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Article Summary: The authors present accounts of the Massacre Canyon battle collected from Pawnee witnesses and their descendants. This evidence suggests that epidemics, war and crop failure—not the massacre—caused the Pawnee to leave their Nebraska homes for Indian Territory,

Cataloging Information:

Names: Sky Chief (Ti-ra-wa-hut Re-sa-ru), John Williamson, Stephen F Estes, Antoine Janis, Robert Taylor, He Is Known By Them (Si-re-ri-ta-wi), Old Lady Washington (White Star, Tsu-pi-rik-ta-ka), Mark Evarts, Rush Roberts, John Haymond, Traveling Bear (Ku-ruks-ra-wa-ri), Kenneth Bordeaux, Leading Fox, Fool Bull, Ruling-His-Son

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Photographs / Images: Ruling-His-Son, Pawnee chief and Massacre Canyon battle participant, about 1925; authors Garland James Blaine and Martha Royce Blaine, June 1976; historian Merrill J Mattes beside Massacre Canyon Memorial, March 1947; Leading Fox, Pawnee chief and battle participant, about 1925; a group of Pawnee and Sioux representatives at Trenton in 1925 for a peace conference



Ruling-His-Son, Pawnee chief and Massacre Canyon battle participant, taken about 1925.

PA-RE-SU A-RI-RA-KE: THE HUNTERS THAT WERE MASSACRED

*By Garland James Blaine
and Martha Royce Blaine*

INTRODUCTION

The Nebraska State Historical Society has published considerable information over the years on the battle and Sioux massacre of the Pawnee hunting party consisting of men, women, and children on August 5, 1873, near present Trenton in a canyon, called since that time, "Massacre Canyon." The last article, "The Battle of Massacre Canyon" by Paul D. Riley, appeared in the Summer, 1973, issue of *Nebraska History*. The *Nebraska History Magazine*, Volume XVI, No. 3, 1935, devoted the entire issue almost exclusively to the events, accounts, and official sources of information available on this, the last major battle between tribes in the United States. The present article is the Pawnee account of the battle, which until this time has not been compiled or printed except for the few references which have also been used here. The bulk of the anecdotes are from persons who had been there, or who had relatives there, such as my grandmother's relative, Sky Chief. Kenneth Bordeaux of Lincoln, Nebraska, has been kind enough to recall some Sioux accounts of Pawnees in battle.—G. B.

THE BATTLE

The Pawnee were on a summer hunt with the understanding from their agent that there would be no danger from the Sioux in the place where they were going. There were approximately 350 to 400 people—men, women and children with their possessions. At that time an eyewitness described the expedition, seen west of

Shelton, Nebraska, as follows: "First were several hundred Indian men, mounted on ponies. Following were ponies dragging teepee poles on which were the camp equipage, these in charge of the women. Bringing up the rear were hundreds of loose ponies driven by the Indian boys and girls. The procession was more than a mile in length. . . ."1

Some distance from the villages at Genoa the Pawnee noticed that the Sioux were about. This gave little concern for they were in small groups that could be seen usually late in the afternoon on a distant rise. In times past the chiefs would order a party to ride after them and drive them off if they came too close.²

It has been said that the Pawnee were warned about the large group of Sioux in the area where they intended to hunt, but that they did not heed the warning.³ John Williamson, the young white trail agent assigned to accompany the Pawnee by their agent, William Burgess, declared that Sky Chief, who was in command, called in all his subchiefs and said, "These white men are trying to scare us; they want the buffalo for themselves." The chiefs agreed. "We will not leave here," Sky Chief declared. "If the Sioux come, my young men can run them off."⁴

Stephen F. Estes, Sioux Indian agent, reported another view. He stated that after the battle, a Pawnee woman captive informed him that on the arrival of the Pawnee at Cottonwood Springs below North Platte [near Ft. McPherson] the Pawnee expressed fear to military officers that as they had come so far up the river they would be in danger. They were informed by the officers that there was no danger, whatsoever, and if the Sioux did trouble them to come and report it.⁵

