Listening to Indians

GILBERT WALKING BULL, Oglala Sioux

MONTANA WALKING BULL, Cherokee

November 28, 1975
Monmouth, Oregon
Part II

This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63136.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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NO. 116

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Glen Rock, New Jersey
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Sam Myers:

I'm speaking to Gilbert Walking Bull, Oglala Sioux, and Montana Walking Bull, Cherokee, continuing our conversation at Monmouth College. Gilbert, we want to talk about your artwork, because you have something to teach us there. The painting on the wall there, you did this one, Gilbert?

Gilbert Walking Bull:

Yeah.

SM: Can you tell us what it means? You have a rectangle in the Sioux colors?

GW: Yeah. Seven ritual Sioux colors they are. Four colors begin with would be the four cardinal parts. These are the ritual colors.

SM: In the feathers there?

GW: Yeah. In old days they used the fluffs out of eagle feathers, but now, well since that thing come out that you cannot sell any feathers, these are just dyed color plumes. I don't know what they are. Maybe it was a hawk or somethin'. The white one is the white cleansing wind from the north that kills the germs, and it gives man endurance. And the red is the east, that brings the light where the morning star lives, and give man wisdom. Then we have yellow is the south, the power to grow. Then the black is the west where the Thunder Being lives. So these are the four ritual colors of the four cardinal points, and then the painting part of it, the background, represent the white and it's feather, the white cleansing wind from the north, as the cold kills germs, yet it give man wisdom. And then the center part here is dark blue represent the supernatural power itself. Then we have here the center, the red, also represent the positive in life, see. And the black here is negative. Then the brown we got here is
the earth itself, although when they cannot get the brown color, they use the gray to represent in place of these browns in rituals. Then we have green here represent everythin' that grows upon the earth, and then you have the yellow here. The yellow represent the power to grow, that's from the spring to the summer. Sometimes we say when the sun stood still is when the sun passed beyond the earth, rotation, see, comes when the longest day in summer, this is where the yellow represents.

Montana Walking Bull:
What you really do is read a Sioux painting. You read not only the design, but you read the colors to understand what's going on there, so that the spiritual, the blue there, and the red connecting, that is the power in that particular painting.

SM: And in this case the power is shown largest and strongest and the positive connecting the two there, so that this would be illustrative of the power for good overcoming the negative powers?

MW: Right.

GW: The negative powers here.

SM: Which are lesser?

GW: The lesser, yet you still cannot live without it.

SM: They are still there?

GW: To connect.

MW: The other very important thing about most of his paintings is the repetition of four. The four cardinal directions. You have it in
the brown, you have it in the red, on the sides there, and you have it in the small red, you have it in the small black triangles.

SM: You have it in the feathers.

MW: You have it in the feathers, so there is much repetition of the number four.

SM: Is there any way of representing the other two directions up and down?

GW: The upward force itself, you still see and hear it, see? We call that the two poles from the north to the south is a red road. From the west to the east is the negative.

MW: And then, Gilbert, that lightning-type line, isn't that a connecting factor too with the positive, that red going down to join with the blue and the red in the center there?

SM: The fine black line?

GW: It still represent, still connected. It's really interesting when you start studying it yourself that every human bein' has this, in m'grandfather's teachings, that you cannot live without the other, and I don't paint one of 'em, but I was explainin' to you so you'll know what I mean by two reds. See, one of 'em is if your left brain taken out and if you were all one brain controlled the whole body, you will go in circles, but the other brain has to be there in order for you to walk straight, so this is where those two powers connect. See, the one is black, if you're left-handed or you're right-handed, regardless, one side of you is negative and one of 'em is positive.

SM: But you have the two and the dualism through everything?
MW: Then if you'll notice that one over there, he calls that "The Power to Grow." Isn't that right, Gilbert? And the dominant color in that is yellow, and that yellow is bordered by black, which is not only negative but one of the thunder beings. But he can explain it better than I, but you read that one too according to color and according to design. According to emphasis.

GW: O.K., I'd like to explain that just a little bit so you know it. When you see this, the bottom part of it, the larger looks like the arrow part of it facing upward, the outer line of that is negative. We call this "When a Child is Born." When a child is born, the child is born innocent, and innocent, we call that positive, but as a child grows the black part of it surround his life, yet the red part of it you see there is like his heart and his soul, the yellow represent the growth of his life. Like I say, the black surrounded his life, and when he reach a certain age, inside of his brain controlled by the negative, as you notice the black center, but still the power to grow is the center of it in his brain, and surrounded with positive, the outer part.

MW: That's the upper part.

SM: So even though the negative can become very strong and almost dominate, the positive can still overcome in the long run?

GW: Yeah. I started to explain it to you, but you ran into something. Two things. The center of your right brain is positive, the center of your brain, one side of it there is a positive, and the other is negative. Even though it is the opposite, like say your right brain is on your left side, it has been proven that your left side of the brain controls the right. O.K., in the center of this here black, there's two powers like this, the opposite of each other. This is your left brain controls the right, but still right in the center of it there is black, there's a positive on the right brain, yet there's a black, red.
MW: What he means is the Sioux believe that you have both the positive and the negative and they're equal. Are they equally strong, Gilbert?

GW: Yeah. Well, you didn't give me a chance to go right into it.

MW: O.K.

GW: Anyway, inside this black there's a red in the center of it, so the man can kill, he can be bitter, hatred, anything that he wish to be he'll be, but the black and the red in the center of this black, can develop in this man that lives on the dark side of life, overnight, become positive, at the end he'll be positive. O.K., now the red one, the man who lives a positive life, never hurt anybody, always generous-hearted, but the same person has evil in him, and he will kill at the blink of an eye, regardless of how you kill a person he will do it. He will become bad at the blink of an eye, even though he lived a positive life all his life.

SM: That is, he may.

GW: If he wished. If you would upset him. If he was pushed so much, he would do it. So everything's in a cycle itself. Bad becomes good, good goes bad.

MW: There's always the possibility.

SM: And actually without disagreeing or detracting, other religions do talk about something similar to this, dualism, but you have explained it and then you have carried it out visually as well.

GW: So when one looks at a geometrical design, just don't look at it just as a geometrical design, because it means something.
SM: It's pleasing as that too, but then there's so much more in it.

MW: Yeah, you look at it, you say "beautiful colors, interesting designs," but that is only the beginning.

SM: You're majoring in music, Gilbert? Why didn't you major in art? You like music better?

GW: Well, the reason I paint, this were taught me, you know, long ago. My grandfather used to talk about designs and different things and what it represent, and always know what you were. It is a shame that, for instance, I watched a beautiful queen wearin' all kinds of buckskin and wearin' a beautiful headband, appeared on television, and the emcee asked her, "What's the meaning of this thing, 'round your head?" And the girl, she says, "I don't know." And she started giggling. She don't. It's just the way, like I was tellin' you before, young kids they're so proud of bein' Indian because somebody told 'em that they are, but nobody taught 'em their ways, their designs, their songs, the legends.

SM: But then, if they begin to get interested and try to find out, then all the more credit to them.

GW: Yeah, I think they should know what they wear, things that they wear.

SM: They have to be taught. Someone else has to start first, don't they?

GW: They should be taught that way. That's why I say the older people, sometimes I hold it against them for havin' their kids make fool of themselves.

SM: Aren't we working back toward a more genuine understanding in these last few years? Thirty or fifty years ago the parents of those children tried to even sometimes hide the fact that they were Indian,
now you find the kids saying proudly, "I am Indian," but not understanding much about it, but at least on the surface, and then maybe as time goes on they will learn more like you would like to have them understand. But, is it a turn for the better at least?

MW: Well, I think there is more recognition now of what being Indian means, but I can remember growing up in our home. My mother was always Indian, she was always herself, and I used to have my friends in and I would go to their homes, and so forth, and I always noticed my mother was not like other mothers, and it worried me, because she didn't look like the other women. Our home, the operation of the home, was not like the operation of other homes. The way she dressed was not really the way the others dressed. She kept with the fashion, after a fashion, but I mean she was always different, and I never understood what that meant, what was going on. Of course she brought us up and said, "You're Indian," and that was that. We grew up knowing that, but I didn't understand, and I knew that we had some difficulty in school because the things that were expected of all students in the school we thought were really funny, but I didn't know why we thought they were funny. They were really strange, and I can remember laughing at a lot of practices in the classroom. Indians laugh a lot, and things were just uproariously funny to me. So we tended, you know, to kind of make fun of everything that was going on, but I didn't know why I was doing this, see. And then when I got into college and a professor would say, "Now I want to know what you think of this or that," well, most students would keep quiet. But I said, "I'll tell you what I think," and I'd say what I think. Well, I shouldn't've said that, because he didn't really want to know what we thought at all, see. So I ran into that over and over and over.

