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EVEN in death, Sitting Bull knows no peace. Last month, sixty-three years after he was slain by one of his own people, the tempestuous Sioux medicine man's bones were exhumed from a grave at Fort Yates, N. D., and moved across the border to the South Dakota portion of Standing Rock Indian reservation.

The dozen or so South Dakotans in the exhuming party, who said they were acting on behalf of Sitting Bull's descendants, crowed that at last the old Sioux's remains had "come home" to rest.

He had not always been so popular. In life he was a controversial figure, often hated, surrounded at times by an aura of mystery. The years have failed to clarify some of the more fantastic stories about this chieftain whose name has inspired countless bad jokes.

This much is certain: Sitting Bull was the spiritual leader of the Indians who annihilated Gen. George A. Custer's troops in the battle of the Little Big Horn in Montana in 1876.

But at least one writer, W. Fletcher Johnson, has suggested that Sitting Bull actually was a graduate of the United States military academy.

Johnson, in a book published in 1891, says that a West Point cadet known as Bison McLean was in reality Sitting Bull, or Tatona E Yotakna in the Sioux language.

McLean, so far as I have been able to gather, attended West Point between 1846 and 1850. His companions nicknamed him "Bison." He was academically in the upper third of his class, anti-social, never known to laugh or smile, a devotee of solitary walks, and an ardent companion of the little brown jug. On the eve of his graduation he cracked the heads of a couple of casual townspeople at Buttermilk Falls, near West Point. This bit of sport brought him before a court-martial which ordered an indefinite postponement of his commission in the army.

One story has Bison McLean wandering off to the southwest where he joined an Indian tribe. Another version is that McLean went back to the Sioux country and became Sitting Bull, medicine man.

This version of Sitting Bull's early days was never wholly disproved. Still another unproved story is that Sitting Bull was a native of Fort Garry in Canada, and an alumnus of St. John's college where he became acquainted with French history, concentrating on the exploits of Napoleon.

Whether he ever knew anything about Napoleon, it is a fact that Sitting Bull conceived of himself as a man set apart from other men. He was his own most ardent promoter. He did not, for instance, spare the gruesome details in a picture history of his life. Up to the time his biography was completed in 1870, he indicated pictorially