Listening to Indians

GILBERT WALKING BULL, Oglala Sioux
MONTANA WALKING BULL, Cherokee
November 28, 1975
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NO. 115

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Sam Myers:

Today I'm talking with a couple who live west of Monmouth, Oregon, and let me introduce the lady first, Mrs. Montana Walking Bull.

Montana Walking Bull:

Montana Hopkins Rickards Walking Bull.

SM: That's your full name?

MW: That's my full name.

SM: I wondered what the HR was for.

MW: That's it.

SM: And you are on the staff here in the college?

MW: Yes, I'm in the department of humanities. I'm in English education, actually.

SM: This is a college for teachers mainly?

MW: It is Oregon College of Education.

SM: And you teach English?

MW: I teach a number of courses--Creative Writing, Literature of the Native American, Methods Course in Humanities, Literature and Media for Young Adults, and occasionally some intro courses in literature, and American literature. I also supervise English teachers in the area that go out from OCE.

SM: You're pretty busy?
SM: Right.

SM: And then the other person we're talking to today is her husband, Gilbert Walking Bull. That's a Sioux name, isn't it?

GW: Yeah. I'm Oglala Sioux from Pine Ridge, South Dakota. I grew up in Pine Ridge until I was 16 years old. Mostly it's on a little village called Wanblee, that's where my grandfather, his name is Move Camp, and he was a traditionalist; he was a holy man among the Oglalas, and his twin brother's name is Old Man Chips. Both of these men are holy men, and both of them kept the traditional alive durin' the Second World War that they really kept it, well, up to date, until Old Man Chips dies, then Move Camp took me and raised me accordin' to m'people ways. So I was not allowed to go to school, and the tribal council forced my grandfather to send me to school. At that time he was such a leader that they had a great respect for him, so instead they left me alone so I grew up accordin' to his teachings.

SM: When did you first go to school then?

GW: Then when he finally decided that I was become of age and had a mind of m'own to think and choose my other religious ways, that he think that I should attend a mission school, because he felt that the church come close to our religion, so I was sent to school there at Holy Rosary Mission. And when I attended the school there I was 16 years old, and I was about six foot tall, and I was in the first grade.

SM: Was it a trial for you then to have to go to school?

GW: He wished that if I wanted to educate myself that he felt that I should attend this school, because he said, "I kept you to keep this religious alive because of five brothers that I chose you," he said, "because you know you have the ways," and they foretold that I should carry through in his religion. The Great Spirit has shown him that I
was the one that should carry through, so he chose me at that time. So they developed me so strong in Indian ways, that when I was sent to school I was far advanced in Indian education, but as far as the white man education, I couldn't speak English very good. The only two words I knew at that time was "yes" and "no," and I still had my long hair, and at that time I was 16 years old and my hair used to come all the way down to my waist. But I didn't stay there very long at this school. I stayed there for a couple seasons there, then finally I just left, not because I wanted to, but just that I felt that the ways they been teachin' were tryin' to make me forget my Indian ways, and this was so strong in me that what they are teachin' me that it isn't coincide with my learnings from m'grandfathers, because I could not speak m'own language at that time, when they put me in the school. I was most punished kid in that school of any kid that ever attended there.

MW: He means they wouldn't let him speak his language.

SM: You spoke your own language, but you didn't want to speak English?

GW: Yeah. That's the reason why I was punished.

SM: How long ago was that?

GW: Yeah, well, this back in the '30's, early part of '40's too, it was still strong.

SM: Are they still doing it now?

GW: Well, I don't remember whether they're still doing it.