SM: Now today, you would maybe find a few of these who would want to know what you thought.

MW: Yes, but that was always a definite handicap for me, but I learned to
keep quiet, and I think maybe that I spent many, many years just observing people and wondering why. Of course, that may be normal with all people, I don't know. But I had some difficulty, but I didn't know why I was having it, until I gained some maturity and realized that I really didn't see things in the same light as many people did. And after I got older I realized that it wasn't important for me to see things in the same light. But you see, in school in my generation we went through a real brain-wash procedure, and even when I started teaching I realized the kind of thing that was going on in the schools. It was a standardization process, and I think in the '50's it really was alarmingly so, and I'm not at all surprised at the rebellion in the '60's, because it had gone just about as far as it could go in the '50's, that standardization, making everybody exactly like everybody else, you know. It was terrible. You know, that's when that song came out about ticky, tacky houses, the whole process.

SM: Ticky, Tacky boxes?

MW: Right. Everybody was just like everybody else. They spoke the same way, used the same protocol, and I don't know, anyway, I suppose it was a self-identification process that everyone goes through, but I finally came to conclude, and this was when I got really among Indians, because, even though I grew up in Oklahoma and we had Indians all around, you know, we also had a white mix in there, but when I really got into close communication with Indians I realized that I was Indian, and it made a lot of difference to me because it made me conclude I wasn't peculiar after all. I wasn't all that peculiar.

SM: You came from a mix. In a way, Gilbert had an advantage there because he had more direction to his bringing up.

MW: He had less of an identification problem, I'm sure, than I did, because he's always known he's a full-blood Indian. He's known exactly who he is.
SM: And he knew it long enough so he never doubted it. A lot of our students, white or Indian, have a great problem with this identification, self-identity concept.

GW: I know that it was awful hard for me back in early '40's, mid '40's and late '40's, and all through that. I remember they hated to be Indians, you know, kids my age that went to school. I didn't go to school, but these kids, they come home and I met 'em some place and I said in Indian, "how," you know, as we said hello. "How." They'd say, "What did you say?" That's what they say, you know. "Naw, big Indian." It kinda embarrassed me, so right away, always. . . .

SM: You mean a kind of rejection?

GW: Yeah, rejection, and lot of times when they do these things, all it does to me is it just more make me laugh inside, you know, because I know who they are, because I know his mother's, I know their father's relation, and their grandparents, and how they live, and they sleep in the same roof, and yet they're speakin' a language, you know. If they're gonna live in that area they should go into it and set an example for others that follow, see?

SM: It's "how kola," isn't it? "Hello, my friend?"

GW: Well, the "how," when you say "how" it's someone that you know close.

SM: You don't say "how" to a stranger?

GW: To a brother or someone that I knew, say "how." But if there was a stranger, then "how kola."

SM: Oh, I thought it was the other way around.
GW: See, "how kola" is "hello, my friend," is also just a respective way of treatin' a stranger. You come in his territory or come into as a friend so he treats you as such, but the other say, "how" is someone near to you, some relation, someone close that knew you all your life or you know him so there is no respect in such a way that he knew you respect him, but you know as a brother.

SM: Now let's ask our literature teacher here how would we translate that into Anglo spelling?

MW: Oh, he has it in that book that we have. Have you seen that? Gilbert will get you a copy, and it's all written out in a little glossary in the back, about "how" and "hau kola." It's spelled two different ways there.

GW: It sounds as [h a u, [h₂ o o.] But most of 'em it sounds as [h o w], so they use that. So mostly I spell it that way.

SM: Well, that's interesting.

GW: Mostly English I taught myself.

SM: Well then, you kept running into people, of course, all the time who were speaking it too, didn't you?

MW: Gilbert's self taught in many ways. He's self taught in music. Of course he's had instruction in art, but his art's pretty much self taught too, although he's taking art classes and that type of thing, but he did all this before he got into the art classes, but he and his writings that you find in that book, they're really excellent, because they haven't been tampered with by anybody. He just sits at that typewriter and he works that out word by word, and so it's as close as you're ever going to get to the real thing.
SM: An artist in Seattle said he was self-taught, except he said he always had trouble mixing colors, and never knew what was going to happen, so he took a course, an art course, in how to mix colors, and he said it really helped him.

