

PORTRAITS OF HISTORY

# Chief Walking Buffalo: 'A God-guided personality'



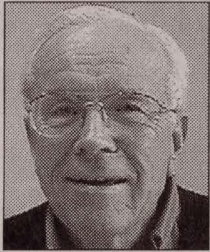
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Chief Walking Buffalo of the Stoney Indian First Nations, Morley, Alberta, photographed at age 93 by Bob Fleming in 1964

*This weekly series features the photography of Bob Fleming. Fleming, who lives in Kingston, also provides information about the subjects of his photos and their historical context.*

**M**Y SUBJECT WAS CHIEF WALKING Buffalo (Tatanga Mani) of the Stoney Indian First Nations of Morley, Alta. The setting, Mackinac Island, Michigan, was called "The Garden of the Great Spirit" by early Ojibway Indians.

Then 93, Tatanga Mani had studied the white man for many years.



By **BOB FLEMING**

Amused as I took his portrait, he examined me. Four years earlier he had given me an Indian name, yet he still liked to inspect me. He always had a twinkle in his eye.

Just before I photographed him in 1964, the

chief, an internationally known leader of his people, was interviewed at the island's historic Mission House by Hermann Hagedorn, an official biographer of former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. Treaty Indians could, at that time, freely travel between Canada and the United States without restriction. The chief and members of his family, wearing their colourful regalia, had arrived to a standing ovation at an international summer conference on moral rearmament with the theme "Tomorrow's America."

Born March 20, 1871, in the Bow Valley near Morley, the chief was originally named Little Bear after his grandfather, Chief Bears paw. As a small boy in 1877, he witnessed the signing of the Blackfoot Indian Treaty No. 7, and later, in the early 1880s, he watched the builders of the Canadian Pacific Railway working their way west.

Little Bear's parents died when he was 10. He was adopted in 1881 by Rev. John McLean, a pioneering Methodist missionary living near the Morley reserve, who christened him George McLean. Later, as a young man on the Stoney Reserve, he took an Indian name - Tatanga Mani - and some years later he became the respected chief of the Bears paw tribe.

I first met Chief Walking Buffalo in early March, 1960. I had packed my cameras and flown to Calgary. My assignment was to cover, for Canadian and international media, a world trip to be taken by Chief Walking Buffalo and six other Stoney and Sarcee Indians. They would meet aboriginal people in Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Uganda and Kenya.

Arriving in Morley, I found that the chief, then 88, had gone riding with his grandson, Henry Holloway, to check cattle. Before they could leave for the airport, firewood had to be cut and stored. To Walking Buffalo, those

were the important things, and he seldom paid attention to his large silver pocket watch.

**E**ARLIER, IN OTTAWA, AT FAREWELL meetings with Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and Lester B. Pearson, the leader of the Opposition, the chief had spoken about the purpose of his journey, sponsored by Moral Rearmament. "All the nations of the world are lost in darkness, bumping their heads together. We have got to change the minds and hearts of men so that all nations will be united," he said. The media called the chief an "elder statesman."

Arriving in Honolulu, I stayed in a beachfront apartment with Chief Walking Buffalo and his grandson. Awakening at sunrise that first morning, I cleaned my cameras so as to be ready to photograph the legendary Olympic swimmer Duke Kahanamoku.

The chief, padding about in his moc-casins, suddenly seized my shoulders. "Young Canadian," he said, "you see those palm trees over there. Some are

crooked, some are straight, but they don't fight each other. They live together in harmony. What are you going to do for human world?"

On that 60,000-kilometre journey, I photographed the chief surrounded by excited children as he caught the beat of a Maori war dance, joined Australian aboriginals in the equivalent of a pow-wow, spoke at a Johannesburg, South Africa civic reception hosted by the mayor, and dined with the King and Queen of Bunyoro in Uganda.

After three months away, the chief and his party were welcomed home as heroes at Calgary airport. Driving that night to his remote log cabin home lit by coal-oil lamps, Walking Buffalo asked to stop at a grocery store. He bought bread and two tomatoes. "There's a porcupine hanging in my storeroom. My missus will prepare that for dinner," he said. Only 24 hours earlier he had been in Berne, the capital of Switzerland, as the guest of the finest hotel in the city. He had been received by the Swiss president.

Later that year, Tatanga Mani came to stay with my wife Patsy and me at our home in Toronto, where he wanted bannock for breakfast. Much to our son John's delight, the Chief gave him a Stoney name - Tatanga Gia (Flying Buffalo). What name did he give me? White Rabbit. Then, with a chuckle, he relented, and I became Red Horn.

**V**IGOROUS UNTIL THE END, THE Chief died from a stroke at Banff, Alta., on Dec. 27, 1967, at 96. Six hundred mourners crowded into a hall in Morley to honour the man who stood resolutely for what he believed in and treated every person he met with dignity and humour. At his funeral, Alberta Lieutenant Governor Grant McEwan, who had written a book about him, said of the chief: "Something of greatness has been removed from us." Tatanga Mani's only son, Bill McLean, recalled his father as "a great statesman, a great warrior, a God-guided personality."

Chief Walking Buffalo had been twice decorated by reigning British monarchs. He was a great Canadian.