

**Rapping**

**On Heroes . . .  
Black & White**

When I was a child, I loved western movies, and with all of my other childhood friends at the times, I cheered the white-hatted guys and booed the villains, who usually wore blackhats or were dressed in black. Naturally, the people portrayed were all white. Blacks in any significant role or number were nonexistent. And

granted only white men. Yet, in our unseemly adulation of such heroes as Bob Steel, Tom Mix, Buck Jones, the Lone Ranger, and Randolph Scott, we were totally unaware of the real flesh-and-blood black western heroes that our textbooks neglected to tell us about - men such as Nat Love, known also as Deadwood Dick, black mountain men such as Jim Beckworth, and cowboys such as Bill Pickett.

Bill Pickett, alone, is a subject worthy of a book, as a rodeo performer. He had a unique approach to the art of bulldogging. Essentially, bulldogging came into being because cowboys, at different times having to rope a steer which broke away from the herd, either had trouble roping the steer, or forgot their rope. Bulldogging became a last resort.

Normally, bulldogging involved a cowboy on horseback, riding alongside a steer, reaching down and grabbing the steer by the horns, leaving his horse, and getting his feet out front and digging his heels into the ground in order to slow the steer down. At the same time the cowboy would begin to twist the animal's head and neck, and if he succeeded in doing this, he would finally stop the steer and throw it.

But Bill Pickett's style of bulldogging was different. When he leaped out of his saddle onto the head of the running steer, he would grab a horn in each hand and twist the horns until the steer's nose came up. Then he would reach in and grab the steer's upper lip with his teeth, and fall to one side, dragging along beside the steer until the animal went down.

Pickett became famous as a rodeo performer, traveling for several years with the Fabulous Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Rodeos, performing at times on the same card with Will Rogers.

Our black western heroes exist in abundance, but we do not realize this, because in most cases we have not had the opportunity to find out. Our history is replete with black heroes, and we do not need to go outside of our race to find men and women whose achievements exceed the ordinary. Every black whose ancestors survived the harsh and deadly voyages chained in the holes of slave ships is a hero, and a testament to the enduring strength of his race. Even though our blood became adulterated during slavery, we are of strong stock, and have a proud heritage, but we do not realize it. We owe apologies to no one, unless it is to ourselves for failing to realize what we truly are.

We need to be convinced of the truth about ourselves, free from ideology or prejudice. We need to know the facts as each situation in our history created them. We were born strong, and born to win, but we have all too often been nurtured to lose and devalue ourselves. Our history in this country is similar to the spectacle of a farmer clipping the wings of an eagle and then conditioning him to believe he is a barnyard chicken. The people we have as heroes reveal the extent to which our eagle wings have been clipped. Regardless of the extent to which we have achieved material or professional success, the degree of our racial integrity is indicated by the extent to which we have succumbed to a value system that punishes us for being black, and which serves as a millstone around our necks.

Norman N. Barbee

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**The System And The Indians**



By LAURA TOLER

Charges against Dennis Banks and Russell Means, leaders of last year's 71-day occupation of Wounded Knee, S.D., have been dropped - and rightly so.

But the main offender in connection with the incident will never go to trial. That party is the prosecution itself.

Newswriters and broadcasters have reported only the surface details. After an eight-month long, often disorderly trial, U.S. District Judge Fred. Nichol dismissed the case, after the prosecution refused to accept a verdict from an 11-member jury.

One juror, whom the prosecution considered "the most likely to convict," had suffered a stroke and was unable to continue. Judge Nichol left open the possibility that the case may still be appealed.

But as of now, the original charges of three counts of assault, one of conspiracy, and one of theft against both of the American Indian Movement (AIM) activists have not been upheld.

Such surface information is only sufficient for the news reader or viewer who just wants to be superficially aware of what's going on. But the real crimes have disappeared from public view.

One count against the government is its mismanagement of the situation at Wounded Knee. The Indians merely pulled a publicity stunt to inform the public and its politicians of their plight. Symbolically, they chose the site of the U.S. Cavalry's massacre in 1890 of 300 Sioux men, women and children.

Hostages in AIM's 1973 takeover agreed with AIM's goals, went along with coercion and were treated well. One of the 300 original participants said later, "We thought the whole thing would only last a few days, and that we would be able to come and go as we pleased from the town."

However, the government sealed off the town and focused on the within-the-system crimes the Indians were committing by taking over the town. Negotiations failed again and again because the government was neither equipped nor willing to consider conditions posed by the Indians. After having been fired upon by marshals and starved into submission, the militants could only forget their demands and begin to bargain for reduced charges.

There certainly are involved in the seige of a town, and the government was legally justified in militarily stifling its opposition.

The Indians were asking that Sen. Edward Kennedy lead a full-scale Senate investigation into government treatment of Indians in general and South Dakota's Ogala Sioux in particular. Not only would the Senator obviously have more pressing duties, but such an inquiry would make plain to the government the conditions under which Indians live, and would suggest that something be done about the situation.

Studies have shown that American Indians of the '70's are the poorest of the poor. Their average annual income is \$1,500, their unemployment rate nearly 40 per cent. Fifty thousand Indian families live in substandard houses. Fifty per cent of Indian schoolchildren become drop outs and the suicide rate of Indian teen-agers is 100 times that of whites.

Although the government appropriates \$8,000 annually for each Ogala family, overhead and bureaucratic waste reduces it to about \$1,900. Less than 20 per cent of the Ogala finish high school, and only 46 per cent have jobs. Alcoholism is a significant problem on the reservation.

Many would argue at this point that Indians should leave the reservation and put out the energy to make a decent, non-dependent life for themselves. But those who can only sustain themselves with some government aid, and amidst their own non-prejudiced culture group,

would have a difficult time of it on the outside. Besides, say the Indians, why give up the last bit of territory they can claim as a group.

The next demand posed by Wounded Knee occupants was that Sen. J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, investigate 371 treaties allegedly signed with the Indians and broken by the U.S. government. Such a study could only reveal the territorial illegitimacy of the United States. The

question has long been closed for a group with no affiliate party leaders, corporate bosses, or business executives to pressure for its benefit.

The Nixon Administration made some effort to aid Indians, but succeeded, for the most part, only in raising expectations for help that never came. Funding of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was increased. There was at least an attempt to end the policy of termination, a law that allows well-meaning liberals in Congress to give any deserving Indian group its independence from all government-provided services and health care. However, Nixon also promised an Indian education program that never came. He appointed a special task force to deal with Indian grievances, and Congress appointed its own such committee as well. Neither group ever met.



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