

ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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With the Government

The Publicity Bureau was located in the basement of the Legislative Building, right under the dome. The professional staff consisted of only three people: Ed Bryant, the director; Sid “Robbie” Roberts, editor of *Within Our Borders*; and me, a publicity writer. Besides us, there was H.E. “Bert” Nichols – who had some sort of title but really looked after Social Credit propaganda – and a secretarial staff of two or three people. We were part of the Department of Economic Affairs, which also included the Film and Photographic Branch across the hall from us, the Economic Development Branch, the Tourist Bureau, and perhaps a couple of others. Our deputy minister was Ralph R. Moore, and our Minister, A.J. Hooke.

Although my boss was Ed Bryant, I worked directly under Roberts. He was a fine, easygoing fellow and we got along very well together. Our main responsibility was to produce the monthly four-page illustrated tabloid *Within Our Borders*. When I started, it had a circulation of 14,500 and was sent free to anyone who asked for it. Besides that, copies were mailed to daily and weekly newspapers with the comment that any of its contents were free for republication. And, as a matter of fact, the information was used quite frequently by the Alberta press.

When we were not busy with the tabloid, Robbie and I did any tasks that were assigned to us. I prepared annual reports, press releases, promotional booklets, fact sheets for conferences, tourism handouts, and even wrote the first Alberta drivers’ manual. The usual routine was to be contacted by another government department, write whatever was needed, and send it back for their approval. With the newsletter, the ideas came either from us or from other departments, but the routine was slightly different. *Within Our Borders* was considered to reflect official government policy and therefore came under the scrutiny of Premier Ernest Manning’s office.

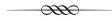
When we completed plans for the next month's issue, we had a meeting with Pete Elliott, the premier's executive secretary. Each proposed article was discussed and approval received. We then contacted the appropriate government departments, wrote the articles, and submitted them to their deputy ministers. Most of the time this was simply a routine, but once in a while a deputy with his own agenda made life difficult for us. When this happened, we simply told Pete Elliott, who phoned the minister, and any opposition quickly disappeared.

After the articles had been written and photographs selected, we had another meeting with Pete, who carefully read every line. He seldom had any complaint and was good to work with. Not only that, but because of his position we were able to circumvent a lot of government red tape.

It was interesting to see Pete in action. I would swear that he had more authority than any cabinet minister, and the mandarins were either in fear or in awe of him, as they never knew whether he was speaking for himself or for the premier. I think Pete deliberately kept it that way in order to maintain his own effectiveness.

There were only a few instances where a deputy really gave us trouble. One time, I was assigned the task of summarizing assistance available to the aged, disabled, and widows. It was pretty straightforward, but when I presented it to the deputy minister of public welfare, he rejected it, saying it was too long. When I tried to pin him down about any mistakes, he would not be specific. His complaint seemed to focus on the belief that if the article was too long, it would come to the attention of too many people who might qualify for help. Puzzled, I returned to my office and read the article again. It was bare bones; there was nothing to cut. Then I got a brilliant idea. The original article was double spaced, so I retyped it single spaced, resubmitted it, and the deputy approved it! On another occasion, a deputy changed my article so much that it was both unrecognizable and inaccurate. When I showed both versions to Pete, he said "to Hell with the deputy" and told us to use my version. It was nice to have that kind of muscle behind us.

I quickly learned that my experience at the *Bulletin* made the job a snap. The deadlines were once a month, instead of daily, and I often had space in the newsletter to write long feature articles. The only problem, from the standpoint of ego, was that nothing was signed; there were no bylines. This was a firm departmental policy. If any credit had to be given, Deputy Minister Ralph Moore was listed as the author.



My assignments for *Within Our Borders* took me to many parts of the province. The first of these was to accompany a busload of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who were touring the irrigation areas of southern Alberta. The tour had been arranged a year in advance by local politicians who wanted to stress the need for more irrigation to combat the perennial problems of drought. The only problem was that when the tour was held in June 1951, it had been raining steadily for so long that the irrigation ditches were filled to overflowing and drought was the farthest thing from anyone's mind.

The tour started with a little holiday for MLAs in Waterton, so I was not needed until the bus arrived in Cardston. This was fine with me. I went to Macleod, where Pauline's folks, together with Clarence Melting Tallow and Stanley Healy, were waiting for me at the station. Pauline had tipped them off that I would be coming, perhaps to keep me away from the schoolteacher at St. Paul's. So we drove to the Gladstone farm and found we had a lot to talk about. That was a wonderful thing about the Gladstones. Her dad and I shared the same interests – Indian politics and history. He had a keen mind and could recall the most minute details of his experiences in residential school in the 1890s and many other aspects of life on the Blood Reserve.

Next morning, I was standing with the Cardston brass band when the MLAs wheeled into town for a tour of the Mormon temple. I took my seat on the bus and was their public relations officer for the next week. We were wined and dined all the way across southern Alberta, and treated royally everywhere we stopped. However, the rain rarely let up and I think the message of the importance of irrigation lost some of its impact.

During this period, the Social Credit party had a massive majority in the legislature and I don't believe that any opposition members were included in the tour. One day while we were on the bus, an MLA asked me about my political affiliations. It wasn't any of his business but I didn't mind telling him that I voted Social Credit provincially and Conservative federally. When he heard this, he really lit into me, saying that it was because of people like me that Social Credit could never implement its monetary policies. The creation and distribution of money, he said, was a federal responsibility and voters were preventing them from fulfilling their real destiny.

When he asked me what I knew about Social Credit, I mumbled something about the A plus B theorem whereby the government could create money based on the value of its resources. This led him into a protracted monologue which delved so deeply into Social Credit monetary theories that I didn't have

the foggiest idea what he was talking about. When he finally asked me what I thought, I equated the running of a government with that of looking after one's own personal finances. A good provider, I said, spent only his assured income, paying off small expenses immediately and extending large expenses such as a house or car over a period of several years. I thought the government should do the same – operate within a balanced budget each year and amortize major capital expenses such as highways and buildings. At this, the MLA snorted that I obviously understood nothing about government financing and abruptly left me alone for the rest of the tour.



A task of the Publicity Bureau was to interview winners of Master Farm Family awards but without letting them know they had won. When visiting their farms, we were supposed to tell them we were interviewing the three semi-finalists, but I don't think they believed us. These trips gave me a chance to see some excellent Alberta farmsteads and to learn of the struggles facing many farmers during difficult economic times. When I got back to the office, I wrote press releases for newspapers and feature stories for magazines, all to be released when the official announcements were made.

A number of rural visits also were made for other purely agricultural stories. For example, Alberta was the only major area to be free of rats, thanks to an aggressive campaign along the Saskatchewan border. Regular patrols ferreted out any creatures hiding in barns or granaries and poison traps kept them from invading Alberta farmlands.

Coyotes, on the other hand, were a constant pest to sheepman and ranchers. When a new poison named Ten-Eighty was developed, the Crystal Springs Hutterite Colony south of Lethbridge volunteered to experiment with it. After the poison had been in use for a few weeks, I was sent there with photographer Bill Marsden to cover the story. We were kindly received by the black-garbed, bearded Hutterite sheep boss and taken on a tour of the poison sites. Afterwards, we were invited to the boss's room for a glass of wine.

Hutterite wine! I'd never tasted anything like it. The boss, Bill, and I each had two glasses from a recycled whiskey bottle, and it was delicious. The homemade grape wine was very smooth and seemed almost as mild as milk, but by the time we left the colony, Bill and I were flying high. I never knew the alcohol content, but neither of us should have been driving as we wove our way back to Lethbridge.

Bill and I became good friends during our work with the government, and remained close until his death in 2006. One of our most memorable assignments occurred in 1952, just after the Mackenzie Highway had been opened. This stretch of gravelled road extended 384 miles from Grimshaw in Alberta to Hay River in the Northwest Territories. Bill and I started out early in September just as the country was taking on its mantle of autumn colours. Our first stop was Peace River which, considering the condition of the roads, was a long day's drive. Next day, we went north to Manning, where we saw the Lambert family, who were up for a Master Farm Family award. We had the bad luck to catch them right in the middle of harvesting, so we had to wait until after nightfall for a short interview and a bunch of pictures. Manning itself was a lovely place near the lower end of the Mackenzie Highway. It had a population of six hundred and boasted the only hotel on the entire road.

From Manning, Bill and I drove north to High Level at Mile 183, our next port of call. As I wrote to Pauline, "High Level consists of just a clearing cut in the forest on which a store-café, two auto court bungalows, and a gas pump are located. There is no power, no radio, no nothin'"²¹ The whole place was run by James Jones, who had owned three trading posts in the Arctic and decided to come south when he heard the highway was being built. It turned out that he knew my brother Harry when he had worked for Northern Traders at Aklavik in the late 1930s.

Jones broke the news to us that a full-blown rabies epidemic was raging through the fox, coyote, and wolf populations in northern Alberta. Immediately my reporter instincts took over, as I was aware that no news about this outbreak had appeared in any "southern" newspapers. I only wished the *Bulletin* had still been around so that I could have broken the story through them.

At this point, Bill and I ignored our mandate to publicize the Mackenzie Highway and began to cover the epidemic. Jones told us that earlier in the day a fox had attacked a passing car and had been killed, so Bill and I went over to look at the carcass. It was in pretty good shape, so I posed with my .22 rifle as though I had just shot it. It turned out to be a good publicity picture. We then turned east and followed a gravel road towards Fort Vermilion, interviewing people who had had experiences with rabid animals. The first person we met was Dick Olsen, a homesteader, who said that he had been grubbing roots in a new clearing when a timber wolf had approached within a few yards of him and had to be turned away with an axe.

Olsen also told us about his neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Kowal, whose farm had been ravaged by a rabid wolf. It had attacked a dozen hogs and a cow before turning on the family's log home. As I later wrote, "The animal, which weighed 150 pounds, gashed at the wood on the entranceway and hurled all its weight forward in an attempt to open the door. It took the combined strength of Mr. and Mrs. Kowal to keep the mad beast out and at one stage it was reported to have wedged its head through the door opening."²² Next morning, Kowal's son shot the wolf and skinned it. At the time of our visit, the boy was undergoing treatment in case he had contracted the disease.

Because of the condition of the roads, we weren't able to visit these farmers but the stories came to us thick and fast. A man named Art Simmons was reported to have been working on his tractor when a wolf attacked its wheels and had to be driven off. Another farmer heard a yelping sound and found a fox attacking his dog. He pried the animal's jaws apart and killed the fox, but his dog had to be put down and the man had to take anti-rabies shots. And Jones told us that two rabid foxes had been killed with clubs right at his auto camp.

With the story and pictures in hand, Bill and I continued our northern trek. The land was a virtual wilderness and there was practically no traffic on the highway. There was a deserted Hudson's Bay Company store at Indian Cabins and nothing at Upper Hay River, so in order to have a meal we had to pull over to the side of the road to build a campfire. Wieners and beans cooked in the can tasted pretty good among the spruce and tamarack trees of the North. Beyond High Level we never saw a cabin or a side road, only trees, bushes, and muskeg. It had a wild beauty that captivated me and kept Bill busy with his camera. At Mile 350 we came upon the majestic Alexander Falls, which looked to me like a not-so-miniature Niagara Falls. The broad Hay River dropped 109 feet at this point and fell into a sheer canyon. In order to get a good shot of it, Bill had me stand at the very brink of the falls, looking down into the churning chasm. Later, when I saw the picture, I thought I must have been nuts to get that close to the edge.

We were only a few miles inside the Northwest Territories when a man waved to us from the side of the highway. He proved to be a Metis who had a sick boy that he wanted us to take to Hay River. Of course, we obliged, as we were the only car we'd seen along the road in the past four hours. The Metis family had their tent pitched near the road and the whole scene was uniquely northern. They had moose meat smoking on racks while more meat was being boiled in a pot. Nearby, they had a moose and a caribou hide staked out on the

ground in preparation for tanning. The man offered us some moose meat, but we were going in the wrong direction for it to do us any good.

