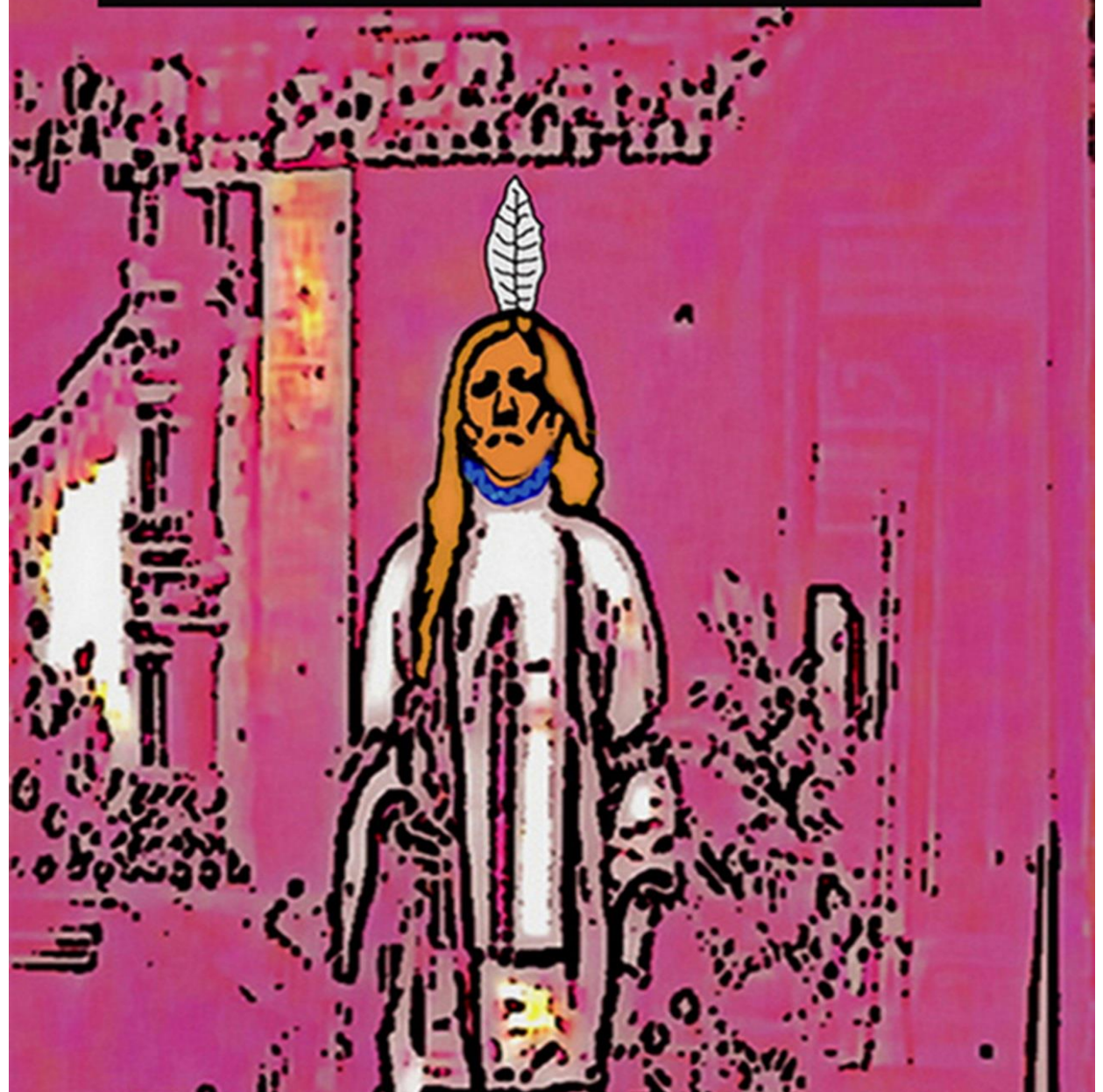


CRAZY HORSE



Edward Drobinski





Little Bighorn



A model of the planned colossal sculpture, with the Crazy Horse Memorial in the background



Crazy Horse



CRAZY HORSE

By

Edward Drobinski

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1 - Crazy Horse - The Consummate Outsider

Crazy Horse - Tǎšaŋke Witkó - "His-Horse-Is-Crazy;" circa 1840 - September 5, 1877, was a Lakota war leader of the Oglala band in the 19th century. Though his birth and childhood occurred late in the land grab game, subsequent to Native Americans having signed treaties with the US Army which resulted in their being generally relegated to reservations, he took up arms against the United States federal government to fight against encroachment by White American settlers on Native American territory and to preserve the traditional way of life of the Lakota people. His heroic and exemplary participation in several famous battles of the Black Hills Wars on the northern Great Plains, most significantly among them the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, in which he led a mixed Native American war party to a decisive victory, earned him great respect from both his enemies and his own people, in some cases they being one and the duplicitous same.