MW: But do you know with these colors—I've had art instruction, and I studied about three or four years at Portland State and Reed College there at Portland, art museum and so on, but you know, we actually had instruction in how to keep your colors pure and clear and bright like this, and he does it naturally. That's the point I'm getting at. You could take a course in how to do this thing. He does it without a course.

SM: Do you use the modern colors that you can buy now?

MW: These are oil. He hasn't tried acrylics yet.

GW: I like to do lot of these things, and what little I've done in writing too, see, there's a little thing I wanted to say that long ago m'grandfather said, "We send your brothers and sisters"—by the way I got two sisters, one of 'em graduate from Santa Fe art school, and one of 'em's at a college, well, not college, a university at Vermillion. And I got a brother that is a priest. Funny thing is that these are the people that call me Indian; when they come home I speak Indian to my grandparents and everybody, and respect them, yet they put me down and yet I don't see 'em make a trail for me to follow.

GW: See, what I mean, in that day my grandfather said, "We chose you to be this way. We send your brothers and your sisters to school, so that they shall set up a way for the people to follow. They shall live in white man's world, 'cause that's the way they wanted to go, and so we sent 'em, so their childrens will follow, set an example for this people." So when they come home durin' summers, you know,
vacations, you know, they make a big thing of. Now I never did see any path that set up for the people, and there are lot of them on earth got high school educations, graduate from BIA school, they come home, and that's it. They're lost in two cultures. I would always say that you gotta be either one.

SM: They're lost in two?

GW: In two cultures. Inbetween two.

MW: He means that they're not completely accepted in white society, because they have their education in BIA schools or whatever. They're not really accepted in Indian society either.

SM: So he said it right the first time. They're lost in two cultures.

MW: I would like to add something, which isn't really too new, but I've been working for a number of years with the National Council of Teachers of English task force on racism and bias in the teaching of English. One of the tasks I've had is to try to get American Indian literature included in American literature courses that are offered in colleges, that is, mainly the major anthologies, some 15 or 20 major anthology studies that are most commonly used. And we've had many sessions with publishers to make them more cognizant of the fact that this needs to be done, not only in anthologies, but a more acute awareness of the importance of American Indian literature. And we really have seen some development. That is, more books are coming out on American Indian literature and oratory and poetry, poetics, and short stories now, and not too much in the way of novels yet, but I think that it's having some effect, and I think that this is what I'd like to see. I'd like to see native American literature recognized as the literature of this land, the native literature of this land with it's own importance. I don't like to see it thrown
in with black literature or Chicano literature or Asian-American literature, because I think it's separate and apart. It is the native literature of this country. Now if we were in Japan, I think the native literature of that country would be Japanese literature, and I think it ought to have priority, and I think in this country we should give a high priority to native American literature, not only because it is the literature of this land, but it is a fine literature in all respects. If you examine the legends, poetry, the songs, the tales, short stories now that are coming out from contemporary young American Indian writers, novels, the very, very fine non-fiction that is being written by many, many of our native Americans. Some of the young attorneys, like Kicking Bird and others, their treatises are of a legal nature, but they are beautifully written. And I think that American Indian literature has some unique qualities that ought to be examined, and I think that it ought to have a kind of priority in the schools, not only in colleges, although that's where we've been working, but it ought to have some kind of priority all the way through, and I think that's what you were talking earlier about when you said that you'd been working for the inclusion of native American history, you know, in the general history of the country. I think that this has just been too long neglected.

SM: I have a long list of books that we offer these people in these classes, and if you ever have any book list that you already have mimeographed, I'd appreciate a copy now and then, and I'll use them too.

MW: I've been doing book reviews on native American books in history and anthropology and art, anything that comes out that's native American for the Daily Oklahoman for about three years, and have had an opportunity to read quite a lot, and some of the books are really fine and some are mediocre and some are not good at all. You know how that goes, but I do think that this is one area where we really need to examine what's going on and what is available, and get it
before the public. Because, for one thing, there are a lot of fallacies connected with this country. Right now they're celebrating the Bicentennial. You know, on television, you have these one-minute segments or two-minute segments, "That's the Way it Was" back somewhere. Today there was something on Daniel Boone blazing a trail in Kentucky, and I told Gilbert, I said, "That's Cherokee country, but there's nothing about trails that the Cherokees blazed."

