

notes that rich and poor shared the same culture, the difference of expression being a matter of size and scale.

The transition to modern architecture is traced with clarity, moving from an early insistence upon functionality to a return to simplicity, the white paint rage, new borrowings, the "shoddily bleak," "Alleviated factory," and finally, "Brutality."

The book is filled with interesting bits like the mail order houses of the 1890s, a note that Colonial white was actually pale khaki, and the fact that University Hospital's bell-less bell tower is a recreation of Oxford's Magdalen Tower.

Lafore makes it clear that one's apprehension of the new College of Dentistry as a mass of "gigantic teeth" is not unique, suggesting that it "may be a fancy of the beholder, not of the architect."

American Classic is a Rosetta Stone for reading Iowa City, or any other town. Sufficiently meaty for the expert, the book is accessible to the person who doesn't know a pilaster from a pediment.

—Julie McDonald
Davenport

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My People The Sioux, by Luther Standing Bear. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1975. \$3.95.

When *My People the Sioux* was first published in 1928 it was highly praised by such reviewers as Van Wyck Brooks and the *New York Times*. Great numbers of Americans read it with empathy and came away with increased sensitivity to the problems faced by Native Americans. Now republished in a 1975 edition by the University of Nebraska Press, it still deserves an enthusiastic reception by thinking Americans.

It is not, and never claimed to be, a literary masterpiece. Its author, Luther Standing Bear, never purported to be scholar nor a man of letters. He offers his autobiographical memoirs in *My People the Sioux* as "a message to the white race; to bring my people before their eyes in a true and authentic manner." Therefore, questions of style become superfluous. In simple language, full of pride yet free of braggadocio, Standing Bear records a tale

of Native Americans which is often tragic, sometimes humorous, but always demanding respect for America's indigenous peoples.

Standing Bear was, by his calculations, fifty-eight years of age when he wrote *My People the Sioux*. Government documents, however, suggest that his birth date was 1863, rather than 1868 as his own memory, supported by strong oral history traditions, recalled as the correct date. In either case, Standing Bear's life spanned a time of crisis and drastic change for the Plains Indians in general and for the Sioux in particular. His own attempts at acculturation and change thus chronicle his people's attempts to live in an increasingly "white" world.

At the outset of his narrative, Standing Bear claims to be the son of a distinguished chief, a claim undocumented in the written sources. As he recounts the beauty of his mother and the fame of his father, one wonders whether Standing Bear is not simply trying to validate himself in terms that his audience would find attractive. In other words, he perhaps learned the values of the "civilized" world so well that he feels that his credentials must precede his story. Hopefully, contemporary audiences will not need nor be impressed by such validation, but will quickly tune in to Standing Bear as a human being who is also a Native American.

His story itself is exciting. Trained as a buffalo hunter in early youth, he later became one of the first students in Pennsylvania's Carlisle Indian School, worked in Wanamaker's Department Store in Philadelphia, returned to his tribe with all the attendant symptoms of reentry crisis, traveled over Europe with the Buffalo Bill Cody Show, was elected a chief after his father's death, fought for and won his American citizenship, made movies in California, was active in the early American Indian Progressive Association, and retired to write this book.

Viewed on a broader plane, this narrative is also a history of the waste of environmental and human resources created by a clash of two divergent cultures, European and Native American. He recounts the arrival of government rations *sans* teachers or directions. As a result, women dumped flour over banks because they had no knowledge of bread-making while they retained the flour sacks for shirting. Similarly, they were dismayed by coffee beans for which they had no mills and smoked bacon with sickening yellow edges. When the boys were presented with their first

"white" clothes they were not instructed on their correct usage so that some boys argued that the pants opening was intended for the front and others argued that it was intended for the back.

Standing Bear had his personal dilemmas. He picked his name "Luther" from a list on the blackboard which was neither explained nor pronounced beforehand. He was trained as a tinsmith, a trade he would never be able to follow among his own people. And when his Sioux-speaking father arrived to visit him at school Luther could not speak with him until he obtained permission to deviate from the "English only" rule. In later years, he puzzled over questions such as why "white men's history" dignified the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee by calling it a battle, why the government paid the Sioux to build a fence around themselves on the reservation, and why the government drafted Native American men for military service when it at the same time denied them American citizenship.

Yet he continued to believe throughout his life that survival for the Plains Indian meant learning and adopting "white" ways. He doggedly followed this path, but became embittered because "whites" could not see that they could also learn much from Indians. In *My People the Sioux* he repeatedly stresses the positive in Sioux culture: reverence and respect for the "old ones," orderly and cooperative work patterns, lack of swear words in their language, the pervasiveness of religion in their everyday lives, and great reluctance to waste any of the resources at their disposal.

He also manifests considerable irritation with stereotypes, myths, and outright misinformation regarding Native Americans. For example, he is outraged that the Indians labeled as heroes by "whites" were those who signed away Indian lands. This is currently a point of irritation with Native American women as well. As Nancy O. Lurie points out in her article in *Look to the Mountain Top*, they highly resent the fact that so-called heroines such as Pocahontas and Sacajawea gained fame through association with European men and by helping Europeans gain Indian lands. At another point, Standing Bear raises the equally-irritating image of the Indian "princess." He argues that since the Indians had no kings and queens, they could not possibly recognize any princesses.

In *The New Indians*, Stan Steiner takes this a step further by attacking another image, that of the Native American women as subservient, drudgery-laden "squaws." Standing Bear certainly does not represent Sioux women in this manner. He reveres the positions of wife and mother, he commends the Sioux women's creativity and skill in the decorative arts, and he applauds their activism and leadership as when his mother destroyed a section of railroad track in order to wreck an oncoming train. Moreover, Standing Bear presents the men as more than just hunters and keepers of horses. Homes, cooking utensils, tools, weapons, toys, and numerous other items were produced by Sioux men with great patience and care.

After completing *My People the Sioux*, Standing Bear wrote three more books: *My Indian Boyhood* (1931), *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933), and *Stories of the Sioux* (1934). In these he grew more outspoken in his criticism of the United States government and its Indian policy. He predated Indian spokespeople like Vine Deloria, Jr. and the leaders of the American Indian Movement by recommending that Indians teach Indians and serve them on reservations, that Indians be taught their own history and language, and that their arts and crafts be preserved.

Standing Bear was therefore a prophet of sorts whose ideas provide a key to understanding the contemporary Native American movement. In his introduction to *My People the Sioux*, Richard N. Ellis, associate professor of history at the University of New Mexico, maintains that this "remains an important book and serves as something of a milestone in the development of American Indian Literature." Clearly, Luther Standing Bear is offering a gift to his readers. In Indian terms, the giving of a gift is a matter of honor and respect. Here Standing Bear not only offers the gift of his own life story and that of his people, but one of the greatest gifts of all—communication.

—Glenda Riley
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