This statement by the Pawnee woman has been largely overlooked since it was believed that the Pawnee had not gone that far up the Platte, but had crossed the river near Plum Creek in a body and proceeded southwest toward the Republican River hunting grounds.⁶

Another eyewitness account made by homesteader J. F. Reams' son, indicated that one group of Pawnee came to their usual camping grounds in Reams' Grove south of the Republican between Franklin and Riverton. Here they camped before they proceeded on their way, and here again they came and saw one of their chiefs die as a result of the Sioux attack.⁷

According to maps made of the route, the entire group went as Williamson and Burgess indicated. However, it is possible that

after leaving the reservation in a body, the Pawnee did split into groups as they had done in former days when the bands would hunt alone or with one another depending upon circumstances. In 1873 some may have gone up the Platte and some may have gone directly south toward the Republican so as to increase the opportunity of finding the rapidly decreasing buffalo herds. Since he was responsible to keep the hunting group together, Williamson may not have reported any tribal separations in his later report of the massacre, fearing that it would further damage his reputation as a trail agent. He was probably powerless to prevent any decision made by the chiefs and hunt leaders to divide the group. His youth would have militated against his advice being accepted by the older and more experienced leaders. Never in any accounts heard by the author was he ever mentioned, and so the memory of his role in the events had been apparently forgotten by these individuals.

If the Pawnee did split into groups as they traditionally could have done, then the report of the Pawnee woman hearing that there was no danger from the military men near Fort McPherson is possible. However, language translation difficulties would have to be considered since there is no way to know just how well Estes' interpreter knew the Pawnee language, and the woman may have said something entirely different.

Agent Burgess, himself, is reported to have said that two important expeditions were out at this time, although he does not say that both were hunting expeditions. He also added, "Minor expeditions were organized daily. A large party of Skeepees [a Pawnee band] went on a visit to the Ponca."⁸ This being the case, and considered with the above accounts, it is possible that more than one hunting group was making its way to the traditional summer hunting grounds in the summer of 1873, with the rendezvous for all to be near the Republican River near Trenton.

In recent visits to the canyon in 1975 and 1976 the authors were aided considerably by Arthur Carmody, Nebraska historian and resident of Trenton, who for many years has studied the canyon, the battle and massacre accounts, and who kindly shared his knowledge. This included information told him by John Williamson and others who visited the canyon with him in past years. His suggestions have frequently been accepted and incorporated here. Carmody suggests that the night before the massacre it is possible that the Pawnee camped near the junction of Elm Creek and the

Republican River.⁹ He notes that here there was sufficient water for the many Pawnee and numerous horses, and here, also, was wood for cooking fires. Carmody thinks that further up the nearby canyon there probably would not have been sufficient water even in 1873 for such a large party. He suggests that in the morning they broke camp and proceeded along the divide between the river and the canyon. It is agreed that this would have been most feasible considering the greater ease of traveling and better view afforded of the land beyond them. It is about four miles from the mouth of Elm Creek to the place where the battle occurred.

Official reports of the Pawnee position at the moment of attack differ. Antoine Janis who was in charge of the Oglala Sioux said, "On the morning of the 4th [5th] they came on a camp of about thirty lodges. They were just moving camp when the Sioux charged them."¹⁰ Williamson said, "While we were traveling we met the Sioux coming toward us over a bluff on Tuesday, August 5, 1873. The Pawnee all stopped and got their women, children and packhorses into a ravine. The Pawnee men came up to make battle in defense and the contest of arms lasted about an hour with few being killed on either side."¹¹ In another description Williamson changed his story somewhat saying that instead of being on the march, the Pawnee had already reached a point and the men were already out hunting.¹² Reflecting both aspects of these two accounts is the report of Stephen F. Estes which said he was informed the Sioux came upon a Pawnee village numbering about 100 lodges (moving), the "bucks" or men nearly all being out on the prairie "running buffalo."¹³

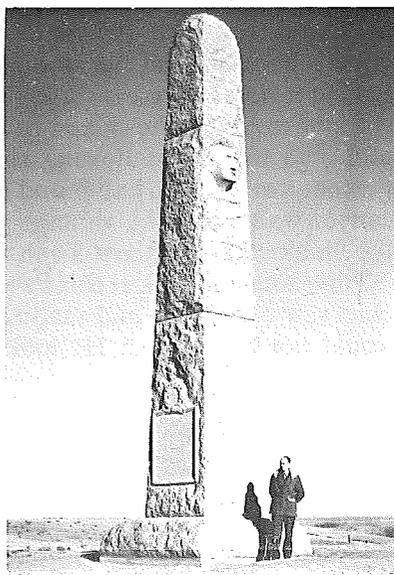
According to Pawnee tribal accounts they were attacked in the morning and were overrun by three waves of Sioux. Immediately they left the line of march and ran down into the canyon to try to reach the creek and the trees and brush growing along it which would give an advantage against the attacker. The old Pawnee claimed that the Sioux were never known to pursue any Pawnee warrior into undergrowth near a creek or stream for fear of ambush and death. When the group ran down into the ravine or canyon they probably did not all move into it at the same place, but were in scattered groups extending along their line of march along the edge of the canyon. They went over into it as soon as the alarm was sounded, moving quickly, abandoning much equipment, catching ponies if they could, and riding as fast as possible down the ravine toward the main canyon where there

were trees and undergrowth near the area where they had camped the previous night. They knew this canyon area well from generations of experience in hunting there, and there is no doubt in the author's mind that they knew where the undergrowth and trees were located between them and the Republican River.¹⁴

The author's grandmother, Effie Blaine, said that during this run everyone became disorganized. A short time later the warriors and chiefs grouped and made a stand. The women and children—and older people who were able to do so—found shelter in trees near a creek.

John Williamson pointed out to Carmody a place on the bluff edge above the canyon where a Pawnee medicine man, as he called him, or perhaps a hunt-society leader, jumped up and down shaking a rattle or some object. Williamson thought it was to distract the Sioux and gain time for the Pawnee. About this same time Williamson said that he and young Platt, a visitor to the Pawnee Agency where his uncle worked, rode out to talk to the Sioux in order to prevent the attack. Later in his 1922 published account, he said that from fear of the Sioux, Platt had left the group the night before.¹⁵ He now said that he had been accompanied by Ralph Weeks, a young Pawnee. This is affirmed by Luther North, who heard Weeks tell that he rode with Williamson to meet the Sioux, but their efforts to talk were met with shots, one of which shot Williamson's horse from under him and he was forced to change his saddle to another mount. Then they both rode down the canyon to escape. "He noticed that the Sioux were

Authors Garland James Blaine and Martha Royce Blaine, June, 1976. Right: Historian Merrill J. Mattes beside Massacre Canyon Memorial, March, 1947.



shooting only into the large mass of those two groups of fleeing Pawnee, who had soon exhausted their arrows, and so he and Williamson and a few others straggled along in between the two groups that were being fired at, and in that way scarcely a bullet was fired at them and they escaped.”¹⁶ Platt in his 1888 account says that he rode up with Williamson and does not mention Weeks.¹⁷ The Pawnee are silent on this event with only Weeks’ account presently available.

He would have been a good choice to meet the Sioux. In 1872 the Pawnee agent reported that he intended to send Weeks and some other “educated” Pawnee to the Yankton and Sisseton Sioux agencies to talk with them in an effort to make peace between the two tribes.¹⁸ At the battle, assuming that Weeks had made the above peace venture, he may have hoped that some of those attacking would recognize him and he would be able to remind them of their earlier meeting, or he could try to initiate a council.