MW: It's more sophisticated now. For example, I won't name schools, but in some that are supported by government funds, they don't really do
anything for Indian children as Indians, or they do very little.
They could set up, for example, good crafts programs, and they do, I
think, more in music, probably, than they do in the crafts, but most
Indian children are really good in art and art work, almost any kind
of art work they're skilled. They have an innate gift for that, as
well as singing. Their voices are beautiful in song, but they don't
really capitalize on these strengths, it seems to me. They give them
the regular kind of education that's being given boys and girls in
all the schools throughout the United States, and they really don't
capitalize on the strengths and the natural gifts that these Indian
children have. Now it seems to me that it would take such a little
to do this, and yet they do not exert themselves to this point. The
other thing, in some of those boarding schools, Indian children have
a lot of time on their hands. You know, they complain of alcoholism
and drugs and so forth, and yet they don't seem to give them an oppor-
tunity to have the materials to work with that they could take in
their dorm rooms, for example. It wouldn't cost that much, you know,
to provide materials or even set up a store on campus, so that they
could buy the materials and have things to work with in their rooms.
And they go to these rooms and they're there, and what can they do,
you know, after school hours but get into trouble, even in their
rooms. And I think that this is a lack of foresight, a lack of good
thinking, in my opinion. I'm really critical of this, because I
have worked with Indian kids in Oklahoma when I first started teaching,
and I found that if you provide materials for them to work with, they
do superior work. Now it is true that they don't have the money a
lot of times to buy the materials, but as I say, it takes such a
little to make these things available to them, and in a sense you
don't really have to do a lot of teaching if they just make the mater-
rials available that they can work with. And a large variety of mater-
rials. But I don't think this is being done. Maybe it's being done at
Santa Fe Art Institute for Indians, and, you know, I think that's a
great idea to have a school like that. On the other hand, I think in
most boarding schools for Indian children and youth, there should be these materials available.

SM: Montana, you mentioned Oklahoma. Do you come from Oklahoma?

MW: Yes. I wasn't born in Oklahoma, I was born in Butte, Montana, because my father happened to be there for a year at the time I was born.

SM: Are you Cherokee?

MW: Yes, but I grew up in Oklahoma.

SM: I was going to ask you where you got the name Montana?

MW: Well, actually my father was a minister at the Southern Methodist Church in Butte, Montana. They used to have those southern churches in the North, if you can believe that. And I think they still have the Southern Baptist in the North, they call them Conservative Baptist, but they are southern people who moved North and want their southern kind of atmosphere. But anyway he was minister up there of the Southern Methodist Church, and when I was born one of the members of his church was an owner of a copper and gold mine. And he said, "If you'll name this girl Montana, she'll have everything in life that she can ever desire, because I'm going to give her everything." Well, I don't know whether that had any influence on the name or not, but anyway, I got the name.

SM: And you've got most everything anyone could want anyway, haven't you?

MW: Anyway they moved back to Oklahoma, and when I was about 12 years old, my parents told me this story, and I said, "Well, what was that man's name? I'd like to get some of these good things he promised." They
couldn't remember his name. I was so aggravated. Now I don't know whether they couldn't remember his name, or whether they chose not to remember his name, but he said he'd send me to college, do this, that, everything. I never knew the man's name, but he was a very wealthy man in Butte, Montana, who named me.

SM: Now the experiences that Gilbert ran into when he went to school--not speaking the language, and then struggling with that--you didn't have that same problem?

MW: I didn't have it. My mother was an Arkansas Cherokee, and she could neither read nor write in English.

SM: But you had learned to speak it before you went to school?

MW: She could speak English, but she couldn't read nor write English. And my father was a well-educated man, non-Indian, and we just went to school as all kids in Oklahoma did, to the public school.

SM: Because in Oklahoma there aren't the reservation schools?

MW: No.

SM: That was a surprising thing. You know, Gilbert, in the country where you and I came from, we are accustomed to these reservations and the schools on them, but down there where there are more tribes than most, they don't have any reservations, except the Osage, and that's only for mineral rights. So you're forced into competition with society as a whole more, aren't you?

MW: Well, not all Indian families are, because they still have the option of sending their children to the BIA boarding school.

SM: Oh yes, they have the option.
MW: Right. Now the advantage to that was that the government would educate the children.

SM: Pay the expenses, but they had to leave home.

MW: Right. But the families that chose not to do this, and didn't have to do it, could go the public school route, and many of them did.

SM: How did that contrast with your school experience, Gilbert, up in Pine Ridge?

GW: Well, as I was sayin' here, the reason I left school because my religion's so strong in me, and I'm still practicin' that a lot, see, because I know how powerful they are.

SM: Are you one of the holy men of the tribe now?

GW: Yeah, I been chosen one of those among m'people. I never did go back there really to help my people.

SM: Do you plan maybe some time to go back?

GW: Well, I hope so eventually. I left school because I felt that the Indian ways is more better for me in outlook in life. Because the way I was taught in the school that ever'thin' is so regulated and so controlled that even it tells you when to go to a latrine, you know, practically come to that point, you know, and nobody shouldn't, accordin' to my grandfathers' teachin', that you cannot control anybody, because you are a human bein' and that's the way you should be. You should be recognized as such as that in a religious bond. This has really worked on me, and I became more to get back to nature's ways. I felt that really come strong on me, and the powers that bestowed upon me through m'grandfather, that has plays important
part and it made me get away from the classes, everythin' that come out, the power always worked in between the white man education and mine . . . way of livin', the Indian education, comes in right in between there, and kept me from learnin' white man ways.

SM: But you learned from your grandfather, and you learned from the other elders too, didn't you?

GW: Yeah. At that time, I was just a kid when he took me, because I vaguely remember those old mans, day after day, evenings, they tell stories, and they show me an example, you know. They talk to me in such a way that they show me an example of things, and they tell stories of their relations, things that happened. Sometimes one of them will take me out in the Badlands and show me how to shoot an arrow, bow and arrow, how to sneak up on. I was really develop that patience in me, and never kill anything, just to get what you need. This is the practice that they gave me.

SM: Are you taught to offer thanks when you have to kill an animal?

GW: Yeah. I still do that. Even our dead, we know, we don't believe, we know, that our dead are on one side of the world, and some day we will go to them, so our offerings always do that. I'll take a piece of it and I'll remember 'em in thoughts, and I'll put it in a place where I can throw it away after the meal's over.

SM: A Navajo girl was telling that her father had shot a prairie dog. They liked prairie dog. She said, "We were out hunting and he shot the prairie dog and he offered up a little prayer of thanks." She thought much more of her father ever since.

GW: See, we remember those who gone before. Our fathers do the same thing when they kill buffalo, elk, deer, and after they skin 'em they'll
take a piece of the kidney or liver and they offer the four powers of the universe, and they'll throw it away.

SM: Now, then, that experience is something that most of us never have a chance to experience.

GW: Yeah, it's really. Well--they'll take you early in childhood and develop into it, so it's not really hard.

SM: No, I would imagine it would be kind of natural.

GW: It come in natural, and you know that like the white man say that you have to have proof to show before they'll know somethin'. This world that they show. But the Indian have this inner gift, and they develop that the most inner strength is the power, the secret power is there, you know, and this is where in a sense it develop that Indian, so you know from things without even seein' it.

SM: Then you became one of the holy men of the tribe? You have been selected and appointed by the tribal members?

MW: Now wait a minute. You have to be careful about that. Not by the tribal members. He was brought up and selected by Move Camp, and his father also was a sacred man.

SM: These were the men that taught you?

GW: Yeah, and my uncle. See, it isn't what you think, what you said now is that the white man way of gainin' position, earn the position from first private, corporal, sergeant, up the ranks, you know. Anything. Or you have to rely on the public itself to put you in a position. The Indian way is not. This is where lot of people make a mistake. When you talk to a holy man you talk to somebody that had position.
Ever'thin' in this day is so educated. Indian kids have influence in white man ways that you see it that they try to think like a white man. Everything has to be in position. When the Great Spirit has chosen a man that he should serve for Him among the people that He created and put them on this earth, that He has chosen this man, and He has empowered this man with that power He has and the people will understand him. And the glow shall be upon him, and people look at him shall sense it.

MW: It's similar to the Protestant faith's call to the ministry. It's a calling, and a calling from, as he says, the Great Spirit, and you can't really be called unless you've been educated to be called, that is, he had the traditional education that Move Camp gave him so that he would be in readiness for this when he is ready for it.

SM: And that's how you become selected as being called by the Spirit Himself?

GW: Yeah.

