

July 1972

Narrative by An Arapahoe Woman

007  
At birth I was given the name of \_\_\_\_\_, which means "girl".  
I carried that name until I was about ten or eleven years old. They  
014  
changed it then to "longhair", \_\_\_\_\_. And then later,  
017  
after becoming an adult, I took my great aunt's name, \_\_\_\_\_,  
which means "mint". She had been given another name and had no more use  
for the name of \_\_\_\_\_.

034  
As a child, I lived on Big Wind River with my parents and my four  
sisters. We traveled by wagon and horses to visit relatives on another  
part of the reservation several times a year. On two or three occasions  
on a visit to my uncle and aunt's, my aunt would shield her children with  
her arms and say, " \_\_\_\_\_", pointing at me, making  
me realize the fact that I was known as a "half-breed" and not a fullblood  
Indian like my cousins, and was not accepted fully by the Indians and not  
really accepted by the white people either, because of my being half  
Indian.

On other travels by wagon and horses we went shopping in Riverton,  
nearly always accompanied by only our mother. We also went to Riverton to  
help celebrate the anniversary each year, August 15. We camped where the  
rest of the Arapahoes were camped and celebrated the anniversary every year,  
and every night there were street dances, Indian street dances. The Indian  
women would dress in their costumes and the men in their costumes, and we'd  
have war dances and round dances. And in the round dances, the women would  
choose one of the townsmen or a white friend to dance with them. The women  
would ask for a small token from their dancing partner, which would always  
be a few coins that the townsman would give her. On these shopping trips,

which took all day from where we lived (about twelve miles out), we would get to town by noon and buy our food for lunch and go to the shade of a building to eat, rather than to eat in a restaurant.

On our visits to Arapahoe, we often stayed overnight with relatives or friends to attend hand games or Indian dances, giving us an occasion to associate with Indian children who were near our ages. In the hand games, prizes were brought by the contestants. And they were lined up in the center of the room, everybody sitting on the floor in the contest, in the guessing game. They were lined up and each team would put up enough prizes for each person on the other team and the other team matched the prizes that were set up by the opposing team. The prizes were whatever happened to be handy for the player, sometimes <sup>maybe</sup> only a pocket knife or a comb, and yardgoods, and more elaborate things like silver earrings and bracelets made by silversmiths of other tribes. Beaded earrings were not yet created by our Indians.

The first time we attended a Sun Dance was on the Little Wind River sometime between the years of 1910 and 1914. These occasions created reunions for different family clans, but I had never attended any of these feasts or dinners that they had at the Sun Dance.

.....

In the middle of the nineteenth century while the Arapahoe were roving the country between Kansas and the Dakotas, my mother's grandmother's nose was cut off by a jealous husband, who said, "Now he can have you", referring to the man he had accused his wife of being friendly with. She was then forced to return to her parents. She was so embarrassed about her missing nose she kept her face covered most of the time. She later married a blind man whose name was \_\_\_\_\_ . And to this union were

157 born my grandmother \_\_\_\_\_, whose English name was Matilda; my grandfather, Sherman Sage; and grandmother, Daisy Hat. My  
 162 grandmother Matilda, my mother's mother, \_\_\_\_\_, and as a result a son was born. Then, she was married in an Indian ceremony  
 167 to Spoonhunter who had received the name \_\_\_\_\_ when he started  
 180 courting her. While crawling around in a tipi looking for \_\_\_\_\_, he was caught by her mother before finding her, causing great amusement for his friends who waited outside. His explanation was that he was looking for a spoon. This incident was the reason his name was \_\_\_\_\_.  
 189 Later, he was given the English name Spoonhunter for enrollment on the reservation. He was a fullblood Sioux Indian.

182 \_\_\_\_\_'s children were Adam Redman, whose father was a Gros Ventre, and the rest by her second husband Spoonhunter were Edith, Tom, Roy, Adam, and Philip, and a daughter who died early in childhood. My  
 189 mother, Edith, whose Indian name was \_\_\_\_\_, meaning Funny Face, was born in Ft. Robinson, Nebraska in the early 1870's, where the tribes were camped at the time. After the Arapahoes arrived at the Wind River reservation, many children attended government boarding school.

193 \_\_\_\_\_ was never allowed to go to school; however, her brothers went to school there. Her older brother, Adam Redman, told their mother that the older boys and girls were \_\_\_\_\_. Boys and girls met secretly off the school grounds, which Adam didn't approve of, so he didn't want his sister to be involved. She tried to enter school several times by sneaking away from home. Each time her mother would find her and she had to return home. The school matron attempted to hide \_\_\_\_\_ and keep her in school, but \_\_\_\_\_ usually won out and \_\_\_\_\_ went home.

Edith was born in Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and in their westward travels the tribes settled in Camp Fetterman for awhile where they received rations from the government. Tom was born at this place in the early 1870's. They continued to move westward and after arriving on the Wind River Indian reservation, they settled down where the rest of their children were born.

When my mother was a young girl, one of her admirers was a white man by the name of "whatjesay". Adam Redman was the interpreter for these two when they visited. The reason they called him "whatjesay" was because when Adam interpreted he was always anxious to hear what my mother said, so he'd always say "Whatjesay? Whatjesay?" And therefore they named him "whatjesay".

Then, a man by the name of Joe LaJeunesse, who was half Sioux and half French came along, and he offered gifts and horses to my mother's parents to persuade her to marry him. At first she didn't agree, but she finally gave in and there was an Indian marriage between LaJeunesse and my mother. To them was born a daughter, Pearl. Pearl was born in 1890. She decided she wanted to put an end to this marriage so she asked him to go to Fort Washakie and get one of the girls that hung around Fort Washakie to be with the soldiers that were stationed there. He finally left and the marriage was ended.