The Pawnee accounts now told here give what was general knowledge among the Pawnee in the author’s youth. They are given by those that were living at that time who had had relatives at the battle, and some of whom had been at the scene in 1873.

Robert Taylor, who said he was a young man at the battle, recalled that people started to seek shelter and protection and ran into the nearest ravine. The warriors then told them to run until they could find the nearest timber where they might find shelter.¹⁹ He, too, noted that it was long ago established never to pursue Pawnee when they were in brush or trees for they were invincible in that kind of cover. Taylor said that suddenly a riderless horse came running in his direction. He ran toward it, but saw that he would not meet it at the right spot to get the reins. Hence, he ran to a small rise and made a desperate leap that put his foot directly into the stirrup. He threw his other leg over the horse’s back and sat upright all in one swift movement. He said having a horse saved his life.

Later in his life he talked to Sioux who had been at the battle and who told the following story to him: There was a young Pawnee warrior who had found a cave-like depression in the steep canyon wall. From this vantage point he killed many Sioux. One of the Sioux chiefs had lost a son recently and his men said to him, “Come here and look at this Pawnee. He looks like your son.” The chief saw it was true and made signs that if the boy came out, he would not be harmed. He looked so much like his son that he

offered to save him and adopt him as his own. He said, "I am still crying. I have lost my son. You are brave. If you come out you can be my son."

The Pawnee signed back, "No, you Sioux have killed all my people now and in times past. There is no reason for me to live. I will stay here." The Sioux tried to dislodge him because he had ignored the chief's request, but the chief finally said, "Let him go, we will leave him here." But whenever they tried to leave, he would run out and shoot at them with the arrows he had picked up that they had shot at him. Finally, after the chief went away, the Pawnee, wounded in his bow arm and no longer able to shoot, was captured. Sioux warriors were dismembering him when the chief came back and tried to stop them, but it was too late. Robert Taylor said he was told that the chief ordered that the legs be returned to the leggings, the rest of his body clothed, and the corpse buried on the top of the hill nearby.

The Pawnee warrior's name was *Si-re-ri-ta-wi*, or He Is Known By Them, a Pitahawirata band member. Once some Pawnee went to Trenton and were unable to find the place of the grave from the Sioux description of the place. The location has been forgotten now.

Another person who survived the battle and told about it in later years was Old Lady Washington, *Tsu-pi-rik-ta-ka*, White Star. She was said to have been born in 1844 and would have been about 29 years old at the time of the battle.²⁰ She told my grandmother and me that she was shot in the back and so was her baby:

"I couldn't turn it loose, even though I knew it was dead." She claimed the fight started at noon and went on into the afternoon; some of the old men, women and children got away, and made the younger men go, too. But all the warriors and chiefs had made declarations that they were "through living" when they saw how many Sioux there were. Many men had lost wives, sisters, and daughters previously to the Sioux and were now determined to fight to the death. White Star heard them shout: "Ti-ra-wa-hut, this is where I shall remain. I do not wish to see the sun come up." They made a covenant that this was their last day. White Star continued:

The Sioux would make a charge and ride by. When the dust cleared our men would still be standing there. Then there would be another charge and the men would roll and jump and fall, zig-zagging, shooting at the same time. When the dust cleared our warriors would still be standing there. Some made it through the day but many were killed, but not a man



Leading Fox, Pawnee chief who participated in the Battle of Massacre Canyon, taken about 1925.

was taken captive. Some of us women—a few of us—the Sioux treated good. They came over and looked at me. This one man tried to take my baby, but I held tight. Then he got me to lie down and they looked at my back and afterward doctored me. It was hard to believe. They took us north and an old Sioux man and lady took care of me and did everything they could do to please me. One day they said we might go home and a white man came—it might have been an agent—and we went back to Genoa. Just a few came in a wagon from the Sioux.²¹ Later we all came on to Oklahoma to live here.