MW: But the tribe has nothing to do with it. The tribe, as far as I know, never calls a sacred man.

SM: However, they do recognize you and accept you, usually, don't they?

MW: If he's proved his ability.

GW: Whether they don't recognize it or not. Whether they don't like it because they live the white man's ways too much, but the Great Spirit, after all, He creates them too, you know. He has empowered me as regards all walks of life that comes to me if in need of my strength, then I can serve 'em, regardless if they don't like me or not. I know it, because I know the Great Spirit has put me; He has give me
this strength to know these things, and walk carefully among this people. I got strength so strong that I can see these things, and whether m'people don't like it or not that I shall serve 'em, because they are a lost people. When they give up this land themselves, when they forgot their religious, they're gone. It's like anybody else, black man, Mexicans, all races.

SM: Someone said that when they gave up using the sweat lodge as faithfully, they began to lose their strengths too. Is that part of it?

GW: Ad long as Indian traditionalists like me keep rememberin' in their heart, the faith, the power will still be here, but when they forget that, and pick up the Bible, that the root of religion will be gone, the native religious itself, and they will be just like anybody else, they will have to go to church every week-end. But to us, every second beat of a heart is the Great Spirit with us.

SM: The two of you, coming from really different backgrounds, in some respects at least, must have found many interesting hours to help each other understand the other's point of view?

MW: Well, you see, I'm really a Southern Methodist in my religious faith, and, you know, I was brought up as intensively in this faith as he was in his. But the thing that we have in common, and a real good bond that we have, is our religious fervor, which isn't anything we go around parading, but it's deep inside us, and it's essentially--I understand what he's talking about. My father was a great spiritual leader among his people too, Southern Methodists in Oklahoma, so when he talks I know what he's talking about, even though his terminology is different, his frame of reference is different, I can see it and I know it to be good and vital and workable, and I applaud him for it, and I don't think anybody should tamper with it, and whether or not ... I probably could never give up my religious beliefs, but I'm completely in tune with his.
SM: Well, don't you find many similarities anyway?

MW: Well, there are a lot of differences, and for anyone who would say there are not, I think that would be really kind of simplified. But his is based on nature, and this was one kind of contention I had with my father when I was growing up. I never quite could go along with what he was advocating in a lot of ways, and I didn't know why at the time, but it was this other business, you know, of being Indian, that interfered. And finally I read Emersonian philosophy, Transcendentalism, his style of Transcendentalism, and then a lot of things began to make sense to me. So I talked to my father about that, and I said, "Really, I don't see your way quite as much as I see this way." And he just paced the floor, and he said, "Well, I really can't tell you how to think. Each of my children will have to think the way he must think." He was visibly disturbed that I would be more interested in that kind of philosophy than in a more fundamental kind of Protestantism. But since that time I'm not, you know, a devout Protestant thinker, because there are a lot of other things that are interesting to me too that have to do with religion. The thing that I like about religion is that it's something you can explore, no matter which direction you go, and find good in.

SM: You have two great teachers here who can teach each other.

GW: Well, I don't know about teach about anything. The only thing I know is what m'grandfather has taught me, it really did develop inside me so strong that I can see people in need of strength, even Indian people in this coastal area lost their tradition, and I noticed this every place I go that somehow one way or other they want it back, but they don't know how to get it back, 'cause they don't know what culture to go into, and right now is the Plains Indians' dances and their costumes they've adopted more or less, and it is good that they still got that. I don't say that, you know, just because they lost their culture that that mean that we forget 'em, you know, but at least
they got their belief anyway.

SM: You can hang on to the belief and still drive a car, can't you?

GW: Oh yeah.

SM: So those kinds of things don't necessarily conflict.

MH: Well, it's my opinion, too, that and my feeling and my belief that the very thing that has caused Indians to endure everything they've had to endure with an alien people coming over here and taking everything they had, and continuing to take what they can get, the one thing that has caused them to hold up as a people is their religion, and this is the one thing that all Indians have in common, is their religious base which is very, very strong. And just about every Indian culture has its base in religion, and this is the thing that still holds them together, and keeps them strong, and no matter what the white man does to them, no matter what indignities they've had to suffer, they still have this religious faith, and I think that's what Gilbert's talking about. If they lose it, what do they have, you know, because just about everything else has been taken from them by a group of people who have been here such a short time, and the other thing, I think, that we have to remember is that these Indian cultures have been here 20,000 to 30,000 years, and the alien super-imposed culture, which is European largely, has been here such a short time, just a matter of a few hundred years, and many Indians think that this imposing alien culture is a temporary thing. That, in time, they will have their land back, and they will be existing Indian nations again.

SM: Do you ever argue any of these points, or do you have quite a compatible understanding?
GW: When you have religious like I have I never argue with nobody, 'cause I know what I'm talkin' about, you know.

SM: Actually both of you seem completely tolerant of the other person's opinion.

MW: We never argue about religion.

GW: We discuss it sometimes, little things, but I know what I'm talkin' about. I never say, "I think," 'cause that's the only thing, a person's speech, that's the way I was taught, that always tell what you know, and know what you're talkin' about.

SM: Know first, otherwise keep still?

GW: Otherwise don't say you think, because this is just a form of speech that you don't know nothin', and if you think about it, it is so. But speakin' the English itself, I'm very limited with the English language.

SM: You're doing great!

GW: When you start talkin' about jawbreakers, I don't really get down to studyin' because I have other things to think about, you know. The powers itself has revealed a lot of things to me. I talk to her about it lot of times. I don't go haywire over some people say, "I see vision, I see this kind of thing," that isn't it, you know, but the Great Spirit has revealed these things to me, and I represent the sacred power of the Indians, not the Indian race themself. The Indian religious itself, this is me.

SM: Could that then go beyond any one tribe?
GW: Right. The religious part of it, that I was chosen by the Great Spirit, through m'grandfather, that I should be this person that represent this point, because I know more than any person at my age you bring beside me speakin' of the Indian, the religious part of it, that you'll never find that person, because lot of things that come to me through Him. My conscience felt these things.

MW: Gilbert is a highly intelligent man, and he never deviates from his religion. It's here today, tomorrow, it was there yesterday; it never leaves him, and he's never in doubt about it. He knows this is the way it is for him, and I really respect that. You talk about it if we ever argue or anything like that. We don't. He does talk to me sometimes and he thinks I don't, I'm not going along with him, you know, in my thinking, quite the way he'd like me to, and I think he gets a little upset sometimes, but it isn't that really. I just keep quiet and I don't say anything, but I am really listening and thinking. But I never can see it quite the way he does, because I wasn't brought up in that framework of religious thinking, but I understand that it's a good, solid way of thinking, and it's an attractive way of thinking, and a beautiful way, and it's a beautiful set, you know, and I think, I know it's powerful. I've met other Sioux people, full bloods, and they are pretty much the way he is about it. I mean, there's no fooling around with that, it's the real thing, and that's where they get their strength, and so you don't monkey around with anything like that. Now once in a while we have people like Jehovah's Witnesses calling here and, you know, they want him to change his way of thinking. They want him to change his religion and go that Jehovah Witness way; that's the most ridiculous thing that anybody could ever think about when he is imbued in this, he recognizes it's power, it's worth, it's strength. It gives him strength to live, it gives him power to live, it gives him power to be motivational in what he does, and for anyone to walk in and say, "Hey, I think that's wrong, why don't you change over to this other
religion?" that's the height of the ridiculous, in my opinion, and I actually chase people away once in a while when they start in on him and say, "Do you know Jesus?" In my faith we never went around parading, "Hey, do you know Jesus?" to anybody. It kind of cheapens the idea. You know, Jesus was . . . in the Protestant way, the Son of God, we're all children of God, and to make that a tawdry kind of idea, throw it around and misuse it, I just can't see that, you know. And you'd just be surprised the people who approach him, almost anywhere, and start this religious business, when they have no idea about how strong he is in his own faith, and he's not about to change, and will never change until he dies, no way, and I suggest to them when they pester him, I say, "Leave him alone. He has his own religion."

SM: People who get to know you don't do that?

