

The Woodley Apartments, 1851 Columbia Road  
Washington, D.C. June 20, 1929

Gen. Charles J. Sumner  
War Department  
Washington, D.C.

Dear General Sumner:

It is with a feeling of deep regret that I find myself unable to accept your kind invitation to meet at luncheon your Indian guest, Red Tomahawk. My reason for this action is as follows. My first station upon leaving West Point in 1882 was Fort Randall, Dakota Territory, where Sitting Bull and 154 followers were held as prisoners in a camp adjoining the post. At the request of the Commanding Officer I took charge of Sitting Bull's mail, translating his French and German letters for him.

For several months I was in daily contact with Sitting Bull, and learned to admire him for his many fine qualities. Indian chiefs from all over the Sioux Territory came to seek his advice. I was always asked by Sitting Bull to attend these conferences, and found them most interesting, as they showed the deep respect in which Sitting Bull was held by his people.

During the Indian campaign of 1890 and '91 I was in the field with my regiment in eastern Montana and was shocked to learn at that time of Sitting Bull's death. I learned of the details from several sources, all of which indicated that he was killed while unarmed and offering no resistance. It was reported that an Indian policeman by the name of Red Tomahawk was the man who shot Sitting Bull. In my search for details of this incident I find no hint at a justification for the killing of this Indian chief. It was reported that there was some shooting preceding Sitting Bull's death, but of no great importance and such as could have been easily handled by the police detachment present at the time.

Hence my inability to accept your kind invitation,

Very respectfully yours,

(George P. Ahern)  
Major, U.S.A., Retired.