

## WHO KILLED CUSTER? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

not necessarily killing him, just striking him.

The old man adopted me as his son. He himself was the nephew and adopted son of the famous Sitting Bull. The Custer "massacre" has always been coupled with the name of Sitting Bull, so I feel that I came very close to the core of the story when we were adopted into the Sitting Bull family.

**O**NE Bull was one of the survivors of the Custer fight. When I finally persuaded him to tell me about the battle, he said, "In the moon when the *sarvis* berries are ripe, Long Hair Custer and his many troops came to fight. The first one they killed was a little Sioux boy, named Deeds. This made me very mad. I went into Uncle Sitting Bull's teepee and said, 'I am going to fight!'"

"That is good, my son," he said. "Fear nothing!" I gave my gun to my uncle. He hung his far shield over my shoulder and I took up my stone club. Then I went to war.

"Three troops of Reno's cavalry charged. They did plenty much shooting. My friend, Good Bear, was wounded. I put him on my horse. I took him to safety, although my horse was killed.

"By-and-by, as the sun rose higher, the Indian warriors gained strength and began to chase the white soldiers. I knocked three of the invaders off their horses as we went. We fought Reno's men until we beat them. Then all the braves of the Sioux said, 'Look!' Tatanka Wanjila, One Bull, the nephew of Sitting Bull, was very angry. He is a true warrior. *Ho hehetu!*"

Immediately after the Indians had bottled up Reno's men on the hill, word went through the Sioux lines that more soldiers were attacking to the north. A few warriors remained to keep Reno occupied, but the rest rushed away to meet this new danger downstream, where Custer threatened the northern end of the camp, more than three miles away. One Bull started off with the rest, but Sitting Bull called to him to come and help take care of the frightened women and children and get them to safety. In such an attack, the chief's first duty was to think of their welfare. So One Bull's part in the battle ended there.

When I tried to find out more about the Custer phase of the battle, One Bull would no longer talk. He said I should speak to his brother, Chief White Bull, who had actually participated in that portion of the fight.

Let me seem to digress for a moment, because it is important that I describe White Bull. He used to visit us often. According to Indian custom, your father's brother is also your father, so I called Chief White Bull "Father," too. On one occasion the two old men lived in our teepee for several weeks.

White Bull was one of the most famous warriors the Sioux ever produced. Both brothers were known as "fighting nephews of Sitting Bull," but White Bull, being older, as well as more aggressive, had participated in more battles and considered a warrior's prestige the greatest

reward of life. He was a heavy-set, powerful man, standing nearly six feet in his moccasins, even in his old age. Like his brother he had alert eyes and his face showed great character and dignity. White Bull and One Bull both had a keen sense of humor and were able to see the funny side of any situation. Constantly chuckling over amusing incidents, they sat in our lodge from dawn till dark and talked of the old fighting days. To hear them, you would think the incidents they discussed took place only a few days before.

Fighting, to those old-timers, was a game. The highest stakes were prestige, honor and social position. The forfeit for failure was apt to be death on the battlefield, but that, too, brought glory. In their youth they had lived by the proverb, "It is better to die fighting than to rot on a burial scaffold." They had little respect for the battle techniques of the white men and little esteem for them as fighters.

On one occasion, White Bull said to me, "The white man takes all the joy out of fighting. He fights when he is tired, when he is hungry, in the rain and in the cold. He takes orders from some other man who may be no better than himself. Why do the soldiers follow one man, especially when that man is often ignorant or foolish?"

The Sioux considered every brave his own general, free to charge or retreat, as he chose. Great warriors, like White Bull, One Bull and their famous uncle, Sitting Bull, often took great personal risks, sometimes just for the pleasure they felt in showing off. But they felt that no man, no matter how brave, had the right to demand such risks from his fellows. No chief could order a warrior to do anything. If he were a real chief, he led the attack himself, and all warriors of any account followed him. But there were no commands, usually no plans. It was every man for himself. The mere fact that they were Sioux meant that the ultimate glory went to the tribe, which they considered the greatest nation in the world.

Now to the great battle again, and hear

White Bull's account of what happened in the fight against Custer and his men. As soon as White Bull heard that more soldiers were attacking to the north of the Reno battleground he wheeled his horse and headed straight for this new fight. He said that for awhile, in the dust and smoke, it was hard to tell what was going on, but the new phase of the battle didn't last very long. "Of course," he added, "the Sioux did not measure time with the clocks of the white man."

I asked him the approximate hour. With his thumb and bent forefinger he indicated the height of the sun in the sky just before noon and went on, "When the fight started against Reno on the flat, the sun was so high. But the fight against Long Hair would be only about an hour in the white man's time."

Sheer weight of numbers crushed the Custer men. The Crow scouts had told Custer that there were as many enemies as leaves on the trees, but he did not heed them. "He had no ears," White Bull said. As soldiers fell, the Sioux helped themselves to guns and ammunition, so the Indian fire grew continually hotter as the soldiers' fire dwindled.

The Indians also captured the Army's horses and obtained extra ammunition and supplies from the saddlebags.

**W**HITE Bull counted seven coups in the battle against Custer. "There was much glory," he said. "I gathered many head feathers." He even outstinted the famous Crazy Horse on two occasions. Hanging over the side of his bay pony, he made several dashes right through the soldiers' lines and back again without being hit. He captured several carbines and pistols and twelve army horses. But he never mentioned Long Hair, except to designate the battle itself by that name.

Officials have been unable to persuade Indians to talk about the Custer affair, because the red men feared reprisals from the government. Some old warriors, even up until the last few years, kept fast