GW: Well, they don't do it 'cause they know. When one Jehovah Witness came in here I just, kind hearted, you know, so I just brought 'em in, see what he had to say, and they got to a point where they was really talkin' about the end is comin' in two years, so they kinda got me uptight, so I told 'em, "Well, I hope you people all go so my people will get this land back."

SM: Well, that's one solution, isn't it?

GW: This is my sacred pipe here, see, and this got me blessed into the sacred pipe, so I used it. When I used it, I pray with it, I pray for all the people in the world. Everybody. That's part of our religion's teachings.

SM: The Indian people generally practice their religion daily, don't they?

GW: Yeah. We don't look forward to certain days. The feeling will come to you. It comes to you inside of you that you'll be kind of weakening,
sort of, you'll call it feelin' low, you know. You felt as though it's piling up ahead of you, you know.

SM: Gilbert, is the Sun Dance still practiced?

GW: Yeah, the real Sun Dance was danced in the early '40's, when the Second World War, and I vaguely remember that, m'grandfather took me to that. That was the real one, and thereafter, it turned out to be just a tourist attraction on the Pine Ridge Reservation. You probably have seen that northeast part of the Pine Ridge agency there, the Sun Dance ground out there.

SM: Yes, but aren't there often more private places where it's really practiced anymore?

GW: Since two or three years ago when Wounded Knee occupation started, and then that's when they really did start it, try to get back the real old way of dancin', the Sun Dance itself, so that's when it started.

SM: One man said that he was going to participate this summer, and then he admitted he was scared.

GW: It is powerful thing.

SM: He said it was the same way as in the old days, and it takes about a week.

GW: They prepare you through the sweat lodge.

SM: Wasn't that the high point of the religious year for the Plains people?

GW: For that religion, yeah. But also there are some fast. They had to fulfill that fasting, but one thing that people, you probably read
somethin' about it, there are many ways of tellin' how the Sun Dancers get themself involved in it. In the old days when a war party goes out and some kid join the war party, their parents like to have their son back alive, the father or his brother will sacrifice, he will vow that he will dance to the Sun Dance followin' years. And there are other people that sickness fell upon the villages or the families, and they would like to fulfill that, if they would get better, so they vow for that, see? And for that, sickness or the man went out on a war party returns. Now if this kind of vow is not upheld, then they have the bad luck, see, for that year. Not for that year, but from then on, they will have bad lucks until he fulfill that promise he made to the Great Spirit.

SM: Do you go home once in a while?

GW: No, I don't go back there often. I should.

SM: You have been back?

GW: I was back there last January, but I went back there to see m'great uncle, his name was Pete Ketchers, he was a holy man too, and then I went back there to see Godfrey Chips. See, in the beginning of this here taping, I told you about who my relation are, but we got interrupted there. See, this Chips is got a grandson. The Old Man Chips and my grandfather are twin brothers, and both of them grew up as a holy man, see? And the Old Man Chips died first, and his power was left, it will fell on somebody in his blood line, see. He had two sons, but they were drinkin' too much that it didn't fell on them, and then it fell on his youngest grandson, Godfrey, and he received his power when he was seven, eight years old, eight or nine years old, I think. And all over the country now, they come to get doctored by this kid.

SM: Did he have a vision?
GW: No, the power, it's a mysterious way it fell on him. He start hearin' noises that he couldn't understand, see, when he was a kid. So ever' place he plays alone it bothers him so much that he finally ask his father, "Why this noise is botherin' me?" And they had a meeting, they call a meeting, our rituals where we communicate with the Great Spirit. And in this they told him that a certain herb that you get and rub in your ears and then you'll understand the Great Spirit, the guardian angels. Call them guardian angels in English ways, but we call them the grandfathers, those holy men that died, their spirits are the ones that guide us, you know, and they're the ones return, relay the message from the Great Spirit to us. They go in between, see. So they're the ones that tryin' to communicate with him, that this power is come to him. So when he done this, this herb that he rubbed in his ears, he began to understand and he heard things that come and he communicate with them that way, see. And this is how he got his power. Eventually, I guess, as he come of age, that he did fast.

SM: Do young people still go out on vision quests like they used to in the old days?

GW: Yeah. See, nowadays young kids, I notice this a lot too, not particularly on the reference of anything that kids might hear this recording and say that, "Well, there is a great thing that we should go into," but around this coastal area lot of college students--I'm a student here at OCE now. I didn't mention, I was gonna mention at the beginning but didn't. I'm a music major here at the college.

SM: You also paint, don't you?

GW: Yeah. So these kids bein' the way I am in classes I attend with some kids, or any place on campus kids will approach me and they talk to me about this religious idea. And right away I know who they are.
It doesn't matter, 'cause you know yourself Oregon has really lax on the marijuana law, you know. So these kids get loaded on marijuana, and they start thinkin' they're seein' visions, they get high, you know, they think they're close to the Great Spirit, they're aware of what is happening, and they thought that I can be a help to them, tell them different herbs should affect this way, and all it is just become addicted to that. But this power is greater than that. There is no man say, well, this is the way it is, and do it this way because it isn't. I'm not mentionin' this guy's name, but he's a world-known Karate expert, and he fears no man. He came out to m'great uncle, Peter Ketchers, as I mentioned it before here, and he thought that this man, he fears no man, that he can go up and see the Great Spirit and talk to Him, meet Him. So he approached my great uncle, Peter Ketchers, that he wanted to go out and fast, so I guess from what my uncle told me that he said he advised him that it was no place for him to go, but he kept insistin' so he worked him through, he cleansed him, came through the steam bath, then sent him up on a mountain top somewhere in Black Hills. And that man didn't last. After nightfall, a couple hours later he came back from the top of the mountain. Now that's how powerful this man is, the Creator. He came back. The power was so strong that . . . he knows no fear, he's s'posed to, but he went up there and he seen the supernatural power and it shook him up so bad that he came back down. There's nothin' cannot be abused. There are around this coastal area, there are people abusin' our religion. This sacred pipe here is so powerful that when this power is imposed upon me, bestowed upon me, I use m'own judgement. I can hurt people with it if I wish to. This is how powerful I can be.

SM: You're referring to the pipe there on the mantel?

GW: Yeah. And also, I can help people with it. It is up to me how to use this power. There are people that go wrong when they get this power,
and they become, you call them, witch doctors, black powers, they got all kinds of names for that. But when the Great Spirit bestow a power upon a person that serve the people, they supposed to serve accordingly, but lot of 'em believe in material things, how easy it is to use the power to gain these things, but they never get well, there always repercussions, always keep goin' until the power will diminish itself, and they are just like throwin' 'em out. There's lot of people that reached that point among m'people, see. This sacred power, it lays in two powers. You can see these paintings. We call the good road red and the bad road is black.

SM: The bad road is the black and the good road is the red?

GW: Yeah. The sacred pipe lies in between them. There's two powers and it lays in between, and the power that bestowed upon me that I shall judge and use, that's why I say I can hurt people if I wish, and I can help people. I use m'own judgement, be on the positive side.

SM: Do you ever help people get well?

GW: Yes. I have faithful people. They don't know it, but I do.

SM: Do people come to you and ask you to help them?

GW: Well, no. I really didn't let 'em know, because 'round this part of the country, like I said, the culture is gone, and power is looked at as like you would look at a Bible. So I seen this thing has happened to this people, so I just keep it to m'self, but at the same time, I pray for this people all over this coastal area here, and it done 'em good, I know it does, 'cause I know how powerful the Great Spirit is. I'm not a fanatic, I'm just saying that's the way some kids are interested in, like to get back into the Indian ways, you know. It is hard
that those that never was brought up on a reservation like I did, it would be hard for them.

SM: We're all kind of stuck with our own backgrounds. And you had yours and you're glad you did?