SM: The same one he followed was one they'd already used for years.

MW: Right. So this is never brought up, it's never brought up.

SM: And the buffalo used it before the Cherokees.

MW: Yeah. And so this aspect of life in this country is seldom, if ever, alluded to, and I think that is terrible, and it really works me up when I get talking about it, because what you really see is the strata of society that ignores the existence of the many Indian nations that were in this country, and the values that these people held, the superb art work that they produced, and the magnificent organizational structure they had in their nations and tribes. Like if you examine the League of Iroquois Nations, you can't surpass that in any way. The magnificent rituals that were carried on in many, many tribes throughout this country and Canada, Alaska, in Mexico. How can you ignore the native American when he is such an important person? You're in agreement with this, I don't have to preach to you, but I think it ought to have a priority.

SM: It's certainly better than it was 50 years ago when it was going down hill, and maybe you have just helped with what you said, because it's recorded here and this will be exposed to a goodly number of people.

MW: I hope so, but you see, Indians face this kind of omission daily, and they face this kind of omission from a conquering people, and that's
hard to take, and that's the reason why I said they've had to endure a lot and are still enduring, and prejudice is not dead, discrimination is rampant in this land. And I've heard some of these people beef about Indians—some of my own friends. Like when I began to spend more time with Indians than I was spending with some of my white friends, they called me on the carpet, and this is hard to believe. They said, "You don't have to associate with Indians. You're white enough to associate exclusively with us, you don't have to do that." And now that really surprised me. I mean, I was really alarmed at that kind of statement coming from these people that I had pretty much taken for granted to be free of prejudice, and yet this was said to me in confidence, but how it really hit me was as a great shock that they could even think like that.

SM: Fortunately, you can choose to not associate with them if you want to.

MW: Yeah. But I still like them, you know. It's shocking, but you don't eliminate people because they shock you, I guess. You never think people are capable of such statements as that, but they are. Oh, we're all capable of a lot of things that we probably shouldn't be doing or saying.

SM: That's what Gilbert was pointing out here a while ago. The black and the yellow over there, the black and the red. Is there anything you can add, Gilbert?

GW: Oh, I'd like to say that lot of these stories need to be brought out. In the village where I grew up there's lotta people have high school and college educations, you know, come back there and they just lay around and never did anything of themselves, but just more or less smart. They hear the stories that I wrote in this book that her and I got it out, the name of it is 0-hu-kah-kan, means stories, legends, songs, that covers all that. Also it covers the future, prophecy,
prophesizing the future. That word covers all, both past and future. I never put anything in there that would be, say a militant attitude, because I look at it where ever'thing need to be said has been said, from ever since I can recall what the foreign government has done to the Indian, nothin' has changed. Ever'thing has to be said. All they need is the rich culture that the Indian people had. I think one has to have a college education to really know how rich this culture is, to reach that point. You cannot get somebody off the street and say, "Believe in this," because that man didn't know it. But when you reached our religion, ever'thing based on so rich, that it takes a man with powerful mind to understand, to reach that. So in my book I never did bring any militant out or anythin' because I let the people that knows the words to take care o'that. What I bring out is the stories that I heard. Stories that m'grandmother and m'grandfather and others that told to me that I put it down just the way that I heard it. Sometimes I have word problems, translating, because lotta words just one sentence, in white man's will cover about four lines, five lines. So I have little problems translatin', but other than that, I just told 'em the way it was told to me, and I like to see people that heard stories like this bring it out so that people'll know that there is such things that exist, not fictional things one hears.

SM: I think it's here now to some degree.

