

Who was Limpy?

The May issue of Over the Edge contained an article about a buffalo robe, now in the Smithsonian collection, that is thought to be a symbolic representation of the Vore Buffalo Jump and that was used by a shaman referred to as Caller of the Game. The person who provided interpretation of the symbols on the robe to the person who collected it was a Northern Cheyenne known as "Limpy." That begs the question, who was Limpy?

It turns out, Limpy's own story is quite interesting. First of all, Limpy was a participant in both the Rosebud and Little Bighorn battles in June 1876. At the Rosebud, Limpy's horse was shot from under him. As his name implies, Limpy was unable to run and was being targeted by the soldiers. His friend, Young Two Moons, raced to rescue him. Limpy reached a rock outcrop, climbed a boulder and leapt on behind Young Two Moons and they rode together to safety.

Cheyenne tradition is that their warriors met and repulsed Custer's troops when they attempted to ford the Little Bighorn River and attack the large Indian village eight days after the Rosebud fight. The Cheyenne then joined their Lakota allies in the pursuit and destruction of the 7th Cavalry.

In that battle, Limpy took a cartridge belt off one of the troopers, an item that was more than just a trophy because it contained much-needed ammunition. In 1927, the old warrior gave or sold the cartridge belt to Thomas Marquis, a lawyer, physician and photographer who wrote the biography of Limpy's compatriot, Wooden Leg. As a Government doctor on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation at Lamie Deer, Marquis interviewed a number of Cheyenne elders about their recollections of the battle and other history. Limpy, communicating through translators and sign language, was one of Marquis' primary sources.

Marquis kept the cartridge belt he had acquired from Limpy in a small museum the doctor opened in Hardin, Montana. It is now on display in the visitor

center at Little Bighorn Battle National Monument. Fortunately, Marquis also photographed Limpy with the cartridge belt (Below).

Following Custer's defeat, the army renewed its campaign against the Cheyenne and Sioux. Limpy was in Chief Dull Knife's village in the southern Bighorn Mountains when it was attacked by Raynald McKenzie's cavalry in November 1868. The attack came at dawn on a very cold morning. Most of the Cheyenne who escaped had little clothing and no food. Most of their horses were captured and the village burn with all belongings. Limpy's wife was shot in the chest but they survived the terrible walk through the mountain snow as the Cheyenne fled into Montana to seek help from Crazy Horse. Limpy's wife recovered from her wound and lived to an old age.



center at It is not known whether Limpy and his wife were involved when the Cheyenne were forced to relocate to Oklahoma or whether they participated in the epic journey his tribe made as it escaped to the back to the north, periodically fighting the army as the Indians fled toward their beloved homeland. As part of the group that finally got its wish for a reservation in the north, it's likely that Limpy and his wife were with the tribe.

The photo at left was taken by Marquis on the day he received the cartridge belt from Limpy in 1927. The above photo shows Limpy (on the right) with two other Cheyenne as they made preparations for a Sun Dance. Clearly, Limpy was a respected and traditional man among the Northern Cheyenne, and that gives credibility to Limpy's interpretation of the Caller of the Game's robe. The photo shows Limpy (on the right) with two other Cheyenne as they made preparations for a Sun Dance.

If you missed the article on the Caller of the Game's robe and Limpy's explanation of it, go to the VBJ web site www.vorebuffalojump.org and click on the "Educational Programs" tab. Then click on the "Articles" section to find the story:

