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:

- Story of a medicine man named Bear Hat (later renamed Curlew).
- How Bear Hat was revived after serious injury.
- How Bear Hat healed a young man wounded in a battle.

George First Rider: Okay, I have a story to tell. Now this is the Duck Moon (March), the 11th day, and I am going to tell a story again. I am First Rider. I always think of what story to tell and now I have found a good story to tell. I think to illustrate of what I am going to tell about so that the person that I am telling the story to, to understand what the story is about. That is why I do my best to tell a good story.

Now I am going to tell a story about shamanism. I don't know very much about the shamanism in the earlier times. I will tell a story about the famous shaman, the ones that did some curing.
There is a man his name is Bear Hat. That man's pelts were two curlews. You know how the Indians will skin an animal or a bird. The feet of the two curlew pelts are still on. The birds were skinned with their beaks still on and then they were stuffed.

The stuffings were not taken out. The bird skins were stuffed with dung, a very dry dung. The dung was grind and the bird was stuffed with it and it gave a little weight to the curlew then it was stitched together and then it was put away to dry. Shield shaped were used. These shield shaped are brass; they are round. Sometimes women sew them on their dresses. I will illustrate them this way - they are like the round ends of brass rivets. So shield shaped were sewn onto the bird for eyes. There are two sizes. Some are small and some are big; the big shield shapes were used for eyes.

The other bird was skinned in the same way; the feet were also still on. There are no meat on them so they were dried just the way they were. The beak was also still on and it was also stuffed with dry dung. When they were dry they were ochred with yellow ochre. A yellow ochre was put in a bag, the bag was perfumed with sweet scented grass which were chewed (that perfumed the yellow ochre), the two curlews were put in the bag, they are all yellow ochred.

This man, Bear Hat, he just got the Bear Hat. He took the name Bear Hat from his relatives. It was their name so he took the name Bear Hat. His sacred bags and his sacred headpieces are hung outside on tripods.

One night, horses were stolen from the camps. The people felt that they were being watched. They kept on the alert for their horses; they kept their horses close to the camps. They tied their horses' legs together. The legs of two gentle horses will be tied together. The right leg of one horse will be tied to the left leg of the other horse; one foot of the other horses will be tied to a picket with a long rope. They will not struggle because they are trained to that. Some are hobbled. When there is no danger a horse will be hobbled in a way so that it can walk when he is grazing but it will not go astray. So horses were hobbled since there was danger.

Aggressive young men were called. These aggressive young men are very obedient. And there are the sickly type of young men. They are lazy. When a person is told to do something he will never say a word, but when he goes to do what he is told to do he will be walking around very slow and we will say he is sickening. The sickly thing means a person has syphilis. There is something wrong with his penis. So this is a sickly person. He will not be able to ride a horse and when he is walking his penis will hurt; so that is a sickly person. They are not called lazy person, they are called sickly persons.

The aggressive young men are the lively ones, so they were the
ones that were called. Four young men were called. This is the thing that I was talking about; the old people never mention names in their stories. So the names of the four young men were not mentioned; it was just said the four aggressive young men were called to watch. They hid behind woodpiles. It was strange how they not see when the horses were herded away, but it was said that it was raining and the young men might have curled up and slept, so they did not see when the horses were herded away.

It was said that the birds were starting to sing in the morning. The young men looked up and they missed one of the horses that was tied to a picket. He walked up to the ropes that were used to tie the horses and as he examined the rawhide rope; it was cut with a knife. He called out, "Horses are taken." The people that were sleeping slept lightly, so they scrambled up. So they went out to check on their tethered and hobbled horses. Some were missing.

They got the horses that were not taken and they got on them. They ran to a safe place and it was daylight by this time and they tracked the enemy down. They galloped their steeds at full speed. They were on the trail of the ones that stole their horses. As they rode up the enemy trail they found some horse dungs and they jumped off and checked the dungs; they were still warm. They said, "These dungs are fresh." They said, "We are almost catching up to them. The dungs are not even cold yet."

The dungs were smashed but still they were warm and they travelled faster. Today the new generation will say, "It's midday." The people of the past will say, "The sun has laid still," which means it's noon, and today we will also say, "It's 12 o'clock." That is what the people of the past call, "the sun has laid still."

It was at this time when the sun laid still the pursuers came down to the river. So they looked around. There they were. They had built a fire. The Crees had killed a colt which they were going to eat. The Crees were panic-stricken. They ducked into the bushes leaving the horses behind. They thought that their pursuers will just take the horses back and they (Crees) will not be harmed.

The horses were herded away. Some kept on chasing the herd away and the rest charged the Crees. The Crees were already digging fox holes in a sandy place; they were digging with their knives. They had to cut roots and that slow them down in their digging. They piled the dirt that they scooped out around them. So they charged them. Now this Bear Hat - Bear Hat is his manhood name - he is the one that has curlew pelts. He thought that he'd run over the trench and the Crees fired at him. He was shot in the chest and he slumped over on his horse and his horse wheeled around. As he came back to his comrades, blood was coming out from his mouth. He told them, "I am
They charged the Crees. The Crees hit another man but they didn't kill the man, and the Crees were massacred and they returned home.

Some rode ahead and told the people at the camps, "Bear Hat is on the way. He is hurt." And the other one was shot in the leg and his leg is broken so two travois were taken back for the wounded. The one that had a broken leg was bundled up in a hide, the hide was tied to the horse's tail with a rawhide thong and that is how he was dragged home; and Bear Hat rode with one of the men.

The two other men brought the travois and Bear Hat was loaded in one travois and the one with a broken leg was also loaded in the other travois and they were taken home to the camps. Bear Hat is not dying yet. People that were going to celebrate the victory dance were waiting; they were victorious. Okay, how are things? One just had a broken leg. Bear Hat said, "Nothing has happened to me yet. Have your victory dance." Scalps, enemy hands that were cut off and feet were used in the victory dance.

WORDS IN THE VICTORY SONG:

"My wounds I don't feel."

These are the victory songs and that's just how the song was worded. "My wounds I don't feel." That was the one that was shot in the centre of his chest. The bullets were still in his body.

Night came and he wasn't dead yet. People sat up all night. At daytime, the sun had risen high, a man came. He told the woman, "Your husband is not strong for nothing. Did he give you any instructions?" She said, "My old man gave me some instructions. I was so confused and was outside all night." So his sacred properties were brought inside. The curlew was laid on a mat and Bear Hat was lying there. The curlews were in a bag with a yellow ochre. It was said that a dust rose when they were taken out and they were laid by the incense. They were taken out from the bag and they were laid down facing the wall.

After the curlew pelts were laid down the woman told the men, "Get seven good singers and seven women that are without children yet and that have good voices. There are seven good singers and seven women that haven't got any children yet. Call them." And they were called immediately.

The seven men came at once and the seven women were also called. They were all young married women but they haven't any children yet. So they all sat down. The seven men that were going to drum sat on the north side. They sat forward towards to the centre and the seven women sat behind them. When they
had settled down a drum was taken. It was yellow ochred; a curlew was sketched in the centre. "Now get six drums." The men ran out and took six drums from the people that they know that have supernatural powers. The drums were brought in and each man took a drum. The one that sat at the head took the yellow ochred drum of Bear Hat.

When the man took the drum the woman pulled her husband to the centre. She did not lay him on anything. She just laid him on the bare ground with his feet to the fireplace. The woman took the two curlews, she went around with them clockwise in the direction the sun travels, she sat with them by the door. Some of the tipi pins were taken out below and above the door and the two sides were spread out wide and the people came forward that were going to watch. They said, "He (Bear Hat) is going to be revived." It was not said, "He is going to cure himself." It was said, "Bear Hat is going to be revived."

The curlews were laid down on their bellies facing to the centre and they were covered with a cloth; it was yellow ochred. The woman took a whistle. The whistle was yellow ochred and she wore around her neck. The bag was there where the curlews were in and as it contained yellow ochre. The woman took some of the yellow ochre in her palm and she spit some water on it. She daubed her forehead with the yellow ochre and on the back of her hands and she covered the curlews again which were stuffed. The wounded man laid on its back. The wound was exposed and the blood had all dried up. The bullets were still in the wound; they were real gun* bullets. The woman told them, "My old man told me, 'Something might happen in times to come, so you will do likewise; you will revive me.' Would he be telling a lie? The day is half gone and he hasn't died yet. If he is not going to die, so he will be cured now."