MW: Another thing too. In my teaching native American literature and your teaching history, I'm sure that you're conscious of this, but I think that it's difficult for them to get into the literature sometimes; at least, my students have difficulty with literature, when they don't know anything about the various Indian cultures. So I think that history, the study of a given people, like the Navajos or the Pueblos, the Apaches or the great Iroquois Nation, or the Northwest Seven Clans up in Canada, or the plateau Indians, or the Pawnees or the Cherokees, or the Chickasaws or Seminoles, any of them, you have to
know the people in that culture and understand the literature that emerges from these people, and so I think that first they should get the historical background. They need that and they need a broad kind of understanding. They also need to know that they can't take one course, one term, and get anything but just the beginning of a vast and complex study of many, many Indian nations and tribes and groupings, so it isn't an easy task. It is one that they could spend a lifetime on, and so to expect that they're going to dash in and take somebody's course, either in history or native American literature, or whatever, or native American art, and they're going to get everything there is to know about Indians, it's just not possible. So I think the thing that you're doing by pointing this thing up, you're touching many, many different tribes and nations to get varying points of view, just to explain how very difficult it is. Because if you are working with the Sioux Nation, you're not working with the Cherokee Nation, and so you have to know that culture to understand the literature that comes out of that culture. Like my students have trouble with Momaday's book, House of Dawn. Well, they don't understand the rituals, see, of the Southwestern peoples sufficiently well to understand what's going on symbolically in some of that story, and they can read the poetries, the Beauty Way of the Navajo people and not understand what that is really saying. So I think that's really important. And they are studying some of the poetry that comes from the Cherokee people which a lot of it that we get is through the work of Kilpatrick in The Magical Incantation, and they have to understand what magic meant to the Cherokee Indians to understand these incantations.

SM: Because it wasn't like the magician that performed or entertainment on on the stage.

MW: No, right. So I think that's awfully important for students to understand that, no matter what they enroll in, they're only going to get a taste of it.
SM: At Berkeley they have either 67 or 87 separate courses. You know, that's enough almost for a degree, but it gives you a clue as to how complex it is, and that isn't even covering it all. Gilbert could cover some nuances of the Sioux religion alone that they're never touching.

MW: There's one other thing I'd like to say, and this is for college administrators principally. I hope they listen to it, and to English staffs, and I'm not getting into the history field because that's for somebody else to work on. Why is there such a resistance to native American literature, taught as a regular, bona fide, healthy course in a humanities department or in an English department. They go great guns with English literature and American literature which leaves out native American literature generally, but when you try to get the native American literature courses in there, you have the whole English staff resisting, tooth and nail. I maintain that one of the reasons is they're ignorant. They don't know anything about native American literature, and, furthermore, they have this false concept about the European-American that they do represent America or this land, and they represent Europe, with the culture they've brought over. They fail to recognize the culture of this land, and I think native American literature ought to be a course in every college and university in this land. I think maybe the high schools are getting wiser to this than the colleges, because most of them are putting in some courses that would include it, which I really object to--I think that native American literature should stand on its own feet.

SM: Like this unit that our elementary schools in Missouri now teach on the native American. It is so different from what it was a few years ago.

MW: Well, maybe in another five or ten years there will be some big difference, but I fight this thing all the time, and I know it isn't
easy, and I know that even in the BIA schools it isn't easy, because we have a friend who teaches in one of them, and he is a Sioux Indian, and he's been teaching a course in American Indian culture, and he has to fight all the time to keep that course in, where the population is Indian. Now that doesn't make any sense to me.

SM: It doesn't. Anything you'd like to add here Gilbert?

GW: Well, I'd like to say that my relations are really deep. My great uncle on m'mother's side is Crazy Horse, and m'mother's father's name's Henry Weasel, and they are cousins, related to Red Cloud, old man Red Cloud.

SM: You look a little bit like him yourself.

GW: Yeah, that's what she always tells me, 'cause we are related.

MW: He looks more like Red Cloud than he does Sitting Bull.

GW: Then, on m'father's side, my father's father come from Sitting Bull.

SM: Have you ever seen that statue that is being carved of Crazy Horse?

GW: Yeah, over at the Black Hills.

SM: Do you like that?

GW: Sure. Well, they did predict that that thing, when it's finished, will be struck by lightning. See, Crazy Horse is so powerful, his power is so strong, that nobody picked it up, it fell on nobody, and there is nobody strong enough to pick that power up. At the one point he told his people what was gonna happen, this has already happened now. And that's the reason why they cursed themselves. The
Pine Ridge people themselves hurt themselves by turnin' against him, and they caused him to untie his pony's tail, give himself up, and he got killed. Even his own cousin caused him to get killed, at Fort Robinson. In the Indian way we always told that when he gave himself up, his uncle I think it was, was the one caused him to turn his back on him. That's my relations on that side.

SM: Was he a great uncle did you say?

GW: Yeah, on my mother's side.