One day when mother was at the Hot Springs, Ed Collins, who was working for the government, saw her and thought she was a pretty Indian girl and vowed that he would try to marry her. After a courtship of several months, they were married at Father Robert's Mission by Father Roberts in 1892. To this union were born Annie, Esther, Sarah, and Frances. My father was Irish, having come from County Wicklow, Ireland just four or five days before he

was twenty-one years old, moving on to Wyoming where he met and married my mother. He was a kind and generous man and when the relatives would come over and want him to butcher a beef, he did it without hesitating or refusing. And when my mother went to Arapahoe to visit some visiting Gros Ventre from Montana who had come down in a wagon with horses, and she saw how poor their horses were, she gave them her buggy and her horses. When she went home she told our father about it and he said, "That's all right."

My mother had the biggest influence in our lives, having taught us the Indian cultures, Indian traditions, Indian art, and telling us how close our relatives were and how much we all loved each other. She often at night and frequently she told us stories told us stories about the foolish white man. One of the stories is "The White Man and the Plums".

This same white man that was mentioned in all the stories was heard of before when he was walking along the river bank one day. Approaching a very deep hole in the river, he looked down into the water and thought he saw plums growing at the bottom of the river. They looked very good and the white man was hungry. So he undressed and, diving into the water, grabbed all directions, but found no plums. Yet when he stood again on the bank, there were the plums below him in the water. White Man was determined to have the plums and he dove into the water time after time only to return to the bank empty handed. At last, he became so exhausted that he lay down on the bank to rest and looking up he saw the fruit

he had been diving for growing on a tree which lent over the river and threw its reflection into the water. He got up then and ate all the plums he thought he deserved for trying so hard to get them.

Another story that my mother used to tell us was about when the white man traded eyes.

White Man was once seen walking beside the river.

He was walking in the same direction the river was running. He was traveling along slowly, gazing around, and as he happened to look up, he saw an owl perched on the limb of a tree.

He called to this owl and said, "Oh Brother, let us trade eyes. I like your eyes very well."

The owl let the man have his eyes, then they each placed their new eyes in their sockets.

"Be careful," said the owl. "Do not trade eyes too often." But the man gave no heed. He walked on with the owl's eyes in his sockets. Soon he met a mouse and said, "Oh Brother, let us trade eyes."

But the mouse answered no. White Man walked on. He met a small bird and repeated his usual suggestion about trading eyes, but the bird refused and flew away. White Man walked on. After a time, a swallow lit in his path. "Oh Brother," called White Man, "right this way. I have some pretty

eyes to trade with you." And before the swallow had decided to trade, White Man took his owl eyes out and forced the swallow to take them. The little bird flew away with the eyes and dropped them on the limb of a nearby tree, leaving White Man alone, blind and helpless. And though White Man called and called, the swallow did not come back, for it had already flown away. White Man heard mice running around on the ground so he appealed to them, "Oh, Brothers, please come here. I want you to do us a favor", he called to them. And finally one mouse felt sorry for him and asked what he wanted. "I want you to find the owl that I traded eyes with," White Man explained. The mouse found the owl and brought him to the man. Then White Man told the owl about the swallow flying away with his eyes. The owl felt sorry for White Man and returned his eyes then flew up into the tree after his own eyes. "My eyes have dried up," White Man complained. "They aren't big enough." But the owl was cross, for his eyes had dried a little too. So he only reminded the foolish man that he had warned him not to trade in the beginning, and he flew away.

In the winter of 1898, Grandpa Spoonhunter wanted to go to Montana horseback. The superintendent of the reservation finally relented and



issued a pass to visit off the reservation. Adam Redman and two other Arapahoes accompanied him. He became ill and died. He was wrapped for burial and put into a cave by Crow friends he was visiting. My mother's brother Roy came home from school on a Friday with a telegram notifying the family that her father had died. My mother didn't believe the message so she had another person interpret it for her. In the spring, she insisted on going to Montana to see her father's burial place; also, to replace his mocassins and other articles of clothing she had prepared for him while waiting to make the horseback trip to Montana. Her one-year-old daughter Anne rode on a travois in making the trip. After arriving at the burial site and unwrapping her father's body, she replaced some of the beaded articles and blankets and rewrapped the corpse as in a navy sea burial. On leaving the site, my mother heard a rumble. Looking back, she saw a boulder rolling down the mountain. She thought if it rolled on her it would be alright because of the state of grief she was in. The noise stopped. When she turned to see what had happened, the boulder had rolled to a stop at the mouth of the cave, sealing it off so other persons could not enter.

.....

When I was six in 1915, I entered a public school on Big Wind River which was attended mostly by white students. Two years later my sister and I were given a choice of going to Genoa Indian School in Nebraska or Riverside Indian School in California. We chose Genoa, where teachers were encouraging me to study to be a teacher. After leaving there I entered Riverton High School but soon dropped out. My social life was more with the Indians, but never having any special Arapahoe boy friends. We



enjoyed the Indian dances, which had all Indian attendance most of the time. One was called the Rabbit Dance. It is danced by partners, much like the American two-step.

In 1939, I left the reservation to make my home in another state. The first ten years I was homesick, but finally became accustomed to living among the white people. Someday, I hope to return to the reservation to spend my last years.

I think the most difficult thing I have had to contend with in my life is being half Indian and half white. Actually, the white people don't always accept a half-breed and the same with the Indians-- they were reluctant to accept and were somewhat shy with the mixed blooded persons. My thoughts and ways have been more Indian and my interests have always been drawn to Indian people. It seems as though my mother has instilled in me the feeling that I believe more in the Indian ways.

#