We got to Hay River, the northern terminus of the Mackenzie Highway, later that day and after we dropped off the Metis lad we checked into the town's only hotel. It was owned by Calgary Brewing & Malting and the only beer available in the bar was a Calgary brand. And the prices! Beer was 50 cents a bottle, or more than double the price charged on the outside. And in order to drink in the bar, one had to get a one-dollar Territorial permit. The rest of the prices were equally high. Soft drinks were two bits and in one store, all the canned goods were 25 cents each, regardless of contents.

Hay River settlement was spread out for about two miles along the river but its only main street was about a block long and consisted of five or six businesses. Its population of 250 people included about a hundred Metis, 50 treaty Indians, 75 people who worked for the government, and the rest involved in transportation, commercial fishing, and other occupations. My impression of the place was that it consisted of a lot of log shacks, plenty of dogs, big Arctic ravens, unimproved roads, and a polyglot population. I had the feeling that it could be a rough town and this was confirmed when I went into the bar's washroom and saw blood splattered on the walls. On enquiry, I was told there had been a fight the previous night between fishermen and loggers.

Our plan was to spend the night in Hay River and, after getting a bunch of pictures, to head back south. But that's where my luck ran out. Shortly after our arrival, Bill encountered an old buddy of his, Larry Mitanski, who was doing some aerial prospecting. He had a float plane and was living on a boat named the *Pilot II* which usually plied the Mackenzie River. That night we attended a wild party on the boat which featured overproof rum – a highly alcoholic beverage found only in the Northwest Territories. I didn't (and still don't) like ordinary rum and I found the overproof stuff to be absolutely unpalatable. Even when it was diluted with Coke it tasted like kerosene, so I was amazed to see some of Mitanski's northern pals drinking the stuff straight from the bottle. I knocked off early and went to the hotel and next morning Bill announced that he and Larry were flying across Great Slave Lake to Yellowknife, which boasted the only liquor store in the North. Larry wanted to stock up and Bill was anxious to see the northern capital. There wasn't room for me, so Bill promised he would be back next morning at daybreak so we could get as far as High Level that night.

Next morning, I checked out of the hotel at dawn and drove to the docks where I waited, and waited, and waited. By mid-afternoon, I realized there

was no way we could get to High Level that day even if Bill did arrive, so I went back to the hotel and was chagrined to learn that they were fully booked. No rooms. I had no recourse but to spend a miserable night in the car, periodically starting the motor to keep from freezing in the 30°F temperature. I saw the false light of early dawn, and then watched with growing impatience as the sun gradually crept over the horizon. As I told Pauline in a letter, “I’ve had absolutely nothing to do. There are no shows, no radios available, no magazine stores and, in short, absolutely nothing to do but wait.”²³

As soon as the town was astir, I went for breakfast then returned to the docks to continue my vigil. Finally, late in the afternoon I heard the welcome roar of the float plane as it landed on Hay River and taxied to the dock. Bill was apologetic but it soon became apparent that Mitanski had been the culprit and convinced my companion to stay with the bright lights of Yellowknife rather than returning to his job. I was furious, and my temper didn’t improve when I learned that the hotel was still full. It was too late to head south, so we had to spend the night on the *Pilot II*. That might have been a pleasant experience, but with Mitanski’s liquor supply replenished, all his pals were back for another night of revelry.

But party or not, Bill and I were on the road shortly after daybreak the following day and reached High Level by noon. We made a side trip to Fort Vermilion so that I could interview a doctor and get some statistics and reports of other wolf attacks. We also stopped to do a little duck hunting and accompanied a Norwegian homesteader on a short but unsuccessful deer hunt. That night in High Level, I slept like a log. Even the howling of wolves near the cabins failed to disturb me, although they shook Bill out of a sound sleep.

As we wended our way south, the debacle at Hay River took on humorous undertones and soon Bill and I were laughing about it. That the hotel should be full in that northern wilderness was surprising, and as a plus I was able to display four pencil sketches I had made of the town and the docks during my protracted wait.

We had only one more assignment before returning home, and it proved to be a fascinating one. Virtually all homesteading land in Alberta had been taken up long before World War II, but in 1951 the Alberta government surveyed a wilderness area on Blueberry Mountain and decided to open it for some good old-fashioned homesteading. This meant that an applicant could file on the land, improve it over a period of three years, and buy 320 acres for a token \$300. More than a hundred farmers had accepted the challenge, and our task was to interview some of them.

Our first stop was at the log home of Herman Hindmarch, who had taken off his first crop that fall and was planning to spend a second winter on the land. He had been raised in the Peace River area, so grubbing the land was nothing new for him. Not so with Andrew Clarke, a prairie man from west of Calgary. He was living in a trailer with his wife and baby daughter and had brought in heavy equipment for clearing the land. His nearest neighbour was ten miles away so they had a lonely season ahead of them. The roads were unimproved but there was plenty of game to tide them over the winter months.

By this time, I was already deeply immersed in my studies of western history, so I was struck by the seeming anomaly of the situation. Here was a homesteader doing what other settlers had done in 1912 or 1920, but not in 1952. It was as though we had gone back in time, yet the portable trailer and heavy equipment reminded me that we were very much in a modern era. And I didn't see much romance in the situation. The Clarkes and others would have a long, hard, and expensive struggle before them if they expected to gain title to their homestead land.

When I got home from this extended trip, I set to work and wrote a general press release about the rabies epidemic. However, I didn't get to "break" the news, as a local correspondent at Fort Vermilion for the *Edmonton Journal* beat me to it. But I did write a feature story for *Within Our Borders*, as well as two or three extensive articles on the Mackenzie Highway and the Blueberry Mountain homesteaders.



The years with the Publicity Bureau were happy ones for me. I was working with a nice bunch of people, my job was enjoyable, and by superiors seemed to appreciate my outside interests in Indians and history. As it turned out, the first couple of years with the government were the most pivotal ones of my life from the standpoint of family, career, and personal interests. These years set the tone for what became the three passions in my life: Pauline, Native culture, and history.

The most important of these was my love for Pauline. After our first date in 1950, we began going steady, but our first several months were filled with doubts and concerns on both our parts. My worry was that I was a shy, insecure homebody who was completely different from the outgoing and vivacious Pauline. After losing my job at the *Bulletin*, I was also afraid that I might be forever confined to some menial job and could never properly look after a family.

Pauline's concern, as expressed to me, was much more basic. The problem as she saw it was that she was an Indian and I was a white man. She could envision my future being jeopardized by marrying someone of another race, and perhaps in the future I might have regrets that I didn't marry someone "of my own kind." My answer to her in a letter was, "You are 'my own kind.' You can't measure it on race alone. I might find a girl of the same race but who would never have the qualities that you have. My own kind of girl would be measured for her love for me, her likes and dislikes, her personality and friends, not on her race, her religion or her doubts."²⁴

I got some idea of the seriousness of the situation when Pauline told me that one of her roommates had seen me on Jasper Avenue chatting with friends. She told Pauline she didn't say hello because she thought I might not want to recognize her on the street because she was an Indian. I was flabbergasted to say the least.

I told her that I would prefer to face any problems as they arose, rather than trying to predict them. I expressed a willingness to seek employment with the Indian Affairs Branch if she thought that would keep me in contact with Native people on a regular basis. Thank God that didn't happen!

But as it turned out, the problem simply didn't exist. I became a part of her world and she a part of mine. My mother and Pauline became lifelong friends who always enjoyed each other's company, while her dad was like a father to me. In later years we laughingly said if we ever got into a big fight, we were sure my mother would support Pauline and her dad would side with me. It was that kind of relationship. Also, my friends and hers accepted us without reservation and we quickly felt at home wherever we went.



From the time of the fateful meeting in 1950, I was also enamoured with Native history. Shortly after the *Bulletin* folded, I blanketed the world with letters in a search for more information. I got anthropological books from the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Blackfoot language studies from The Netherlands, transactions from the Royal Canadian Institute, Native studies from the American Ethnological Society, reports from the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and Indian photographs from the RCMP, Royal Ontario Museum, CPR, and Hudson's Bay Company. I also launched into a lifelong friendship with John C. Ewers, who was then Associate Curator of Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. My first letter in 1951 was a formal one but after we met in Browning

a couple of years later, it was “Dear Jack” and “Dear Hugh.” As time passed, Jack and Marge became great friends as we visited each other in such places as Browning, Cody, Washington, and Calgary. I now prize almost fifty years of correspondence with Jack filled with a wealth of information on every imaginable aspect of Blackfoot and museum work.

About the same time, I opened correspondence with Claude Schaeffer, Curator of the Museum of the Plains Indian, in Browning, Montana. This also was the basis for another lifelong friendship but a tragically short one. Claude left the museum in 1954 because of ill health and lived in Oregon for a few years before returning to his old job in 1960. He retired a short time later and died of a heart attack in 1969. Claude was a quiet, kindly man. I got along fine with him, while his wife Halina and Pauline were good friends. Claude was a meticulous researcher among the Blackfoot and Kootenay but he seldom published anything. He was always waiting until his research was complete but, of course, it never was. At the time of his death, he had just agreed to write a history of the Kootenays for the University of Oklahoma Press. I learned of his passing when Halina phoned me from Seaside, Oregon. She said that Claude had told her if anything ever happened to him, she was to turn his research papers over to me. A few days later, I made the sad flight to the West Coast and brought back to the Glenbow Museum as fine a body of Native interviews as one would ever see. It made me sad that Claude had never taken that next step.

Another person I contacted in the early 1950s was Douglas Leechman, anthropologist for the National Museum of Canada. We, too, started writing to each other and ultimately he was to have a major impact upon my career.

With all of the information about Indians pouring in, my writer’s instincts took over. In the spring of 1951, I decided to interview Percy Plain Woman, one of the tubercular patients at the Charles Camsell Indian Hospital. He was an artist who painted under the name of Two Guns. Percy and I had become great friends over the previous few months so I was pleased to write his life story and to see it published in *The Native Voice*.²⁵ This made both of us happy, as the story helped to bring in more orders for paintings.

I must tell a little story about Percy which occurred sometime after he was released from the sanatorium. At that time he was living on the Blood Reserve, just on the outskirts of Cardston. Pauline and I were going to Montana for a holiday and I had brought some beer with us, as Cardston was a dry Mormon town. Just as we were leaving, I remembered that we still had half a dozen bottles left and we couldn’t take them across the line into the States. We were

parked on Main Street so when I noticed Percy coming our way, I dumped the bottles into a paper bag and handed them to him.

“Here, Percy,” I said. “It’s a half a dozen beers. Maybe you could use them.”

Without giving the matter any further thought, Pauline and I headed south for our holiday. When we got back, I met Percy in the Old Chief Café and the first thing he said to me was, “Dempsey, you scared the shit out of me. I’ve bought bottles from bootleggers in back alleys but that’s the first time anybody gave me the stuff right on Main Street. After you left, I was almost too scared to walk home with it, and I was sure I was going to be stopped by the Mounties.”

I had completely forgotten that Indians were not allowed to either drink or possess alcoholic beverages, and if Percy had been stopped, he would have been sent to jail for at least a month. He never tired of reminding me that I was the boldest bootlegger he’d ever met.



Later that summer I decided that my first major literary effort should be a book on the life of Pauline’s grandfather, Joe Healy, or Flying Chief. All I knew about him was that his parents had been killed by enemy Indians in Montana in the 1860s, that he had been raised by whisky traders, and that Pauline had loved him very much. A few newspaper accounts slightly expanded his biography, but not enough for me to make any sense out of the confusing stories. In one account, the white Joe Healy, for whom Pauline’s grandfather had been named, had been a soldier who had saved the boy’s life. In another, a man named John Healy had been the rescuer, but he’d been a whisky trader.

This set me off into another facet of my career. At Christmas 1951, I was invited to spend the holidays on the Blood Reserve with Pauline and her family. I gladly accepted, not just to be with Pauline, but to be part of her family. I can still remember us travelling over the snow-covered prairies and being told that the Bloods were experiencing one of their worst winters on record. When we turned off the main highway, we couldn’t travel on the secondary road as it was choked with snow, so we had to follow a winter trail along a ridge that led down to the Gladstone ranch. When we approached, I saw that the whole place was ablaze with lights and the reflections from the windows shimmered across the frozen snow. Coming closer, we passed some Gladstone cattle huddled together near the shelterbelt, their backs encrusted with snow. I found the whole experience to be exhilarating.

On the day before Christmas, I asked if I could speak with some of the elders about Joe Healy. This led us to the Marquis Café in Cardston, where I interviewed ninety-four-year-old Iron, who revealed the real story of how Joe Healy's parents had been killed. He also told about Healy having been struck by lightning, and another time being in a shack which was attacked by white horse thieves. When he finished his stories, Iron added, "Many men told lies about their experiences and that was why they are now dead and I am still alive. I tell only the truth."²⁶ All of this was in Blackfoot, with Pauline's father interpreting. We then moved to another table where Pauline's aunt, Rosie Davis, was sitting. She was the eldest of the family. She repeated the story of the attack by Pend d'Oreille Indians, adding a few more details about Healy's life.

As it turned out, I never did get enough information for a book, and not until 1994 was I able to tell Joe Healy's factual story in *The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and Other Blackfoot Stories*. But the experience taught me about the wealth of oral history that existed among the Indians, particularly those who spoke no English and prided themselves on the accuracy of their information. I came to appreciate the fact that storytelling and history were inextricably intertwined, that elders told their stories both for entertainment and to pass on the history of their tribe.

The first Christmas on the Blood Reserve left me with a multitude of memories. From the front porch of the Gladstone house I could get an unobstructed view of Chief Mountain, huddled at the Alberta–Montana border in all its massive glory. Slightly to the west, St. Paul's school was nestled in the foothills while between it and the house were a few Indian homes, those of Ken Tailfeathers, Henry Standing Alone, and Harry Mills. There were two houses at the Gladstone farm – the main one and the old original cabin which was now occupied by Pauline's brother Fred and his family. To the north were the barn, corrals and – for me a new experience – the outhouse.

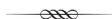
I was given a comfortable room under the eaves of their two-storey house and became accustomed to the workings of the household. This included being jolted awake at 7 a.m. when Pauline's dad turned on the radio full blast. I was accustomed to sleeping in late while on holidays but it was impossible at the Gladstones. By the time I struggled down to breakfast, most of the family had eaten and gone about their chores, but Pauline had waited for me to avoid leaving me in the embarrassing position of eating alone. Pauline's mother was an excellent cook, so there was lots of bacon, eggs, and pancakes in the morning.

Pauline's dad had a small office just off the veranda where he kept all his Indian Association and farming files. After a short while at the ranch, I became accustomed to a steady stream of visitors who came calling. Some were relatives, some fellow Anglicans, and a few were neighbours. All of them were Indians and mostly they talked politics and local gossip. I don't think I saw a white person during my entire visit, except at church and in town. There was a certain amount of holiday drinking, as the nearest bootlegger was never very far away. This caused some boisterousness but only one time did I have any concern. This occurred when Pauline's uncle David arrived very drunk and in a fighting mood. Later, I was told that at one stage he had to be forcibly restrained, but by this time I had gone to bed.

On Christmas Eve everybody had a few drinks but no one was drunk; they were all boisterous and happy. At midnight, they began opening their presents. While I was growing up, we didn't open our presents until Christmas morning, so this experience was entirely new for me. Not only that, but because of the drinking, the opening of parcels was sometimes a hilarious affair.

Next morning the women were up early preparing the turkey while the men went about their chores. By suppertime the house was filled with good odours and a bunch of adults and kids. Besides Pauline's brothers Fred and Horace, and her sister Doreen with her New Zealander husband, there was Pauline's Aunt Suzette Eagle Ribs, her Uncle David Healy, neighbour Harry Mills, and his son Buster who worked at the farm. Most of them had kids with them. The meal itself was the usual turkey, stuffing, vegetables, giblet gravy, and several kinds of pies and cakes. All the Gladstones had attended St. Paul's residential school, where they had learned everything they needed to know about English and Canadian cooking. I was told that at one time Pauline's grandfather used to include flaming plum pudding with the meal.

Pauline had talked about me being with "my own kind," but on the reserve that season I felt completely at home with her folks and her friends. And that's the way it turned out to be over the years. I can honestly say that on a social basis I have felt more comfortable among Indians than among white people, and throughout my lifetime the majority of my closest friends have been Indians. That first holiday on the reserve simply confirmed the fact that, as far as I was concerned, Pauline and I had nothing to worry about. If we ran into discrimination from time to time, that was somebody else's problem, not ours.



Back in Edmonton, I threw myself wholeheartedly into my work. Over the months, it became common knowledge that I was interested in history, so enquiries that came to the Tourist Bureau or to our department were passed along to me. Then, early in 1952, the deputy minister asked me to prepare a report on historic sites for him to take to a federal-provincial conference in Ottawa. I jumped at the chance, and after considerable research I produced a thirty-six-page report dealing with every major site in the province. When the deputy got back from Ottawa, he was ecstatic; the report had far surpassed anything from other provinces and had been warmly praised at the meeting.

A few weeks later, when a federal bureaucrat who had co-chaired the conference visited Edmonton, she asked to meet the author of the report. While the three of us – the bureaucrat, the deputy, and I – were standing in the deputy's office, the federal official said, "Mr. Moore, this report is too good to put on the shelf. Why don't you have it published?"

"That's a good idea," he responded. And, looking at me, he said, "You look after it, Dempsey."

Then the Ottawa official, with a twinkle in her eye, added, "And surely, Mr. Moore, you're going to give this young man credit for writing it."

The deputy was momentarily taken aback but then, knowing he had been cornered, good-naturedly added, "Of course."

And so it was that I broke with the department's policy on anonymity. The booklet came out in mimeographed form under the title *Historic Sites of the Province of Alberta* and bylined by me. It was such an instant success that it went into a second edition before the end of the year, this time as a typeset and fully illustrated booklet. Ultimately it went through ten printings over the next twenty-five years, with some 25,000 copies being circulated. It was my first book and nothing since then has ever attained that kind of distribution. The fact that it was free and distributed by the Tourist Bureau may have had something to do with it.

The response was astounding. For many years, Alberta had been languishing in the backwaters of Canadian historical publishing, even though there was considerable local interest in the subject. As a result, people were delighted when the Alberta government did something historical. Over the next few months I got friendly letters from a raft of people whose names didn't mean too much to me at the time. Among them were Grant MacEwan, Norman Luxton, G. Rider Davis, J.E.A. Macleod, George Heath MacDonald, Morden H. Long, George Edworthy, and Walter N. Sage. All were extremely laudatory.



This project, interestingly, led me into another facet of my career. In 1953, Ed Bryant introduced me to an engineer named Jim MacGregor and said we were going to help his group, the Historical Society of Alberta, publish a quarterly journal. The government had agreed to mimeograph, collate, and bind four hundred copies free of charge.

And so began the *Alberta Historical Review*. Four years earlier, Jim MacGregor had made publishing history when his book *Blankets and Beads* was published. It was one of the first ever written about Alberta by an Alberta author and produced in the province by a commercial publisher. Because of the publicity surrounding the book, MacGregor had become president of the Historical Society in 1952 and began an aggressive campaign to promote Alberta's past. Professionally, Jim was general manager of Canadian Utilities Limited and was chairman of the Alberta Power Commission.

This society had been organized by an Act of the Alberta legislature in 1907, right after the province was formed. It had functioned off and on for years, offering meetings in Edmonton, marking historic sites, and generally trying to raise an awareness of Alberta's history. Although supposedly province-wide, in the beginning it was purely an Edmonton organization.

Shortly after his election, MacGregor wrote to several local historians throughout the province, stating that, "It has occurred to me that we might be able to start publication of a monthly or quarterly bulletin devoted to Alberta history. What would you think of such an effort?"²⁷ Encouraged by the response, he asked the Rev. W. Everard Edmonds, a retired high school teacher, to be the editor, then contacted our department for assistance in launching the new publication.

I was designated the liaison person in seeing the magazine into print. For the first issue, the Society decided to produce seven hundred copies, of which four hundred would be paid for by the government. This first issue, released in April 1953, was mimeographed, thirty-five pages long on legal-size paper. It included four lectures that had been given at society meetings and contained a brief history of the organization. Copies were sent to the ninety-one members of the Society while others were widely circulated to libraries, newspapers, and interested persons throughout the province.

This first issue surpassed all expectations. Shortly after it was released, MacGregor wrote to the editor, "The reception given the *Review* has been most gratifying. Mr. George [the treasurer] advised that we have received 130 new subscriptions and he has sent me dozens of complimentary letters which

he has received.”²⁸ This more than doubled the previous membership and there was no sign of a letup. As a result, the first printing was soon gone and it was necessary to reprint another hundred copies and to order 500 copies of the number two.

Fairly quickly, Edmonds and I slipped into a routine. He gathered the articles (mostly papers given at earlier meetings) and carefully prepared everything else in handwritten form. He then delivered to me at the Publicity Bureau a bundle containing the articles and news of society happenings. I organized it, had it typed by one of the secretaries, and delivered it to a company which printed and bound the copies. When I received the invoice, I deducted the cost for the first four hundred (later increased to five hundred) and sent an invoice to the Historical Society for the remainder. I also began contributing articles to the magazine, starting with “Story of the Blood Reserve” in 1953, and “Fort Ostell and the Riel Rebellion” in 1954.

Because of my involvement, I soon found myself recruited into the society by Jim MacGregor. At the annual meeting in February 1954, I was elected to the executive committee before I had even become a member. My task, besides working with Edmonds on the editorial side, was to arrange for newsstand sales of the magazine all across Alberta. At its peak, we were selling more than a hundred copies through the news outlets.

A year later, when looking at the invoices, I realized that we were paying a lot of money because of the amount of mimeograph paper we were using in the cumbersome magazine. On a hunch, I checked with some friends at Douglas Printers and learned that we could get a professionally printed, glossy, illustrated magazine, 7 x 10 inches, for approximately the same price we were paying for the mimeographed ones. A quick change was made and everyone was happy. We now had a format which was kept for the next thirty-seven years, changing the name to *Alberta History* in 1975, and switching in 1992 to the format and size used today.

In 1956, I officially became associate editor of the magazine even though I had actually been filling that role since 1953 and would continue to guide its production throughout my career. When I moved to Calgary, Edmonds and I continued to work together at a distance, but two years later he was obliged to resign because of ill health. I then took over as the editor, a role I accepted with pleasure and continued to pursue in my spare time during all my years at Glenbow.

My involvement in the Historical Society opened a whole new vista for me in the way of interests and friends. I attended meetings, heard interesting

lectures, and became friends with many of the members. Jim and Frances MacGregor visited back and forth with Pauline and me, and I came to know people like Bruce Peel, Lewis G. Thomas, Ernie George, Sam Dickson, and Jean McCallum.

My responsibilities at the Publicity Bureau also increased when the Historical Society convinced the Alberta government that it should launch a historical sign program, similar to the one which was so successful in Montana. I was given the task of looking at the recommendations, making suggestions to the deputy, and arranging for the placement of the highway signs. In the early years, I wrote virtually all of the text myself, selected the sites in conjunction with an engineer from the Department of Highways, and attended the official unveilings. These signs, commemorating such events as the Frank Slide, arrival of the North-West Mounted Police, Jerry Potts, the Frog Lake Massacre, and the first irrigation ditch, became very popular tourist attractions.



My interest in history naturally led to freelance writing. At first my sights were set high on such major magazines as *Macleans*, *Argosy*, and *True*, but after a few rejection slips I concentrated on more local publications. I launched a long association with the Montana Historical Society in 1953 when they published my article, “The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt,”²⁹ and also had stories in *Scarlet and Gold*³⁰ and *Western Canada Police Review*.³¹ Actually, my start with *Scarlet and Gold* – a magazine for RCMP veterans – had been an accident. It started in 1951 when I read an article by Philip H. Godsell dealing with the pursuit of a Blood Indian named Charcoal.³² I was disgusted when I read that Godsell had the Indians speaking Cree instead of Blackfoot. By this time, I was already appreciating the pride that many Bloods had in themselves and saw the article as an insult to the tribe. I wrote to the editor of the magazine, venting my spleen and was surprised when I received a response, asking me to contribute an article. I was also told that Godsell had been reprimanded by the editor for his undue liberties with historical fact. Little did I know that a few years later I would be working with Godsell at the Glenbow Foundation. At that time he immediately made it clear that he did not forgive nor forget my earlier criticism, and indicated he had no use for me. That was fine, as the feeling was mutual.

One of Pauline’s good friends in Edmonton when I met her was Father Antonio Duhaime, an Oblate priest. He had been a teacher and coach at St. Mary’s school on the Blood Reserve and met Pauline and her friends at the

Camsell Hospital when he was transferred to Edmonton. Tony encouraged my Native studies and in the summer of 1954 asked me if I would like to prepare an English edition of *Le Grand Chef des Prairies*, a biography of Father Albert Lacombe, written by Father Paul-Emile Breton. A brother at Lac La Biche had made a word-for-word translation into English but it was unpublishable. When I agreed, Tony took me to see Father J.O. Fournier, the Provincial Superior, who gave me a \$100 contract to write the English edition. He also gave me free access to the Oblate Archives, which were not open to the public.

For the next four months, I laboured over the manuscript in my spare time and enjoyed every minute of it. I checked quotations against their originals, particularly the ones written in English, added details from letters in the archives, and put the manuscript into literary form. Father Fournier was a delightful man who regaled me with stories of the early missionaries and some of their foibles. One day, he had Father Devique (an elderly priest who was looking after the archives) dig up a letter in which the bishop had instructed a priest to “get that sixteen-year-old girl out of your room.” I think Father Devique was scandalized by the idea of a Protestant having access to his beloved files, but even more so when his Provincial Superior was revealing the order’s deepest secrets. But it was all in good fun, and Father Fournier succeeded in putting a human face on the missionaries of the past.

Late in 1954, the manuscript was finished and published in Montreal under the title *The Big Chief of the Prairies*. In the front, I was pleased to read, “Acknowledgement is given to Mr. Hugh A. Dempsey who translated and revised the text.”

During this period of research and writing I was still living at home and being outrageously pampered by my mother. I slept late on Sundays, spent countless hours on the phone with Pauline when I couldn’t be with her, and devoted my spare time either to writing or painting. My father had retired from Canada Customs and was actively pursuing his interests as an elder of the Presbyterian Church and as a gardener. He was a man of strong principles, strong ideals, and with a firm sense of what was right or wrong. I never knew anyone who could see the world in black and white, without shades of grey, the way he could.

He was a faithful adherent of the Loyal Order of Orange and had demonstrated a number of prejudices over the years, including opposition to French-Canadians and the Catholic church. He had even been a member of the Ku Klux Klan for a short period in the late 1920s, but had quit when fellow Klansmen wanted to burn a cross on the lawn of the Catholic Church in

Edgerton. He abhorred such overt actions; he had joined the Klan simply as an outlet for agrarian protest, as an interim stopgap between his support for the Progressives of the 1920s and Social Credit of the 1930s.

I was pleased that his prejudices did not extend to Indians. In fact, the opposite was true as he welcomed Pauline and her folks into their house on many occasions. I believe his brief experience as a clerk with the Edmonton Indian Agency in the 1930s had given him a positive outlook on Indian people generally, and later to Pauline in particular. So Pauline felt just as welcome in our home as I did in hers.



Pauline and I became engaged in 1952, and that summer I learned something about the extended family. In white society, a “family” usually consists of one or more parents and their children. In the Indian society, the word can mean parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, foster children, adopted children, and even friends and adopted adults.

During the summer, for example, I was visiting the Gladstones while on a government assignment and met Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Revais, from Browning, Montana. Charlie was introduced to me as Mr. Gladstone’s father. This puzzled me greatly, as I already knew quite a bit about the family and it did not include a handsome elderly Indian from Montana. Only later did I learn that many years earlier Pauline’s father had befriended an Indian cowboy who had been hurt in a riding accident and had put him up for the winter. He was Charlie’s brother, and the following spring, Charlie came to the Blood Reserve and expressed his gratitude by adopting Pauline’s father as his son. There was no blood relationship but both families took the “adoption” quite seriously.

A similar situation existed between Pauline’s dad and Joe Bull Shield, except in this case they were brothers. When they were in residential school together, Joe’s father had taken Pauline’s dad as his son and gave him the name of *Akainamuka*, or Many Guns. As a result, Joe and Pauline’s dad always considered themselves to be kin, in an Indian sense.

During the early summer, Joe and Dorothy Bull Shield visited us in Edmonton and we took them for a tour around the city and out to the Winterburn Reserve. When we were parked, Joe, who was sitting in the front seat beside me, spoke to Pauline in Blackfoot, “Does my son-in-law have an Indian name yet?” He used the term “son-in-law” because of the close relationship between him and Pauline’s dad.

“No,” she said. “He hasn’t.”

“Well, my son-in-law suits my name better than I do. I’ll give it to him.” He then turned to me and said in English, “Here, I’m giving you my name of *Piksi’nee*. Take it.” In saying this, he cupped his hands and “threw” the name at me. Following Pauline’s instructions, I made the motion to “receive” the name.

“*Piksi’nee*,” I repeated. “What does it mean?”

Dorothy and Pauline laughed and Pauline said, “It means ‘Skinny.’” They explained that this had been his young man’s name. Now, truthfully, it fit me perfectly, as I was as thin as a rail, while Joe was expanding with age. Ever since then, *Piksi’nee* has been my personal name, the one used by my family and close friends. I have received other “official” names but this one has always been my personal name, the one that Pauline uses when she says something to me in Blackfoot.

Then, a few months later while on assignment in Fort Macleod, I was taken aside by Pat Bad Eagle, patriarch of the Peigan tribe, and given the name of *A’sitapina*, or Young Chief. Pat also took me as his adopted son. We had first met at the Camsell Hospital, where a number of his grandchildren had just been confined. When Pauline and I arrived at the hospital, Pat and his wife were outside, looking up at one of the windows and crying. Pauline was able to calm them down and learned that they were not allowed to visit their grandchildren until some initial tests had been done. They didn’t understand this; they thought they were permanently banned from seeing their young ones. Over a period of time, Pat and I became good friends, and from that time on, the Peigans always referred to me as Young Chief.

That Christmas, 1952, Pauline and I were back home on the Blood Reserve for the holidays and this time the family announced that we were all going to the Christmas dance. After supper we followed the Blue Trail across the prairie and then went along the snow-covered Glenwood road until we came to the Bullhorn community hall. This hall was the same one where I, as a stranger, had attended the Indian Association meeting only eighteen months earlier. It seemed like a lifetime ago. At the hall, we saw pickup trucks, cars, sleighs, and saddle horses scattered everywhere and from inside we could hear the tum-tum-tum of the drum.

Two big dances were held during the holiday season. On Christmas night it was sponsored by the Horn Society, the most sacred religious organization on the reserve, while the New Year’s Eve dance was put on by the Magpies, an age-grade society of young men. Little did I realize that within a few years,

I would be inducted into their group. At both of these gatherings there were chicken dances, owl dances, round dances, honouring dances, and chiefs' dances, all to the beat and singing of the drum group at the far end of the hall.

I learned that the Bloods had retained from the buffalo hunting days some vestiges of their warrior age-grade society system. There were eleven societies, each based upon the ages of the men involved. The youngest were the Magpies for men under the age of twenty-eight. Next oldest, in five or ten year groupings, were the Small Change, Skinny Horses, Eagles, Red Belts, Crazy Dogs, Tall Hats, Big Holes in the Ear Lobes, Fast Horses, Shell Earrings, and Crow Indians. At that time, Iron was the only surviving member of the latter group.

While at one time these societies had a role in protecting the camps and performing ceremonies, they now limited their activities to sponsoring dances. There was great rivalry among them, with all even-numbered societies considering each other as allies, and all the odd-numbered ones as their competitors. That year, the Magpies had the New Year's Eve dance, the Small Change the pre-Lent dance, and Skinny Horses the Easter dance.

There were at least a thousand people jammed into the hall, and the only white people I saw were priests or teachers from the residential schools. At one stage, a fair red-headed child stopped in front of me, and I looked around for her parents. Then she burst forth with a torrent of Blackfoot to her friends and ran away laughing. I don't know if she could even speak English.

Wise to the ways of Indian pow-wows, the Gladstones had brought their folding chairs with them. They found a place with the Joe Bull Shields and Fred Tailfeathers families while Pauline and I paired off with Irene and Gerald.

Very quickly I learned there were rules that had to be followed. If anyone was dressed in their Native outfits, they had to join the chicken dance if one of the Magpies came along and tapped their legs with his whip. The owl dance was for couples, and three rules were that the women asked the men to dance, the men could not refuse, and wives could not dance with their husbands. Perhaps these were good rules to make people circulate, but they could also be the cause of considerable jealousy, especially if an old girl friend persistently asked a man to dance while his wife looked on.

About midnight, the Magpies had a feast for the crowd, handing out sandwiches, soft drinks, and cookies. At the same time, gifts of money and blankets were given away to visitors. Finally, about 2 a.m., while the dance was still going strong, we headed for home. I was told the dance would last until dawn, but it had been a long day and we were all tired.

A week later, we were back for the New Year's Eve dance. I was pleased to notice the complete absence of drunks at both dances, and when the Mounted Police patrols showed up, they had nothing to do except watch the dance for a few minutes and continue on their way.

On our return to Edmonton, I mentioned the dances in one of my letters to Douglas Leechman at the National Museum of Canada, and he thought it was a subject worth pursuing. He said if I wrote it, he would see if he could get it published in one of the scientific journals. This was a new experience for me, but I wrote the manuscript, "Social Dances of the Blood Indians," and it was eventually published by the *Journal of American Folklore*, a prestigious American periodical.³³ This was my first experience with the professional world of ethnology, but over the next several years I had other papers published by such periodicals as the *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, *Plains Anthropologist*, *American Anthropologist*, *Natural History*, and others.



With a growing interest in Native history, I remembered that a Cree named John Rabbit had invited me out to his place on the Louis Bull Reserve. This invitation occurred at one of my first Indian Association meetings. So one spring day Pauline and I drove out to his log house in the Bear Hills, and after some visiting the storytelling began. John was there with his wife and his friend Tom Bull. Perhaps the most interesting story came from Mrs. Rabbit. She told us that when she was a young girl she saw the Little People playing in the Red Deer River. These were the *Maymaykwaysiuk* believed by the Cree to inhabit the lakes and sandhills. She said they were about eighteen inches tall, with big bellies and white faces. "Their ears were big too," she said, "and they were something like little bears."³⁴ She ran down for a closer look but they went into a whirlpool or eddy and disappeared.

At this point in the story, John Rabbit reached into his vest pocket and took out an arrowhead that was about two inches long. He said he found it on a hill said to be frequented by the Little People and he wanted me to keep it. I have it still.

I found out later that stories about the Little People were common. They were said to have made all the stone arrowheads used by the Crees. They left them on rocks or in open areas for the Crees to find.

After the storytelling, John took me out to an old Sun Dance camp that was still standing. He let me take a picture of it, also of the buffalo skull that had been used in the ceremony, and the frame of a nearby sweatlodge. He then

showed me a deep rutted trail and wallow that he said had been made by buffalo, not cattle.

After I bid goodbye to this kindly man, Pauline and I were making our way back home when we became hopelessly stuck in a mudhole on the reserve. The nearest house wasn't far away, but we were worried as we could hear sounds of revelry coming from it. Regardless, I knocked on the door and was greeted by some happy drunks. When they learned of my predicament, they hitched up a team and promptly pulled us out. When I tried to offer them money, they just laughed and went back to their party. This was quite an introduction to the Crees, their friendliness and their hospitality.



After a long engagement, Pauline and I were married on August 31, 1953. The decision was made – at my urging – that we should be married in St. Stephen's Anglican church in Edmonton, and have the reception at St. Paul's school on the Blood Reserve. My thinking was that many of our friends, as well as my family, would not be able to make the long trip to Cardston, while on Pauline's side they were all a bunch of travellers. Pauline agreed, but only after it was all over did I learn that she had had her heart set on being married on the Blood Reserve. She wanted all her old school chums to be there to send her off in grand style. I just wish she had told me beforehand but by then we were already married. One of my many faults was to see something as being logical and assume that everyone else would see it the same way. I did not take into account that emotion can be just as important, if not more so, than logic.

We were married in Edmonton, with Rev. J.E. DeWolf, missionary on the Blood Reserve, coming north to conduct the services. My brother Glen was my best man while Irene Tailfeathers was matron of honour and Naomi Foster and Audrey Pilling were bridesmaids. It was a very ecumenical wedding in many ways. Pauline, Irene, and Naomi were Anglicans; I was Presbyterian (but soon to turn Anglican); Glen was United Church; and Audrey was Mormon. And we were driven to the church by Tony Duhaime, the Oblate priest who was a long-time friend of ours. However, ecumenicalism had not progressed to the point where Tony could enter the church. Instead, he sat in the car reading his Bible until we emerged amid rice and confetti.

A few months earlier, I had purchased my first car, an old 1941 Ford sedan which was a piece of junk when I got it and was still a piece of junk when the transmission gave out a year or so later. With this as our transportation, we made our way to Cardston for a big reception and supper in the church

hall. The place was jammed with Indians, government and school staff, local ranchers, and old friends. Master of ceremonies for the evening was Ralph D. Ragan, the Indian agent. The toast to the bride was given by Canon S.H. Middleton, who recalled that the first wedding he ever performed on the Blood Reserve was that of Pauline's parents. A toast was also proposed by Mike Mountain Horse, a long-time friend of the family and the husband of Pauline's Aunt Mary. Other speeches were made by Pat Bad Eagle and Many Guns, who had come from the Peigan Reserve. After a huge dinner prepared by the staff and students, the evening ended with dancing to a live band, the Rhythm Ramblers.

Fearful that my old Ford wouldn't make it back from the honeymoon, Pauline's dad insisted that we use his car. We had intended to go to Glacier Park that night but the dance lasted so long that we got to the border a few minutes after the customs office had closed. As a result, we spent the first night of our honeymoon in a dingy tourist cabin at Carway. But it really didn't matter, as we were together. For the rest of the honeymoon we had a wonderful time as we wended our way over Logan Pass, through the mountains, and on to Spokane.

On our return to Edmonton, we rented an upstairs suite in an old house just off Jasper Avenue. The landlady, Miss Paul, was a spinster who kept to herself and treated us well. I don't know what she thought of the steady stream of Indians who came and went from the house but she never complained. We stayed there a year until we had enough money for a down payment on a small house on the South Side. That year was the only time I had ever lived in anything but a detached house. I didn't mind it, but I was glad to get our own place.



Now that we were together, Pauline and I were seldom without house guests or visitors. Pauline's mom and dad visited us regularly and stayed for days at a time. It was delightful having them, as Dad (I guess I can call him that now) and I never ran out of things to talk about. More and more, I became immersed in the activities of the Indian Association of Alberta, attending annual conferences, helping to write resolutions, and watching the directions of the political winds. This was particularly true of the Alberta government, for I was in an ideal position to see what was going on. I told the premier's executive assistant, Pete Elliott, about my interests and more than once he phoned me to find out what was happening on the Indian side.

Once, I interviewed E.S. Heustis, Alberta fish and game commissioner, for a *Within Our Borders* story on beaver ranching. I had been led to believe that he was an ogre who had always hated Indians. I knew that he had prevented them from killing female game for food, even though they had a treaty right to do so, and that he considered any fishing with nets to be commercial fishing. After the meeting, I wrote to Pauline, "I had a long talk with Mr. Heustis and ... drew him out on his policy with Indians. It gives me a slightly different impression of him now. Here are a few of the things he said, word for word: 'I just can't understand those people. For years, I tried to play fair with them, but all I got for it was headache and heartache. So I've just about given up. Sometimes I'd like to kill every God-damned one!' That is word for word, so you can see, and I felt it, that he is bitter and disillusioned. He gave me examples, too. Apparently beaver control is one of his favourite projects. He said he cooperated fully with the Indian Department to stock beaver on reserves. But he said it did no good. Instead of only trapping a limited quota each year and allowing them to become established, they would clean them all out the first year. But I will say his reasoning for the female game problem doesn't hold water."³⁵ The information did not make Heustis any easier to deal with, but at least there was some indication of why he was reacting the way he was.

On the matter of female game, one time in 1952 I was tipped off by Ivor Eklund, fur supervisor for Indian Affairs, that the Alberta government had made an illegal seizure. Four members of Paul's band, near Wabamun, had an elk and two deer carcasses seized by a provincial game officer. Not only that, but the officer didn't have enough room in his car, so he made the Indians transport the meat to Entwistle so it could be sent to the Edmonton residential school. The action left the families of the hunters stranded in the bush with only bannock and tea for food. As the IAA was involved in contesting another female game case at the time, I was able to pass the information along to give the lawyers more ammunition to fight illegal actions of the Game Branch.

But perhaps my most dramatic involvement between the Association and the government occurred over the question of provincial old age assistance. In 1952, the federal old age pension scheme was extended to include Indians over 70 years of age, but assistance for the 65-to-69-year group was a responsibility of the provincial government. John Laurie, secretary of the IAA, asked whether this program, too, would be extended to Indians but was told that a decision had not yet been reached. In fact, the Alberta government intended to provide old age assistance, but details of a federal cost-sharing arrangement were still being negotiated. Laurie, however, took the delay to mean that the

Alberta government was refusing to participate. As it happened, the annual meeting of the Association was taking place on the Blackfoot Reserve when the delay occurred, and Laurie told the press that “the Province of Alberta has so far refused to grant old age assistance.”³⁶ He also drafted a resolution which attacked the government for its “punitive laws and all restrictive regulations.”³⁷

On the second day of the conference, Laurie phoned Premier Manning’s office and learned that old age assistance for Indians had been approved and would become effective retroactive to January 1st. He immediately announced the news at the general meeting and left the impression among the press that the government had been a reluctant participant but that Laurie had won them over.

The premier was furious when he read the newspaper accounts. I was in Pete Elliott’s office when the incident occurred and Pete asked me, “Who in the hell is this John Laurie?” I explained his role in the IAA and Pete said he’d pass the information along to the premier. Later that day, I wrote to Dad, saying “The Indians almost didn’t get the old age assistance. Apparently an Order-in-Council was ready to go before the Executive Council at least three days before the IAA meeting, and Mr. Laurie’s remarks at the convention almost made the premier tear up the bill.”³⁸ I don’t know if my comments were of any help in that particular situation but they did explain what was happening within the IAA.

Don’t get me wrong. John Laurie was the best thing that could ever have happened to the Indians of Alberta. He was utterly devoted to the cause of improving the lot of Indian people and he knew how to make best use of the press, opposition Members of Parliament, and sympathetic organizations to get action out of Ottawa. He may have had a high profile in the newspapers, but within the IAA he made it clear that he was simply their secretary and did not try to run their meetings. He sat at his table taking minutes, and if he felt the meeting was getting off the track he simply passed a quiet comment to Dave Crowchild, who proceeded to set things straight.

Laurie was a Calgary schoolteacher who came to the attention of the Association after he had helped the Stoneys get new reserves at Eden Valley and Bighorn. When the IAA was close to folding in 1944, Laurie stepped in and gave it the kind of business organization and political clout that it needed. I admired and liked the man from the first time I met him. While I was still living at home, he was a guest at my parents’ house for dinner and we found that both of us shared a lively interest in Native history. During all the time I

was in Edmonton, we corresponded with each other and a number of times when I was with Dad we visited him in Calgary.

Politically, Laurie was a left-wing member of the CCF party, but most of his lobbying was with the Conservatives. Doug Harkness, the Conservative MP from Calgary, was the Indian Affairs critic in the House of Commons and Laurie was one of his closest confidants. Laurie was extremely suspicious of the federal government, and rightly so. He questioned their motives on just about every action they took and firmly believed that their secret agenda was to divest themselves of any responsibility for Indians and to force them into Canada's mainstream population. For that reason, he opposed Indians getting the vote. He was also opposed to the extension of liquor privileges to Indians, but this was more from his Calvinist background than from politics. In these two areas – the vote and liquor – he interfered blatantly in IAA policies, but otherwise he left them alone.

One of Laurie's greatest contributions had occurred in 1950–51, just as I was getting involved. In 1950, the federal government introduced a new Indian Act which was even more restrictive than the old. With only a few days in which to organize a campaign before a quick third reading of the bill, he used all his contacts to flood the Liberal government offices with complaints from Native and white groups. As a result the bill was tabled and, for the first time, the government agreed to consult with Indians before bringing forth a new Act. They partially kept their promise, calling conferences of mostly handpicked people, but the IAA could not be ignored and managed to see that the new Act, passed in 1951, was more equitable than the old one.

Once Pauline and I were married and ensconced in our own apartment, we became kind of a crossroads for people who were personal friends of the family. Sometimes they were on their way to IAA executive meetings while at other times they were simply visiting friends or relatives in the Charles Camsell Hospital.



After the positive experience of interviewing Iron and Rosie Davis in 1951 I was anxious to pursue more oral histories. Because of the distance between Edmonton and the Blood Reserve, I was limited to summer and Christmas holidays. However, I had been visiting patients at the Camsell Hospital with Pauline for a couple of years and had made some good friends. Among them were Percy Plain Woman and Albert Wells from the Blood Reserve and Jack Black Horse from the Blackfoot. When I asked Albert any questions, almost

every answer was prefixed with the comment, "Jack Black Horse told me..." As a result, I decided to interview Jack. The only problem was that he spoke practically no English and, while Pauline was completely fluent in Blackfoot, she had never tried interpreting. But always game, she accompanied me to the Camsell on a couple of weekends after our honeymoon so that I could speak with him.

Jack explained that he was a son of Big Meat Eater, who had died in 1928 at the age of ninety. His information had come from his father. Jack decided that he wanted to tell me about the origin of the Sun Dance and of the four people who contributed to its success. These were Beaver Man, Scar Face, Night Rider, and Tail Feathers Woman. Patiently, he explained how Beaver Man had been given the beaver bundle on the shore of Waterton Lake; how Scar Face had visited the Sun and received the Sun Dance ceremony; how Night Rider (also known as Scabby Round Robe) had been befriended by beavers; and how Tail Feathers Woman had married the Morning Star. In the end, according to his account, these four people came together to put up the first Sun Dance.

Everything went well as far as the translations were concerned, except for one amusing incident. We were at the point in the story where Scar Face and Morning Star went to hunt birds along the lake shore. Black Horse said the birds were *Sai-eeks*.

"I don't know what they are," Pauline told me. "Maybe they're geese or swans."

"No," interrupted Black Horse, "They're ducks."

That was the first time that either Pauline or I knew that Black Horse could speak English. He didn't consider himself proficient in the language so he spoke it only when he had to. From that time on, I found that I could visit him without Pauline there, as he really did not need an interpreter. It became even easier to visit him a short time later when the hospital authorities moved Albert Wells to the adjacent bed.

On another visit later in 1953, Black Horse told me that he wanted to sing a song for me. It started on a high note then gradually went lower and lower until I thought his voice must have been coming from the bottom of his feet. By this time, I had heard a lot of Indian songs and while I have no ear for music, I found this one to me dramatically different and very melancholy. After he was finished, he explained through Albert Wells that it was a ghost song.

He said that long ago, a Blackfoot Indian had become lost in a blizzard and was almost dead when he stumbled onto a lone tepee. When he went inside

he saw it was a burial lodge. Opposite the doorway on a scaffold were the skeletons of three dead Indians. Frightened, he was about to leave when one of the skeletons called to him.

“Come and build a fire,” it said. “We won’t hurt you.”³⁹

The man did as he was told and when he was warm, the skeleton said they would teach him a song and a dance.

“They began to sing the Ghost Dance Song I have just sung,” Black Horse told me, “and showed him the dance. They would get up and dance a slow step, moving their fists in front of them, sit down, then get up and repeat it again. After the warrior watched them for a little while, he joined them and soon learned the song. He stayed with the skeletons all that night and in the morning, when the blizzard ended, he returned to his people and brought the Ghost Dance and song with him.”

“This is not a legend,” Black Horse assured me. “It really happened.”

It was certainly nice having friends like Percy Plain Woman and Jack Black Horse. Both were released from the Camsell a few months later but that didn’t end our friendship. I have in front of me a letter which Jack sent to me a month after he was released. It was obviously written for him by a member of his family. “You know,” he said, “since I ever got back home now here on the Blackfoot Reserve, seems to me everything is been changed. Every Sunday, they have rodeos, and lot of people attended it.... I give you a big hello to you and your wife. I miss both of you. Hope to see you in the future.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Percy wrote from the Blood Reserve, “I’ll send you a nice painting some time next month. I just got started again the last two weeks. My rheumatism was bothering me all summer, especially the weather, but I am O.K. now. I am sending Pauline a little pair of moccasins and a little doll for you.... Well, my dear friends, I close now with the best of luck.”⁴¹

I experienced this warm friendship time and time again as I ventured deeper into the Indian community. By the time Pauline and I were married, I had pretty well concluded that there wasn’t enough for a book on her grandfather, but discussions with her dad, members of the family, and correspondence with Jack Ewers opened up several new fields to explore. In particular, I became curious about Blackfoot traditional leadership and the biographies of some of the leading chiefs. It’s strange, but right from the first I was more interested in the lives of people than I was in religious practices, mythology, material culture, and all the other topics that are near and dear to so many ethnologists.

The interest in biographies started innocently enough when I began borrowing letter-books of correspondence from the Blood Indian Agency for the period from 1880 to 1900. Ralph Ragan, the Indian agent, generously allowed me to take three or four volumes at a time, and I laboriously copied out any reports and letters that seemed interesting. In a letter to Jack Ewers, I mentioned an incident in 1882 where a Blood chief named Running Rabbit had given up his leadership and moved south to become a chief of the South Peigans in Montana. Ewers was interested, as most of his work had been among the Montana Indians; he was familiar with a great leader named Running Rabbit but was unaware of any Canadian connection. As it turned out, there were two Running Rabbits, an American one and a Canadian one. However, by the time I learned this, I had already become interested in the identities, careers, and politics of Blood chiefs.

I learned that the Blood tribe had been made up of bands with distinctive names such as Fish Eaters, All Tall People, Lone Fighters, etc., and each was led by a chief. Soon such personal names as Red Crow, Seen From Afar, Bull Back Fat, and Father of Many Children were floating past my eyes, each seeming to be a subject worthy of study. Excitedly, I planned (with Pauline's blessing) to devote part of our summer and Christmas holidays speaking with elders. Dad was free and agreed to be my interpreter.

And so began the most active year of my life in the pursuit of oral history. During July, October, and December I spoke to more than two dozen people, many of them unilingual, and all of them wondering why a twenty-three-year-old white man would be interested in their stories. During this period, the only white people to regularly visit their homes were missionaries, Indian Agency employees, or bootleggers. I didn't fit any of these categories and under normal conditions I would have been greeted with considerable suspicion. But because I was the son-in-law of *Akainamuka*, they could immediately pigeonhole me and welcome me as a guest, and later as a friend. More than once, elders complained that no one listened to their stories any more. Their children were too busy and their grandchildren simply weren't interested. As a result, they were not only willing, but anxious to talk of the "old days" and to share the information that had been passed down to them.

The usual procedure was to drive up to a person's place and for Dad to go inside to explain my mission. Often they asked us to come back later, and it didn't take me long to realize that they wanted to tidy up the house and get tea ready for their unusual visitor. When we entered, I shook hands with

everybody in sight. That was another lesson I learned. If I missed someone, like an old lady sitting in a dark corner, she'd never forgive me.

Some homes were of log or frame construction on a small plot of land. Others were tiny cabins in the newly established village of Moses Lake, on the northern outskirts of Cardston. And in a few cases, the interviews took place in a tent, or in a tepee at the Sun Dance. Sometimes, if it seemed to be the right thing to do, the elder was brought to the Gladstone farm for a visit and a meal.

I quickly learned that there were certain protocols to be followed. For example, if I entered a door from the east and saw a stove in the middle of the room and the elder on the far side, I knew the room had been laid out in the same fashion as a tepee. This meant that the fire, i.e., stove, was in the middle, the owner of the lodge was at the back, and his altar was in front of him. Female members sat on the south side of the room, and men on the north. The altar consisted of a shallow box of clay holding such holy objects as *iniskim*, or buffalo stones, and the ashes of a fire. Beside the box might be a piece of braided sweetgrass while nearby were his pipe, fire tongs, and bags containing tobacco, paint, and other items needed for daily ablutions and ceremonies.

It was important never to go between a man and his altar, or between the altar and the stove. If, for example, I had a photograph that I wanted to show someone sitting to the right of the elder, I walked all the way around the stove and handed it to them.

Once we shook hands, often nothing happened for quite a while. It took a few visits to realize that this was an accepted practice among the traditionalists. The elder would point to our seats, and Dad might open a package of cigarettes and pass one to the elder. They would light up (I never did smoke) and sit pondering the floor. In many cases, the elder was obviously curious about my visit, but he was too polite to ask. Finally, the silence would be broken when Dad started speaking quietly in Blackfoot. The conversation had nothing to do with my visit. Often he asked about the man's cattle or horses, or commented on the condition of the hay crop. Or the elder might ask about the Indian Association or enquire whether anything had been done about interest payments or grazing leases.

After a reasonable amount of conversation, Dad switched over to the reason for my visit, explaining who I was and why I was interested. To this day, I have no real knowledge of what was said, for the conversation was entirely in Blackfoot. But as they spoke, the elder would look at me from time to time, as though confirming some comment that had been made about me. Then,

at last, Dad would lean back and say to me, "Okay, what do you want to ask him?"

I never learned regular shorthand but I did use a method picked up at the *Bulletin* whereby I would write down the key words of a conversation. Besides, there was always time while Dad was interpreting for me to polish my notes. And I made a point of typing them as soon as possible while the conversations were still fresh in my mind.

Dad was a wonderful interpreter. He knew how to ask the right questions, often taking a different approach than my enquiry if I happened to be on the wrong track or was violating some aspect of the culture. He had an extensive knowledge of the language, both ancient words and modern ones. He also knew sign language so if he really got stuck, he could still make himself understood. In speaking to me, he gave me everything that was said, including the conversations. That was one thing I noticed about Blackfoot storytelling. Even though an incident might have occurred two or three generations earlier, the informant would speak as though he had been there, complete with conversations. And, among those elders who proved to be reliable, the conversations when compared with government reports or other documents proved to be strikingly similar. This simply pointed out the importance of accuracy among a people with no written language. One could be confident among good informants that the story was being passed along just as he had heard it.

Sadly, not all elders were reliable. Sometimes Dad warned me about them, while at other times I had to learn for myself. Some had shown no interest in history or culture while they were young. They were too busy being cowboys, chasing women, or getting into trouble with the law. Others simply had bad memories. If they happened to live to an advanced age, they started to take on the mantle of an elder but it didn't change the fact that they didn't know anything. To make matters worse, such people sometimes were inclined to invent something rather than admit that they didn't know. I could name half a dozen people like that, but naturally I won't, as their memories are revered among their families, even though they may have left a litany of misinformation for future generations. Happily, they were in the minority.

Over a period of time, I developed a couple of methods for determining the accuracy of elders. For example, I would pick out nine or ten statements of fact from an elder and compare them with different sources, such as statements of other elders, fur trade records, and government documents. If I could find comparative data for even half of them and they checked out, then I knew the elder was reliable. Also, if an elder told me something that was extremely

important, I might run it by another elder without giving the source. If he verified it, I knew it was true.

Speaking of truth, someone once asked me how I could believe all the stories about ghosts, visions, animals taking human form, and other supernatural events. The answer was simple. The information was the truth as far as the elder was concerned, so I accepted it as his truth. I did not question its logic but felt that if the elder believed it then I believed him. But more important, these tales fitted perfectly into the beliefs and customs of the tribe. To understand the Blackfoot, one had to understand their perceptions of the world and everything in it.

Some of my best male informants were Jim White Bull, Jack Low Horn, John Cotton, Charlie Pantherbone, Bobtail Chief, Harry Mills, Percy Creighton, George Calling Last, Frank Red Crow, Big Sorrel Horse, Iron, Laurie Plume, Rides at the Door, and Shot Both Sides. Among the Blackfoot were One Gun, Ben Calf Robe, Paul Wolf Collar, Ayoungman, and Heavy Shield, and with the Peigans were Pat Bad Eagle, John Yellowhorn, Good Rider, Joe Potts, and Joe Crow Shoe. Among the women were Suzette Eagle Ribs, Rosie Davis, Jennie Duck Chief, and Vickie McHugh. There were lots of others, but these stand out in my mind.

The only reason I didn't interview more women was because I had a male interpreter. If we had pursued some of the possible informants, we would have been the subject of gossip, and this I wanted to avoid. Pauline made it clear that she didn't particularly want to interpret, and because of the mother-in-law taboo, I really couldn't ask her mother. Most of the women we did interview were relatives or old friends of the Gladstone family.

A word about the mother-in-law taboo. In traditional families, a son-in-law was not supposed to speak directly to his mother-in-law and avoid even staying in the same room with her if this was possible. When Pauline's eldest sister, Lucy, married Wilton Frank, the mother-in-law taboo was honoured as much as possible. However, the second girl to marry was Doreen, and her husband Max was a blond, blue-eyed New Zealander. When they came to the farm, Mom tried to follow the taboo custom but after a couple of days, Max stopped her in the kitchen and said, "What's the matter, mother? Are you mad at me?" Everyone started to laugh and the taboo ended right there. However, the unease remained, and when Pauline and I were married, Mom didn't avoid me but neither was she openly talkative and chatty as she was with her female friends.

From time to time, I wrote down personal observations about the elders as I was interviewing them. For example, when I saw Jennie Duck Chief, she was ninety-three years old. I noted that “she was reclining in her iron cot which was covered with mattresses and an array of blankets and quilts. She wore a black knitted coat and had a kerchief pulled tightly around her hair. Lying on the bed was her willow walking stick, its end blackened by poking the fire.”⁴² Of Bobtail Chief I commented, “He is blind and speaks no English. He sat cross legged in the middle of his bed, with a jam can beside him for an ashtray and spittoon. Behind him a tent canvas was nailed to the wall on the west side to keep out any drafts, and his medicine bundle was hung over his bed.”⁴³ While interviewing Charlie Pantherbone (or Sinew Feet) I noted he was “as thin as a ghost, very mild in appearance, and with one of the most kindly faces I have ever seen.”⁴⁴

And the stories these people told! As they talked, I could envision White Wolf when he was surrounded by Crows and dared them to attack. I was with Running Wolf as he crouched in a coulee while his comrades were dying all around him. I listened with interest to the story of a feud between Seen From Afar and Big Snake with all its supernatural overtones. And I was impressed when White Calf cursed Calf Tail after the government had made him a chief and heard how had he died a few days later.

Not all stories had been passed down from earlier generations. Shot Both Sides told me of his own raids against enemy tribes. John Cotton described his tribe’s last buffalo hunt and how he’d been too scared to kill a buffalo calf. And Big Sorrel Horse let me know what it was like to farm a small patch of land using only a few crude hand tools.

