) was told to sing. My songs started to increase at that time. I (First Rider) didn't sing all the Horn Society songs that I know. As it was summer I sang 18 songs. There are four soft beats to one song and the song is repeated four times over. The songs are sung in sequence just like in numbers. We'll say just like the white man's saying (English); there's No.1, No.2, No.3, No.4, No.5. That's how we will sing them; we will not mingle them. When I (First Rider) sang 18 songs it was daylight. We're up all night. Then I sang the dance song and the Horns danced. As soon as the Horn members got through dancing, the Holy Lodge ceremonies started. We can't sleep

long and we cannot abandon the Horn Society tipi because the Horn Society staffs are all in there; they cannot be left alone in the tipi. Early in the morning people were told to hurry, and we all got slicked up immediately. The Horn Society members will perform inside the Holy Lodge. Horses were brought to our

Horn Society home and dry goods; those are giveaway gifts. It is different with a war coup counter. A coup counter will give away something as a gift for counting war coups. Supposing a Peigan visitor is present, the coup counter will give something to this person.

When the people came forward, all the various societies were ready. The Horn Society members came out from their tipi and stood in line as the things that they are going to give away are all there. They were singing one song. They all stood in a row; behind them are the women. They did not let their elder comrades walk in front, they just all stood in a row.

Some old men were in the Holy Lodge singing fancy lodge songs. The Horn Society members were the important ones. They stood in a row and there was a lot of singing of songs of praise by men and women. They were singing songs of praise for the Horn Society. They (Horn Society) stood facing the Holy Lodge and they sang.

SONG: NO WORDS IN THE HORN SOCIETY SONG.

The Horn Society then came forward. As they marched on they sang the same song; that is called singing as they go. They walked on slowly. We'll say the women were all dressed like as if they were at a dance. They did not dress up in their holy cloth and they were dressed up in their very best clothes. They are walking to the Holy Lodge at this point. So they (Horns) sang the same song.

SONG: NO WORDS IN THE HORN SOCIETY SONG.

They (Horn Society) got to the entrance of the Holy Lodge and they stopped and they sang the same song again. As they stood outside of the tipi they sang one song and they walked slowly to the Holy Lodge. The song was repeated twice then they stood at the entrance of the Holy Lodge and they sang the same song. Actually they sang four songs. After they got through singing they sat down; they sat on the south side. They didn't sit they way the in the Horn Society tipi. The ones that were going to count war coups sat at the head of the row.

The All Brave Dog Society came forward and the Pigeon Society. In the Holy Lodge is where they compete against each other.

The dance at the door died off since the time -- since the time Holy Lodges were not built any more. Because there were no more war chiefs, so who is going to dance at the door of the Holy Lodge?

Fires were scarcely built in Holy Lodge ever since that Holy Lodge that was built in the year of 1948. The real war chiefs would almost burn out the Holy Lodge because of their great war exploits. What I (First Rider) spoke about is not like as it used to be. All they do is count war coups; they don't reenact their war exploits.

A South Peigan Indian was the lodge dancer. His name is Mexican; he is still alive today. The white man's ways came and everything was no good. The song of the Pigeons, the Pigeon songs, the All Brave Dog Society also sang their dance songs. The Pigeons and the All Brave Dog Society dance in the Holy Lodge except the Horn Society. The coup counters were there and the people that sing songs of praise. That was the time I (First Rider) heard Eagle Calf sing a song of praise. This Eagle Calf's other name is Mountain Horse. His son's name is Surpend Owl Hooter (Joe Mountain Horse) and his other son's name is Night Hitten on the Back (Mike Mountain Horse) and he (Mountain Horse) has another son who's name is Praying (Albert Mountain Horse).

He (Mountain Horse) had three sons; two are still alive. Praying (Albert Mountain Horse) came back after the war and he died. He (Albert Mountain Horse) didn't come back to the Blood Reserve but his body was shipped back to Many Houses (Fort Macleod). Praying (Albert Mountain Horse) was buried on the Big Island on the east side of the reserve where the old Saint Paul's school was located. He (Albert Mountain Horse) is well known by the white people. Praying's name is Albert Mountain Horse. The other one's name is Joe Mountain Horse and the other one's name is Mike Mountain Horse. These three men all served in the First World War. At that time Eagle Calf sang a song.

"My children, when they were long gone I had pleasant thoughts."

He (Mountain Horse) didn't sing a song of praise for his children, he just sang a song for them though they were back home. He (Mountain Horse) always praises his sons. People will count war coups in the Holy Lodge and that is where he (Mountain Horse) sang a song of praise for his sons. The various societies sang all their songs at this time.

WORDS IN THE ALL BRAVE DOG SOCIETY SONG:

"I paid a lot on my rattle."

SONG: NO WORDS IN THE SECOND ALL BRAVE DOG SOCIETY SONG.

These are their songs.

SONG: NO WORDS IN THE PIGEON SOCIETY SONG.

These are the Pigeon Society. Some societies will just sing their dance song. Okay, the old men that are singing the fancy lodge songs.

SONGS: NO WORDS IN THE FIRST, SECOND, OR THIRD HOLY LODGE SONG.

The people that sat in the Holy Lodge sing at intervals. That is how the Holy Lodge is. Okay, I (First Rider) close my

story. I am First Rider. I am through telling this story and I am closing it now. That's all.

(End of Interview)

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