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(Rand McNally, hardcover; Signet, paperback) and my article in GUNS published last year, you will find quotations from American officers showing that the marksmanship of the Indians was far superior to that of the troops. As one officer put it, "Most soldiers couldn't hit the side of a barn."

Having made an extensive study of Indian warfare on the Plains, I can only laugh at the pictures of Indians at war on the screen. Thus they show the chief sitting on a hilltop ordering his Indians into the fight, forming them into a long line and sending them forward in that way. Of course, there was no military discipline to order anybody around, and when Indians charged they charged, as General Mills put it "in herds like fox and buffalo." That is, a group of warriors or relatives who knew and trusted each other would ride in together, and every warrior attacked or sat it out, according to his individual preference. The Indians were adept at scouting, trailing, creeping up, and shooting (they had to buy their ammunition, and it was expensive). Those who served as scouts for the troops exhibited similar virtues. They took good care of their horses, never deserted, and few of them would ever touch liquor. Given a good horse, an Indian would show extraordinary bravery. General Benteen accounted for the defeat of Custer in these words, "Too many Indians; good shots, good riders, and the best fighters the sun ever shone on."

The conversation of Indians on the screen is also not very characteristic of this loquacious and humorous people. However, I do think that the Indian is presented more sympathetically in recent films than he was twenty years ago, and I trust that my own books on the Indian (SITTING BULL, WARPETH, and WARPETH AND COUNCIL FIRE; and those which included sections on Indian life, such as KIT CARSON, JIM BRIDGER, JOE MEEK, etc.) helped to bring this about. The films now show sympathetic intermarriage between Indians and white heroes.

However, it is seldom that they have a genuine Indian in the title role, and the heroines particularly never behave or look like Indians of the tribes concerned. I suppose I am a fair judge of what an Indian girl looks like, since for three years past I have acted as one of the judges in the Miss (Indian) America contest, staged annually at Sheridan, Wyoming, during the All American Indian Days program.

Having been adopted by Chief Joseph White Bull, nephew of Sitting Bull, whom the Sioux believe to have killed General Custer (see my piece in the February issue of AMERICAN HERITAGE), I was well acquainted with the older Indians of the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and some other tribes, both in this country and in Canada. I have found them men of their word, accurate, and with remarkable memories and a keen sense of humor, and a great deal of congeniality and hospitality.