I discovered that there had been five major bands in the Blood tribe, and from them came another thirteen offshoots. The two leading bands in the mid-nineteenth century were the Fish Eaters under Seen From Afar and the Followers of the Buffalo under Bull Back Fat. The politics were intriguing, and it was fascinating to hear how the Fish Eaters gradually gained ascendancy until by the time of Treaty Seven in 1877 they utterly dominated the tribe.

But by far the most engrossing story I heard that year came from Jack Low Horn. Just before sunset, Dad and I had driven to his home on the edge of Bullhorn Coulee. After the usual preliminaries, Jack asked me if I wanted to hear about the reincarnation of his father. Did I?! Wild horses couldn’t have dragged me away. Jack spoke for almost five hours, with Dad carefully interpreting every word. What emerged was the saga of a Blackfoot chief who had been killed by Crees in the 1840s. At the moment of his death, Jack’s father

had been born, his ears already pierced for earrings and his body bearing the scars of musket ball wounds. He was given the name of Only Person Who Had a Different Gun, but when he was about five years old, he revealed to his family that he was the reincarnation of Low Horn. When this was determined to be true, he assumed the name of the dead warrior and went on to become a leading medicine man in his tribe. In 1899, when Jack was a teenager, his father had been killed when his wagon overturned into a muddy ditch. Low Horn had told everyone he had the power to come back to life if a ceremony was performed immediately after death by his oldest wife. Unfortunately, she was at the Timber Limit collecting tepee poles at the time of the accident, and by the time she got back, it was too late.

Jack told the whole story – the powers of the original Low Horn, his battle and death, the birth of Jack’s father, the discovery of his real identity, his own mystical powers, and his ultimate death. Later, I found ample documentation in fur trade records, Indian Agency files, and other sources which backed up almost every statement he made, but added materially to my knowledge of the two great Low Horns. This story, with the added documentation, was published in my book *The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and Other Blackfoot Stories*.

By the time 1954 was ending, I had notebooks full of stories, and files of typed transcripts to supplement the books, Indian Affairs letters, and other pieces of information I had amassed. I wasn’t quite sure what I was going to do with the material but I knew that much of it would end up in print, either in books or articles. But more important, I knew it was information which was fast disappearing, and that if I didn’t collect it no one else would.

And that was only the beginning, for in the ensuing five or six years, I used every opportunity to interview elders and collect their stories. During that time, Dad was out of office at the Indian Association so he had plenty of time to take me around to all his old friends and associates who were now elders of the tribe. In retrospect, I wish I could have done more, but when I look through my files of interviews, I am amazed at what I did do in my “spare” time.

During these years I met a number of Stoney Indians at Indian Association meetings and at the Calgary Stampede, but I was not really close to any of them. This was because I was a “Blackfoot,” i.e., I was closely identified with the Blackfoot tribes who historically had been enemies of the Stoneys. Even today the intermingling of the two groups is very limited. The people were always polite and friendly to me, but not on a basis that made me feel like

pursuing research or collecting stories among them. I did enquire one time about writing a history of the Stoneyes but it never went anywhere.



One of the most spectacular and gratifying interviews took place during the Christmas season of 1955. During the course of conversation one day, Dad mentioned that Joe Potts, a son of the famous scout Jerry Potts, was a next-door neighbour of Charlie Revais, Dad's adopted father. They lived in cabins along the Two Medicine River on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. When I asked if we could go and see him, Dad agreed, and we set out from the Blood Reserve in the early morning of December 30, 1955. The weather was cold and clear and the roads were all snow-packed. I didn't know it then, but many people limited their travel on the Cardston-Browning road to warm chinook days when the ice was melted off the roads.

We set off in Dad's car, with Dad and I in the front seat and Mom and Pauline in the back. That was one practice that never changed. The women always sat in the back. Even after many years of marriage, Pauline insists in sitting in the back if there is another male in the car. I gave up years ago trying to argue with her about it. Anyway, we set off from the farm and I noticed we had the road virtually to ourselves all the way across the line to Babb and then to St. Mary's. The roads were snow-packed and there were high drifts on each side, but travel itself was no problem as long as one drove slowly and carefully.

From St. Mary's we went up the long hill to the top of the ridge that divides the watersheds of Hudson Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. I was moving along at a nice pace, gauged for the snowy roads, when we reached the summit and made a hairpin turn to go down the hill on the south side. However, I failed to appreciate the fact that the winter sun was beating down on the south side and the snow on the road had turned to sheer ice. Not only that, but at the hairpin turn and down the slope there were no fences or barriers of any kind. On one side were high snowdrifts hugging the bank, while on the other side of the road was nothing but a sharp incline to the bottom of the canyon.

As we hit the ice, I had enough presence of mind to cut the wheels sharply and almost in slow motion, the car skated down the slope, reaching the edge of the precipice and then slowly swinging towards the bank. There were four collective sighs of relief when the car finally bumped against the snowbank and stopped. If I had had my choice, I would have turned back right then and given up any idea of seeing Joe Potts. But we were sitting several yards down the slope of an icy hill with no way of getting back up. The only alternative

was to keep going. Cautiously I turned the wheels and felt the car moving of its own accord on the icy surface. After a few yards, I cut the wheels again so that we bumped into the snowbank and stopped. I repeated this all the way down the hill, and by fits and stops we successfully reached the bottom.

But the problem was far from over, or so I thought. Ahead of us was a long stretch of road along a valley, then up over another dangerous mountain ridge that led down to Cutbank Creek. From there the highway split, one staying in the mountains to join up with the road to East Glacier, and the other going straight east to Star School. With more than my usual share of trepidation we crossed the valley and up over the next ridge. There I was overjoyed to find that my fears had been groundless. This piece of road was at a lower altitude than the Hudson Bay Divide and the area on the south side was dry and bare of snow! At the river, we cut east towards Star School, getting out of the mountains and back on the snow-covered roads of the prairies.

After a brief stop in Browning we continued on to Two Medicine River, where there was practically no snow. Dad took us to Joe Potts' cabin and we were pleased to find him at home. He was a kindly quiet man, and although he could speak English, he preferred to talk in Blackfoot with Dad translating. I learned that he had been twenty years old when his father died, and that he had left Alberta in 1901 when the North-West Mounted Police had a warrant for his arrest for horse stealing. He ultimately became a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and never moved back to Canada.

The interview itself was a revelation. I had read everything available on Jerry Potts, but virtually everything had come from the Mounted Police and gave only the white man's viewpoint of the man. From his son I got the whole Indian story and much of the other side too. I learned about Potts' parents, the murder of his mother, his experiences as a warrior.

"I was very young when my father related his war experiences at a Sun Dance at Brocket," he told me. "There was an Indian with whom he had a friendly feud of long standing and the main reason he counted his coups was to show that he was a greater warrior than his rival."

By the time we left, I had a picture of Jerry Potts that was two-dimensional, not the cardboard image that came from the Mounted Police stories. In addition Joe told me that he had a half-brother named Charlie who worked for the Carnation Milk company in Seattle. I hoped I might interview him as well, so I contacted him. He wrote a very nice letter saying he was only six years old when his father died and knew nothing about him. He did say that an

old-time surveyor named Johns had his father's gun but when I tried to track it down I had no luck.

Needless to say, I was quite excited about all this new information about Jerry Potts, so when I got back to Edmonton I wrote a lengthy biography of him. I submitted this to *Argosy* and *Canadian Cattleman*; the first turned it down without comment and the second because it was too long. So I sat on it for a few years and ultimately it was published as an Occasional Paper by the Glenbow Foundation. Since then, the Indian-based stories I got from Joe Potts have been "lifted" by numerous authors around the country. Grant MacEwan once told me I should enlarge the Occasional Paper into a full-length book but I didn't think there was enough there to do it. A local writer named Long did take my material and made a book out of it but, as I expected, it didn't work and the book was a flop. There was another so-called biography in 2005 that also borrowed heavily from my work.



I was enjoying my publicity work for the government, but my interest in history took me in a new direction in January 1954 when Ed Bryant received an invitation to speak to the Canadian Club in Calgary. He could not attend so he suggested that I go instead. I agreed, and as a topic, I selected "Calgary in the Buffalo Days." Although the meeting was at noon, the only way I could conveniently travel was on the midnight CPR milk run. I never did sleep well on a train, and this time was no exception. We arrived in time for breakfast and then I wandered over to the Calgary Herald to visit Garth Hopkins, my old pal from the *Bulletin* days. After I left him, I looked into Jaffe's Bookstore, and finally asked a man where I could find the Club Café. He pointed to a prominent downtown landmark.

When I went inside, the waiter directed me around the corner to the main meeting room. Up to this time, I'd never really given the matter much thought. I assumed the club consisted of a dozen or so men and that we would be meeting in a small cafeteria room.

Imagine my surprise when I walked into the room and found it packed with close to four hundred people! I learned later that it was one of the most prestigious clubs in Calgary, strongly supported by the local business community. I was welcomed by W.H. Herriot, the chairman, and Mel Shannon, the secretary, and escorted to the head table. We had a fine lunch and I gave my half-hour talk on the whisky trading posts which had existed in southern Alberta before the arrival of the Mounted Police.

When I was finished, the chairman asked me if I would entertain any questions. There were a couple of random queries, then a man arose and said, “You mentioned that William Gladstone was the carpenter who built Fort Whoop-Up. I knew a lovely Indian nurse named Nora Gladstone who came from that part of the country. Do you know if they were related?”

“Yes,” I said, “They were. And I’m married to Nora’s younger sister.”

That brought more delighted laughter and applause than my original speech.

Strangely enough, while I sat at the head table during the meal, looking over the sea of four hundred faces, I was not the slightest bit worried. Nor was I nervous when I arose to speak or to field the questions afterwards. For someone as shy and introverted as I was, this seemed to be an anomaly and I often asked myself why it was. In all the years I spoke to large conventions or small school groups, appeared live on television or before any group of people, I was never really nervous.

There were only two exceptions. One occurred when I gave the convocation address at the University of Calgary, and the organizers insisted I provide them with a written copy of my speech and that I not deviate from it. This was hard, as I never used a written speech. My method was to make a few notes on a piece of paper (often the back of an envelope) and pace myself to meet the allotted time period. At the university, I found that reading the talk was very unsettling, resulting in an unfamiliar nervousness.

The second incident occurred when I stopped at the bus depot café in Fort Macleod for lunch. As I was ordering, a number of local friends walked by and said hello. Obviously they were going to their noon Rotary Club meeting. I was halfway through my meal when Abs Swinarton came over me. “Hugh,” he said, “We’ve got a problem. Our speaker hasn’t turned up. Will you fill in for him?”

“Sure,” I said, thinking I would take a few minutes to organize my thoughts, make some notes, and give them a short talk. However, as soon as I walked into the room, there was a round of applause and the chairman introduced me to speak. At that moment, I didn’t even have a topic selected. I don’t remember what I spoke about, but it was accompanied by a nervousness that was apparent to me, and likely to everyone else.

But those were the only times. I came to the conclusion that my lack of nervousness came from the confidence I had in my subject and the knowledge that I knew more about it than the people I was speaking to. But whatever the

reason, it was a godsend for me, because of the hundreds of speeches, lectures, and interviews I gave during my career.



In the autumn of 1954, Robbie Roberts and I were talking one day about Alberta's upcoming fiftieth anniversary. Except for the construction of auditoriums in Edmonton and Calgary, nothing much seemed to be happening. We agreed that when politicians and the public realized that the anniversary was almost upon them, there would be a mad rush to get things done, and we'd probably be caught in the middle. We knew that daily and weekly newspapers liked to produce special editions on occasions like this, especially if they could sell lots of advertising. We also knew they would have many blank columns to fill with historical data and would expect the Publicity Bureau to provide it.

In order to avoid the rush, we began working on feature stories and mimeographing them by the dozens. I wrote articles on the formation of the province in 1905, Alberta's first legislature, early trails, the fur trade, and any other subject that seemed appropriate. I also looked through the Ernest Brown photographic collection and selected a number of pictures I thought could be used to publicize the event.

A few weeks later, there was an emergency meeting in the deputy minister's office and, much to my surprise, I was asked to attend. It turned out that the premier's office had been receiving enquiries about the anniversary and in turn the premier wanted to know what the Department of Economic Affairs was doing. Not much, it seemed. Then suddenly, the work that Robbie and I had been doing took on great significance, as it was used as evidence to show that the department had indeed been planning for the anniversary year. The upshot was the formation of a five-man Alberta Golden Jubilee Committee, of which I was a member.

Within a short time, the committee had a full list of projects to be undertaken during the year. The celebrations were to begin on June 5th, with September 1st being Inauguration Day. With nothing scheduled for the first five months of the year, we had plenty of time to get organized. There were school programs, bumper cards, posters, play-writing and song-writing competitions, grants to municipalities, and all sorts of other events. I had five highway signs planned for the year, and these suddenly became part of the golden jubilee. In addition, an Ontario publisher was given a contract to publish an anthology of Alberta writing and one of my articles was included.

My involvement in the whole celebration was neither administrative nor honorary. For the next year, I was up to my eyeballs in work, all in addition to my regular duties. And I loved every minute of it. As the program moved into high gear, a number of subcommittees were formed. I was placed on the Historic and Senior Citizens Committee and was also made responsible for any museum-related activities. This included designing an Alberta Golden Jubilee Caravan as a travelling museum and installing museum displays in a newly built exhibition building in Fort Macleod. Keep in mind that there wasn't a single museum of consequence in Alberta at that time, except perhaps in Banff, so I was venturing alone into uncharted waters. In fact, in 1955 there were only forty-two significant museums in all of Canada, mostly in central or eastern Canada. Most of these were run by provincial governments or universities. So our travelling museum and museum displays were something new to Alberta.

Fortunately, I had access to the Ernest Brown collection, which was stored in the basement of the School Book Branch. It contained the remnants of an old private museum Brown had operated in Edmonton during the 1930s. It had a lot of wonderful stuff and was the basis for both exhibits. But besides that, I scoured the country looking for more artifacts. I borrowed a broad axe and treaty box from the Edmonton Indian Agency, an iron pot from Pauline's Uncle George at Pincher Creek, a frying pan from Norman Luxton, and other items that came to my attention.

The travelling museum trailer was about thirty feet long and designed with closed display cases down each side, with pictures and artifacts on the walls, and a large display space at the far end. There were Indian dresses, back rests, snow shoes, and parfleche bags; coffee mills, scythes, swords, chaps, and buffalo skulls; pictures of missionaries, sports teams, and politicians. Considering the sources of material, it was a hodge-podge, but the public loved it. During the summer of 1955, it toured fairs and celebrations throughout the province and had people lined up to see it wherever it went.

In the summer of 1955, I moved to Fort Macleod for a week to install the exhibits at the Tourist Bureau. A building had been constructed for the occasion; it consisted of three rooms viewed from the outside, like department store windows. One I furnished like a pioneer home and included a Mountie in full uniform. The next was a modern room with furniture borrowed from Eaton's, and the third consisted of exhibits such as a beaver pelt, guns, iron kettles, and historical photographs. This also was well received, especially by American tourists.

While in Fort Macleod, I took a side trip to Pincher Creek to complete arrangements for another project. The committee had lined up a stagecoach and four-horse team and needed somebody to drive it. The idea was for it to travel from Fort Macleod to Edmonton, picking up and delivering messages from the mayors of the various towns and cities along the way. I had been told that one of Pauline's distant relatives, a man named Charlie "Chink" Reviere, was good with a four-horse team. I went to see him in Pincher but he was so drunk that I couldn't even talk to him. But I tried again, and this time I caught him when he was sober and we made the necessary arrangements. He was a tall, gangly chap who looked the part of an old-time stagecoach driver. He also got a local pal, Ralph Vroom, to ride shotgun for him. We were warned that Reviere was unreliable and too fond of the bottle, but he proved to be a gem. He was perfectly sober (or almost so) as he raced the four-horse team into each new town and impressed everyone with his down-to-earth western mannerisms. He may have quaffed a few at the local beer parlours in the evenings, but he was always on time and ready to go the next day. The stagecoach project was one of the many success stories of the jubilee.

One proposal that came before our committee was for illuminated scrolls to be given to any Albertan who had lived in the province since 1905. I pointed out that every Indian over the age of fifty would qualify, and suggested that we should also do something special for those over the age of sixty-five. The committee agreed and we designed a zinc-plated medal which was presented at the Calgary Stampede and at other ceremonies. I had the pleasure of being involved when the medals were presented to Black Sleeps and others at the Camsell Hospital.

During all this time, I continued to pour a steady stream of articles into *Within Our Borders*, dealing with everything from historic sites to game counts, telephone books, and oil and gas regulations. Then, in the autumn of 1955 Robbie Roberts resigned to take over a newsletter for the Department of Northern Affairs in Ottawa, and I became editor of our magazine. It seemed sometimes as though events were moving so rapidly that I could hardly keep up with them. At one stage, I seriously considered quitting my job to live off Pauline's income while I went to university to seek a degree in anthropology. Jack Ewers was against it. He wrote, "I believe you are now much better qualified to make something out of anthropology than the average person entering college with a yen to become an anthropologist – your published work would show that."⁴⁵ However, it all became academic when the University of Alberta indicated it had no desire to accept a high school dropout into its ranks.

So I settled in as editor of *Within Our Borders* and it looked as though my future was secure as a publicity man for the Alberta government. I was twenty-six years old, married to a wonderful woman, living in our own house, and quite contented in my work. I was having a great time studying and writing about the Blackfoot Indians and much of my personal life revolved around the Gladstones, the IAA, and our mutual friends in the city. It was, to all intents and purposes, a very comfortable life.



Two of Hugh's friends, Buck Alton and Ray Bulger, are seen here in 1942. A bunch of kids, they called themselves the Fifth Street Gang. (Author photo)



On Saturday afternoons, after the *Edmonton Bulletin's* publisher had gone home, some staff gathered in his office for drinking and high jinks. Here in 1950, left to right, are news editor Bill Lewis, oil reporter Harlo Jones, and reporters Stan Burke, John McLean, and Don Travis. (Author's files)



Hugh's 1947 hitchhiking venture from Edmonton to Vancouver took him through the United States. A family that had picked him up photographed him at the border south of Vancouver. (Author's files)

This is the group that Dempsey met when he first went to a meeting of the Indian Association of Alberta. Seated at centre is President James Gladstone. Immediately behind him, left to right, are John Laurie, George McLean (Walking Buffalo), and Dave Crowchild. At left of Gladstone is his old companion Joe Bull Shield. Others in the group include Albert Lightning, John Callihoo, Peter Burnstick, and Frank Cardinal. (Author's files)





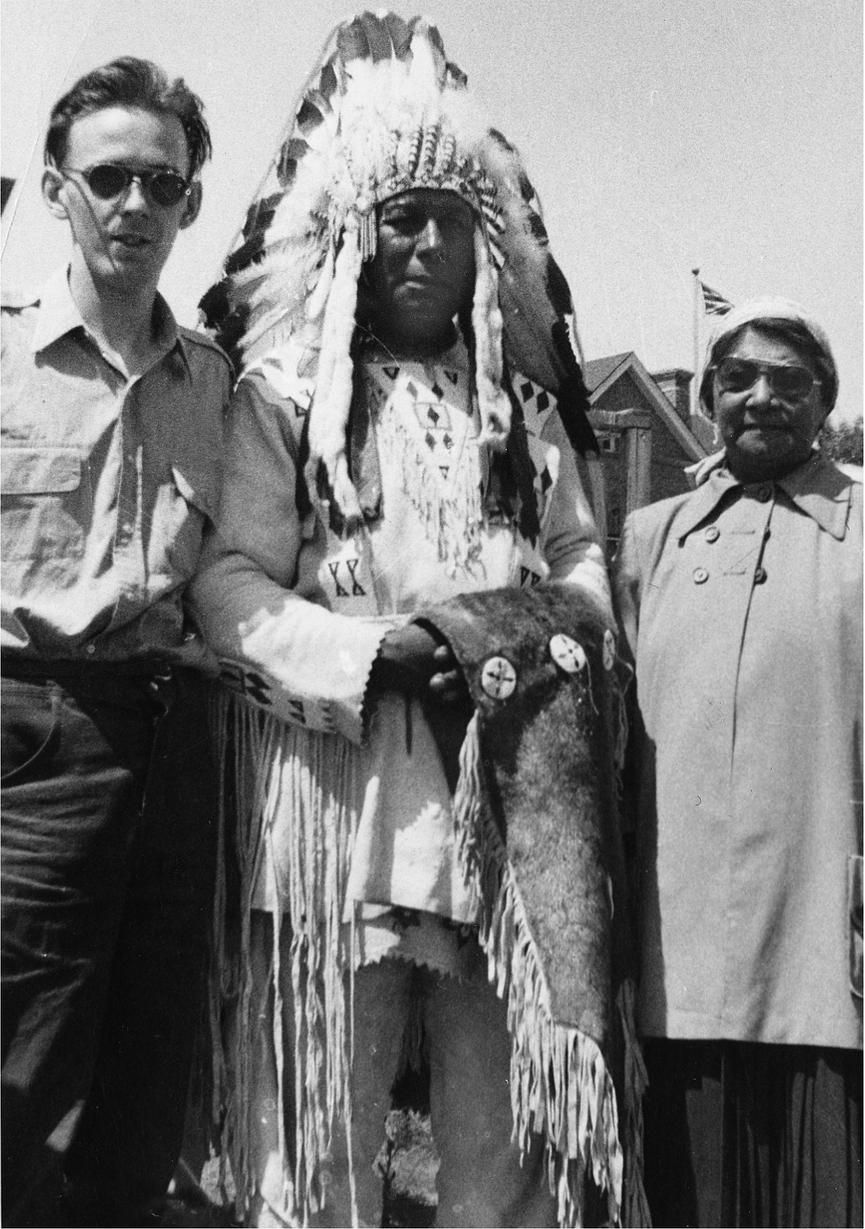
Percy Plain Woman, who painted under the name of Two Guns, became friends with Hugh Dempsey while a patient in the Charles Camsell Hospital in Edmonton. Their friendship continued when he returned to the Blood Reserve. Percy is seen painting from his hospital bed in 1951. (Author photo)



Hugh Dempsey and Pauline Gladstone in 1952, a year before their marriage. Dempsey is wearing one of his hand-painted ties. (Author's files)



Dempsey recalls that this was the Blood Sun Dance when he first saw it in 1952. It was a sight he never forgot. It was taken looking west from the slopes of the Belly Buttes. (Author photo)



In 1952, Pat Bad Eagle, Peigan elder, took Dempsey as his son and gave him the name of Young Chief. At right is Mrs. Janie Gladstone, later Hugh's mother-in-law. (Pauline Dempsey photo)



Close friends of the Dempseys were artist Gerald Tailfeathers and his wife Irene, seen here in Edmonton in 1953. Pauline had gone to residential school with them. (Pauline Dempsey photo)



In 1953, shortly after his wedding, Hugh climbed Chief Mountain, on the Alberta-Montana border, with Jim Black Plume. Dempsey is seen here on the saddle of the ridge. (Jim Black Plume photo)



Two of the most sacred societies of the Blood tribe are the Horns and the Motokix. The Horn double lodge is seen here in 1955 and the Motokix, or Old Women's Society, in the background. Dempsey has been permitted to enter both. (Author photo)



One of Dempsey's assignments during the Alberta Golden Jubilee was to design and install a travelling museum, seen here in Calgary in 1955. (Author's files)

Jack Low Horn, Blood elder, became one of Dempsey's favourite storytellers. (Glenbow photo NA-1757-1)

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When Dempsey moved to Calgary in 1956, he helped to form a Calgary branch of the Historical Society of Alberta. Seen here are the Calgary executive members in 1960. Left to right: President Benton Mackid, Sheila Johnston, Sheilagh Jameson, and Hugh Dempsey. (Author's files)