GW: Yeah. This Indian kids, young kids, called urban Indian kids, these are the kids that they wanta get back to the old ways, you know. They attended the school that say you are Indian, you should be proud, and they are proud, but what are they proud about? When they stop to think, "Why am I proud, proud about my heritage, about bein' Indian, m'skin is red?" But when they start searchin' themself they realize they ain't got nothin' to be proud of, because they don't speak their language, they don't practice their religion, so, in turn, they want to get back into it. And it is kinda funny to me that we attend a powwow--there are a lot of older people that come out of the reservation and live in the urban areas, and their kids are the ones that become what they are, the ones that came out on the reservation, live out here. They know how to dance, sing, but they're ashamed to get out on a floor and dance, so they push it off on their kids that goin' to grade school or high school. They, "Go on and dance," so those little kids don't know nothin' about dancin' so they get out there and try to make the best of it. It is a shame.

SM: There is quite a comeback coming, though. Some of the older people are in there too.

GW: But what I get so uptight over is the older people should say, "Well, this is the way you should be proud, and you should do this," and they should get out on the floor and do it, you know. Don't sit back in the bleachers and have their kids make a fool of themself.

SM: Well, that's fascinating. There's a book by a man named Thomas E.
Mails. Have you run into that by any chance?

MW: Do you mean on the Warrior Society? Yeah, we have that one.

SM: Has Gilbert ever looked at that? Do you have it in your school library?

MW: No, I have it here.

SM: The big one?

MW: Yeah.

SM: It's pretty thorough in a lot of factual ways, I was wondering if he had seen it, if you agree with him, let's say. If you accept his version as being reasonably accurate?

MW: I'll get the book so he'll know which one you mean.

GW: Lot of times, lot of these books, in a sense, I just look at the pictures and put it down, 'cause I know sometimes they little exaggerate in certain things, you know. In our religious itself, it is good to see how the Warrior Society are band together, and how they practice, but as far as the religious part of it, it is hard for me to really come right out and say, "Well, that man is wrong, that man is this way, you know." Because when he start talkin' about the religious part of it, when he start writin' in certain things, it's sort of more of a abusin' it.

SM: This is another version. The other one is Fighting Warriors of the Plains, I believe. But this one is by the same man, and I would imagine that he treats various things like this sort of drawing is in the other one, and he speaks of the pipe and the sacredness of
it and everything, with great respect and reverence for the peoples' opinions. Well, it's not a fair question to ask, is he right, is he wrong, because I imagine if you move from one tribe to another you'd find differences in details.

MW: There are some subtleties to some of those societies that a person like Gilbert would know that a white man doing research on it probably would never know.

SM: It would go right over his head?

MW: Well, yeah. It's a lack of understanding, because you're not.

SM: Many of these are very similar to those in that other book.

MW: What Gilbert could do would be to be differing with it, and he doesn't think that's the main thing.

GW: See, I got one of m'own relations, he was one of those fox soldiers, and he was a great man. He lived through one of 'em and he had spoke of so many times how this man gave their lives so others may live. Lot of this is recorded from, like from the Zunis' Snake Dances, or Hopi Snake Dances or certain dances that you see it. They'll never reach the Indian part of their religion. They have recorded pictures of it, but then, again, there is a turning point on this man that I'm talkin' about, Crow Dog. Crow Dog is a man that, he means well, but the history part of it, when one search it, he will find that this man's blood has been cursed for four generations, see. But he's really tryin' to do good, but you cannot go up against the Great Spirit power, through that power that he has cursed this man blood for four generations, because of what he has done. Every man at the end will stand for trials, accordin' to his own, how he has done, what he has done. Spotted Tail has done wrong to the Rosebud and Pine Ridge.
SM: The old Spotted Tail?

GW: The old man, yeah. He has give western Nebraska away for material things, and he was chosen man to lead his people at that time, but he went for the material things, and the government promised him that he shall have all credits in government stores, and they give him a team and wagon, a good house to turn up with that land Nebraska wanted. That's the grazin' land for the buffaloes, the hunting ground. So he went and done that, so Crow Dog went and took the law in his own hands and went and shot Spotted Tail.

SM: It was Spotted Tail's daughter who wanted to be buried near Fort Laramie, wasn't it?

GW: I think so. This is where his power set. He has helped lot of people.

Part II of this interview appears on a separate transcript.