Sunrise in the Black Hills



Black Hills in late Fall

It was 1840, a late autumn day in the Black Hills of the Wild West as well in present day South Dakota. Some overnight lows had been dropping into the teens and the waters falling from the sky had been manifesting as modest snow, accumulating slowly during the Fahrenheit freezing days, not venturing much out of the comfort zone, perhaps portending something different. Perhaps not. It was not the first time this had happened. Only time would be able to tell that this day was one of lasting significance.

Rattling Blanket Woman, born in 1814, and a member of the Brule Sioux; a Lakota Sioux married to a man named Crazy Horse, actually the second Crazy Horse, an Oglala Sioux shaman, another Lakota Sioux, gave birth to a son. According to the Lakota oral history, he was born near Bear Butte, a sacred site in the Black Hills.



Bear Butte

Rattling Blanket Woman's first name for him was Čhán Óhaŋ, "Among the Trees," which he most certainly was. As his light skin and hair developed she began calling him Pěhíŋ Yuňáňa - Curly Son; and Žiží - Light Hair, until she prematurely died at age thirty in 1844, when he was four.

Crazy Horse did indeed have lighter complexion and hair than others in his tribe, with prodigious curls. Boys were traditionally not permanently named until they had an experience that earned them a fitting name, so Crazy Horse was called "Curly Hair" and "Light Haired Boy" as a child.

He had two siblings. Little Hawk was his younger half-brother and Laughing One, sometimes called Iron Cedar, his younger half-sister. Little, if anything, has been written of their close relationships. Crazy Horse's difference in age from his half-sister contributes to this.

Little Hawk - Čhetáŋ Čík'ala, circa 1842-1871, was the offspring of the remarriage of Worm, Crazy Horse #2, Crazy Horse #3's widowed father, to a pair of sisters of the Brulé Lakota chief Spotted Tail, Iron Between Horns and Kills Enemy. The name Little Hawk was given to Crazy Horse #3's younger brother by uncle Little Hawk, who then took the name Long Face. According to He Dog, Little Hawk liked fast horses and was a thrill seeking risk taker; making no efforts to calculate potential risks and potential rewards. Little Hawk was killed on a war expedition, south of the Platte River. Crazy Horse, upon hearing of his brother's death, traveled to locate Little Hawk's remains. After preparing Little Hawk's remains, Crazy Horse killed Little Hawk's horse so that the horse could help Little Hawk travel to the spirit world.

Because Crazy Horse and Little Hawk had no direct descendants, the family is related by blood only through his half-sister, Laughing One - Iron Cedar, A/K/A various derivations of Julia Iron Cedar Clown, who was born in 1868, making her about

thirteen when Crazy Horse was killed by Lakotas-in-name-only. It was after Crazy Horse's death that the family began their descent into hiding and decades of silence. They were told that if anyone spoke of Crazy Horse or of members of the family, to listen, then walk away. It was not until decades later that she orally passed on their life history, including the attack on Lt. Col. Fetterman; the Wounded Knee massacre; the battles of Rosebud and Little Big Horn; and the murder of Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson, offering versions which did not correlate with the "official" diatribe of popular Custer "heroics." It was also noted that Crazy Horse had a premonition of his demise fifteen months before his death. Laughing One's stories were not written until the twenty-first century, by another member of her husband's Clown family.



Laughing One - Iron Cedar in 1919

As an adolescent, Crazy Horse earned the name "His Horse Looking" or Tħašúnke Witkó - "His Horse is Crazy," but he was more commonly known as "Curly" until 1858 when, following a battle with Arapaho warriors he was given his father's name, Crazy Horse, while his father then took the name Waglula - Worm.

Few historical figures of such significance have so little of their lives accurately known, accurately written about, and pictured. Ominous warnings about speaking truth and the fact that historians may have difficulty in trying to deal with someone who was at odds with the world in general, that trait

not so challenging to find anywhere, but one also at times at odds with his own people; the Lakotas, as well as other Native American tribes; being a "daunting" complication.

The child who would eventually be known as Crazy Horse; actually the third Crazy Horse; was also averse to being photographed. As he was quoted saying to photographer Valentine T. McGillicuddy, of the US Army; "My friend, why should you wish to shorten my life by taking from me my shadow?"