SM: And Red Cloud, what was his relation?

GW: They're our cousins, through m'mother's father, m'grandfather on m'mother's side.

SM: Illustrious ancestors you've got.

GW: And then also, m'grandfather is the one I told you about, Henry Weasel, m'mother's father, is cousin to Black Elk. Do you remember Black Elk?

SM: Oh yes, Black Elk Speaks, the book by John Neihardt.

GW: Yeah, I know it. I know old man Black Elk when he was alive, and also his son, Ben.

SM: You did?

GW: Yeah.

SM: He never talked any English, did he?
GW: But his son, Ben, did.

SM: Do you know John Neihardt too?

GW: Yeah.

SM: Were you there by any chance when he was out there interviewing old Black Elk?

GW: Well, no, but I heard about it, just a rumor, but I didn't know what he said. Rumor travel fast.

MW: We were at Sun Valley, oh, when was that, nine months ago, it was a cross cultural dialogue with white people and Indians, and we were there for three days, and Joseph Epes Brown was there, and Gilbert talked to him, but he wrote The Sacred Pipe. But he, I guess, recorded it from Black Elk. See, he knew all of Gilbert's relatives, he knew the grandparents and all his folks there, because he'd been out there on the reservation. I think he feels a little scary about putting out a religious book like that, putting his name on it. Which, any time a white man does something like that, he should put the Indian's name in prominence, rather than his own. Now like that new contemporary American Indian short stories that came out edited by Rosen, I believe it is, Kenneth Rosen. Kenneth Rosen's name is prominent at the bottom of that book. He was just the editor. He should have managed to put the name of those Indian short story writers on the front of the book. Naturally the Indians get really perturbed, because whoever produces this work gets all the credit, and they get what's left, and that's a mistake they make. One Indian author said one of her stories was published in the Literature of the American Indians, that big, hard-backed anthology, and she said they didn't ask her if they could put it in there, they didn't give her...well, they put her name on the story, but she was never consulted. So she sued them, and before it could get to court they paid her $200 to
put the story in there, but it goes on all the time. And with this book Gilbert and I did, it's one reason we don't want anybody's hands on it, because we want the credit to go where it's due, him and me. How about that!

SM: That's only fair.

MW: Well, we did the whole thing. We dummied it up and put it together and took it over to the printer.

GW: They are good stories in there that you'll enjoy readin'.

SM: I'm looking forward to it. Besides there's a lot of other help in there, too, words and things.

MW: Now you have the glossary back there, but you actually get this in context of whatever it is. Mainly in the tales, so that you see how they use these.

GW: Sometimes I felt as thought Crazy Horse's power came out on me, when things kinda bothers me the way Indians been treated, seems like I wanna tie my pony's tail and get back on and continue on where he left off.

MW: Sitting Bull had three wives, and Gilbert comes from Pretty Bird, the third wife, and Frank White Buffalo Man that you talked to comes from the first wife. She was an older woman, I mean, when he married Pretty Bird she was an older woman, but he says he's a grandson. Gilbert's a great grandson from Pretty Bird, so they're only related through Sitting Bull. They're not related through the wives that he had.

SM: May I ask you, who was it performed your wedding ceremony?
GW: John Fire Lame Deer.

SM: Lame Deer, the man we've got the book about? Lame Deer performed the wedding ceremony for you and for Montana?

MW: He was here for five days before that.

SM: To help prepare you and all?

GW: Yeah. We set up a tepee out front here and we set up our sacred colors, four directions here, and he blessed it so it become sacred ground, and he performed it there, the Indian wedding ceremony, and he give me this sacred pipe.

SM: That's when he gave you the pipe?

GW: No, the stem. And this one here, she got this for me so it could also be blessed. It has unique power. You can see this round bowl.

SM: Was that put on there or did it come that way?

GW: This represent the power that I have. You see, in the center of a tornado, that center part of it's so powerful, the sacred power is there, it's so strong. This is what this pipe represents, the power in the center of a tornado.

SM: And this is made from pipestone from Minnesota?

GW: Yeah, and we believe it is over 200 years old.

SM: Well, Gilbert and Montana, I want to thank you very much. This has been most informative, in fact, today has been an outstanding day for
us. Even though we're in the Pacific coast country, I have talked to a great grandson of Sitting Bull and a relative of Crazy Horse and Red Cloud. Thank you both.