The woman told the man that sat at the head, "Give me that drum." The yellow ochred drum was handed to her and she sat by the doorway with it and she blew on the whistle. As she blew on the whistle she beat the drum very fast. The woman's robe was yellow ochred. There were loops at the two corners of her robe, she stuck her hands in the loops and she spread out her arm with her robe. That was the man's robe; the woman wore the robe.

She blew the whistle and beat the drum real fast. She was beating on the rim of the drum. The seven men didn't know the song before; the seven sharp voiced women did not know the song; this was the first time that the song was going to be heard. The woman sang the song. As the seven men were quick in learning songs and they are good singers with good voices they will not fail in learning a song. The woman sang. She blew the whistle four times beating the drum real fast. On the fourth of her fast beating on the drum, she beat the rim of the drum. She did not sing the song too fast; she sang the song slow.
She told the singers, "Do you know the song yet?" "Yes, we have," they answered. The woman threw the drumstick in the drum and she rolled it to the man that sat at the head. The man grabbed the drums. The seven men sang. As they were good singers they sang just like as if there is one voice singing. The women sang with skill voices; they sang like coyotes.

The singers did not word the song. When the woman sang, and the curlews, she laid her whistle down. She was blowing her whistle and she stuck her hands in the loops at each corner of her robe, making like as if she was flapping her wings and blowing her whistle. Then she let her whistle go and she sang with words in her song.

*Real gun bullets are musket balls.

**WORDS IN THE SHAMAN'S SONG**

"Man, sit up. Man sit up."

She was blowing on her whistle. She kept moving up to the curlews and on the fourth time she threw the cover off from the stuffed birds. The storyteller said, "We must have gone loco. The stuffed birds got up on their feet with their wings spread out halfways up as they got up." The story was told like this. When the curlews got up they trumpeted like this, "Aah Aah, Aah." That is how they trumpeted; that is the story.

The curlews staggered and suddenly they flapped their wings and then they ran in each directions. One curlew ran around on the north side and the other ran around on the south side and they both jumped up on the chest of the wounded man, performing on the wound of the man.

The woman just sat there with outstretched arms and she was blowing her whistle and the drummers sang real hard. The stuffed curlews were at the wound. What were they doing? Suddenly the stuffed curlews dropped and the woman waved at the singers. The singers stopped singing and the woman got up and the man sat up.

There was a small wooden bowl with some water in it. The woman put some yellow ochre in and she stirred the water with her finger. The man had sat up; she gave the brew to him. The man took the bowl and he drank the brew. When he drank and swallowed it all down he lowered the bowl. He moved his chest in certain ways and then he moved his head to the bowl and he spit out two musket balls into the bowl. He drained them out with the brew.
The woman took some of the yellow ochre and she put the ochre in her mouth and she sprayed the wound with yellow ochre. She still had some of the yellow ochre in her mouth. She sprayed the wound again. This time it was white ochre. When she sprayed the wound again what came out from her mouth was red ochre. It was the same yellow ochre that she had in her mouth that changed into various colors. When she sprayed it again it changed to purple. The yellow that she had in her mouth changed into four various colors. She said, "That is all. Nothing will happen to him." A pipe was prepared. The pipe was also yellow ochred. The pipe was lit for the man and he started to smoke. When he got steady with his smoking he blew a puff of smoke on the palm of his right hand and held his hand on the wound. He blew a puff of smoke on his other hand and held his hand at the back of his head. He blew another puff of smoke on his hand again and he held it on the ground and he blew another puff of smoke on his hand again and held it on his heart.

The pipe was then handed around and all that sat in the tipi smoked and the tobacco didn't burn out. As he sat up a band was tied around his chest and his pelts were put away in their container. The stuffed curlews were not taken out because it was towards in the evening so they were kept inside and the drums were taken back to the owners. There were six drums - seven with the drum of Bear Hat. The spectators stayed in the tipi. When darkness came he was given another drink in the wooden bowl. There was no more drumming done. Yellow ochre was put in the bowl, the woman stirred it with her finger; when the water turned yellow he drank it.

A half dried meat, a raw dried meat - a raw dried meat is half dry and half raw - this was cooked for him over the fire. People were still sitting inside. The half dried meat was cooked over the fire for him. When the meat was cooked, it wasn't really cooked it was still half raw. She took some of the yellow ochre and sprayed the meat with it.