In fact, Crazy Horse' premature death was likely caused by a partnership, a conspiracy of White Army soldiers and his "fellow" Lakotas who sought capitulation to and paid jobs from the US Army. This was not the official diatribe until mentioned much later by Crazy Horse's descendants. Little Big Man, a Lakota, and distant cousin, who served in battle under Crazy Horse, but who at the time was working as a policeman-guard for the US Army was present at and integral in Crazy Horse's betrayal and stabbed demise.

Crazy Horse was known to have a personality characterized by aloofness, shyness, modesty and presumed lonesomeness. He was generous to the poor, the elderly, and children. By omission, this may have indicated a distrust and/or dislike of adult Lakotas in their prime years, who he generally ignored. He was a

nonconformist, who tribal elders described in oral history to tribal members as quiet and even reclusive. While he was highly spiritual and participated in ceremonies, elders say he didn't consider himself bound to protocol. Instead, he preferred to follow his own dreams and visions. He would go about the village without noticing people or saying anything. In his own teepee he would joke, and when he was on the warpath with a small party, he would also joke, in this situation in an attempt to make his warriors feel comfortable. But around the village, he hardly ever noticed anybody, except little children. All the Lakotas like to dance and sing, but he never joined a dance, and they say nobody ever heard him sing. But everybody liked him, and they would do anything he wanted or go anywhere he said.



1934 sketch of Crazy Horse, whose half-sister, Laughing One, thought accurate

Sources differ on the precise year of Crazy Horse's birth, but all agree he was born between 1840 and 1845. Yet they seem to agree that he was a Sagittarian through an implied repetition and more so, a dearth of refutation; one source proclaiming December 4 as the special day. According to Šůnka Bloká - He Dog, he and Crazy Horse "were both born in the same year at the same season of the year," which census records and other interviews place as having been in 1842. Ptehé Wóptuň'a - Encouraging Bear, an Oglala medicine man and spiritual adviser

to Crazy Horse, reported that Crazy Horse was born "in the year in which the band to which he belonged, the Oglala, stole one hundred horses in the fall of the year," a reference to the annual Lakota calendar or winter count. Among the Oglala winter counts, the stealing of 100 horses is noted by Cloud Shield, and possibly by American Horse, and Red Horse, as equivalent to the year 1840-41. Oral history accounts from relatives on the Cheyenne River Reservation place his birth in the spring of 1840. On the evening of his son's death, the elder Crazy Horse told Lieutenant H.R. Lemly of the US Army that the year of birth was 1840.

This book will use the 1840 date as this is the date most provided by Native American testimony, and one would think that the father knows, though it matters little other than simplification.

There is no dispute in the current, prevailing "wisdom" over Crazy Horse having been born in the Black Hills of South Dakota, near Rapid Creek, unorganized US territory, and that as a child, he was named "Curly Hair" due to his light complexion and hair that made him stand out from all the other boys. It is also near universally believed that he acquired his final name, the same his father bore, after an 1858 battle with Arapaho warriors. One other account said that after the son had reached maturity and

shown his strength, his father gave him his name and took a new one, Waglúla - Worm. Yet another version of how the younger Crazy Horse acquired his name is that he took it after going through the Lakota hanǰbléčheya ceremony, in which one goes to a secluded place to fast and pray for a number of days, crying to the Spirits for a vision. The Spirits often answer with gifts of power, some of which end up becoming new ceremonies.

..... No matter in a way regarding the name Crazy Horse, as the hero owned the name.

The Grattan Massacre

An early formative event happened when Crazy Horse was twelve years old. He was involved in what would become known as the start of the First Sioux War. A Mormon wagon train had lost a cow that ended up being killed for meat by a visitor in the village where Crazy Horse was staying. The US Army at Fort Laramie administration sent 24 year old Lieutenant Grattan to arrest the shooter, but the village chief attempted to talk Grattan out of the arrest until the local Native American agent could come. Conquering Bear was explaining that the shooter was a visitor and not under his command, but Grattan's interpreter was reported to be intoxicated and angry. When this was considered unsatisfactory, the Native Americans became more than reasonable and offered to pay for the cow and apologize for the

incident, but Grattan would take nothing less than the arrest. One of Grattan's men fired an unprovoked shot and killed Conquering Bear. In quick retaliation, the Sioux ran down and killed Grattan and his 29 men. Crazy Horse immediately rode to a nearby hill to try to understand all that had happened. He had a vision of a warrior with a lightning bolt on his face that went through many battles unscathed. From that point on, Crazy Horse would always paint a black lightning bolt on his cheek before a battle. The US military would come back for revenge on the Sioux at the "Battle of Ash Hollow." Crazy Horse was not injured in the retaliation attack at Ash Hollow by the US, but he did witness over 100 Sioux die. This fueled his hatred of Whites and his need to become a great warrior.



Funeral scaffold of a Sioux chief

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