As he had lost a lot of blood, that is why the meat still had some blood in it which will refill his blood again. They did not sing any more. The meat was just set in front of him. The woman put some yellow ochre again in the bowl and she stirred it with her finger and the water turned yellow. He started eating the meat. The half raw dried meat was not so big so he ate it. When he ate it all, he drank the water and as his chest was already bound and the people dispersed.

The victory celebration was still going on, and they had another big victory celebration after it was dark. Now they built a long bond fire. A long bond fire is used as a lighting. That is where the people celebrated their victory dance. Bear Hat was seen standing there in his yellow robe watching the celebration. He did not stand too long and he went back home.

The wound healed in four days. His curlew pelts cured him; the wound healed in four days. So time went on and they'd move
camps now and then. The same thing occurred. The men went out on a hunt; they found their game. An aggressive boy took the lead to the people on foot. They were running away. He thought that he'd run over one of them and the man shot him. Guns were introduced at that time. The man shot him.

He was shot in the ribs and the bullet came out at the shoulder but nothing too serious happened. When they came home, "Okay, go and get Bear Hat." So that was the first time Bear Hat did some curing. He did the same thing. There seven good singers and there were seven women that did not have any children yet. The women helped in the singing.

He (Bear Hat) did some curing at that point. He did the same thing. The wounded were laid on the bed with his feet towards the centre. The curlews were taken to the door and they were laid on their bellies. They're curlew pelts; that is how Bear Hat got the name Curlew.

Now as they were his pelts and he cured himself with them, he (Bear Hat) painted his face and he daubed the wounded boy's forehead with yellow ochre. And on the back of his hands he (Bear Hat) did the same and he painted the faces of the curlews with yellow ochre though they were yellow ochred already.

He took his drum. He didn't beat it hard. Some of the drummers knew the song but still he (Bear Hat) sang his song. It is a usual thing even if we know a shaman's song before, he will sing his song first then the drummers will sing. The shaman will sing a song. His curing song is different. This man Bear Hat has only one song.

(There are no words in the shaman's song.)

He (Bear Hat) was performing. He threw the drumstick into the drum and he rolled it to the man that sat at the head and the man grabbed it and he started beating the drum immediately and they sang fast.

(There are no words in the song.)

This man did the same. He stuck his hands into the loops at the two corners of his robe, waving his arms as if flapping his wings and blowing his whistle. On the fourth song he suddenly uncovered the curlew pelts. He told them, "Are we loco?" The stuffed curlews got up and they trumpeted and their wings touched together as they lifted them.

The curlews trumpeted, "Aah-Aah-Aah-Aah," the same sound as the whistle. That is how the story was told, and that is how the storyteller sounded it, "Aah, Aah-Aah." After the curlews trumpeted, they ran. One ran around on the north side, westward, and the other ran around on the south side and they both jumped on the wounded boy moving around the wound and trumpeting, "Aah, Aah, Aah." Then they went sprawled on the boy. They were stuffed birds.
The bullets went right through the young man. When he sat up he was given a brew of yellow ochre and he drank it and he survived.

The man put the stuffed curlews in their container and put them away. Then the young man was fed a half raw dried meat. It was cooked over the fire. The meat was half cooked and it was given to him to eat. When he ate it, blood was seeping out from the corners of his mouth.

That is how he (Bear Hat) got the name Curlew. He was famous by the name Curlew, and today he is still called the Curlew. This song. There is a man who is deceased. He took the name Bear Hat. His name is Crazy Crow. Holy Man In The Water's (Dave Melting Tallow) sister's husband was the son of Crazy Crow. It's not Jim Healy. This man's name is Joe, Big Nose Joe (Joe Crazy Crow). Crazy Crow was Joe's father. Crazy Crow also uses curlews for curing. I (First Rider), I am First Rider. I once drummed for that deceased man (Crazy Crow); that is how I know this song real good.

So that is how I told the story about shamanism. The late Crazy Crow (alias Bear Hat) also sang this song when he did some curing. Curlew was his father. He (Crazy Crow) also sang this song when he did some curing; he died recently. So I (First Rider) close my story at this point. That is all the story I can tell and I will tell another story. That's all.

(End of Interview)

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