Another old Pawnee man recalled:

I was a young man. All I wanted to be was a great warrior and a great hunter. I wanted to fight there, but my uncle kept trying to get me to go with the rest of them. He even took his whip and whipped me to get me to go, but I just stood there. I told him, Uncle, you can whip me, but I am going to stand right here. Either the Sioux are going to kill me or you are going to kill me. Let me fight.

The uncle said, "You are too young to die, but we will fight and you stand here and we will try to get up the little hill." When we got on top, we looked and just as far as you could see was row after row of horses—the Sioux waiting to take their turn. We knew we didn't have a chance. My uncle cried and said, "I don't want them to kill you, and I don't want to touch you, but I want you to go to the women and children and see if you can help get them out of here." So I did what he said. I went back down and got with some of the women and most everyone had horses at that place. We rode to the river and got away.²²

Another Pawnee account was sent to the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1936. It was written by a Pawnee, Mark Evarts, and described the event mainly from his mother's story to him. She was at the battle with her uncle and husband. The early part of Evarts' letter, not given here, tells about the preparation for the journey and the early stages of movement toward the battle area. Then Evarts continues:

They rode in a formation of single file until the scouts gave a signal that there were buffalo in sight. Then they gave a signal and everyone came into regular camp formation, which was a circle down the canyon. The hunters soon left, and while on the chase of the buffalo, the surprise attack was made by the Sioux.

The hunters that were scattered in different directions, chasing the buffalo, were completely cut off from any aid or to protect those remaining in the canyon, with only a few horses to make their escape, and who were being completely surrounded by the Sioux.

As my mother's story goes: There she was at the end of the canyon, alone with her uncle, as guard, not realizing that the rest of the party had moved to make their escape. . . . During the few moments that had elapsed, during her pondering of the situation, the uncle had disappeared over the ridge and came back with a wound in his shoulder and bleeding from the mouth. He called for a certain medicine that she carried to stop the bleeding.

He then told her to mount the horse, a red spotted horse, helping her on, and he, himself, mounted a sorrel horse. By this time the Sioux had advanced well upon them. With shots passing over and across and from behind, and in making the run from this canyon, with the Sioux on each side of the canyon and the rear, the shots continued, as though they were hunted animals of some sort, and with her saying, that the gun barrels looked as big as apples to her for she was badly frightened.

While on their run on the north side of the canyon, there appeared a man on a yellow horse, facing them or heading them off, whipped out a bow, aiming to strike the horse's head, but missed and struck my mother on the chest or across the breast with a strong force, and passed on by. Mother, at that time, did not think that she was seriously injured, but she

was, internally, for her death was caused by the effects of the blow in later years, in Oklahoma.

On the same side of this canyon there came another man, riding down upon them. This time, the Sioux Indian told him to grab her horse's guide rope, to take them alive, but she pulled back, just enough to have him miss his hold, and before he could pass by, her horse struck him broadside, dismounting both. As the Sioux lay on the ground with his face to the west, her uncle dismounted quickly by throwing his left leg over the horse's head and shot two arrows into his side. As mother started to arise from her fall, at her hands passed a buffalo hair rope, which she grasped. The horse immediately stopped, and she called to her uncle to mount the horse. He told her to get on which she did, then she told him to ride double with her. He jumped and by catching his leg, he was soon mounted, but there was no time to be wasted for the Sioux had not given them up.

With her in back of him, he told her not to look back, but to ride straight ahead and through this canyon they went. As they passed a waterfall, they came upon a woman mired waist deep in the mud, but she was safer there, hidden from view, than being on the run. They soon came to the thickest [part] of the battle being combated by the main force of men, the remains of the hunting party. They were fighting for all they were worth as they passed by them.

Looking to the south on the hill stood her husband, with a rope in his hand and a blanket over his left arm, and a horse by his side, blasting away with his right. Seeing him there this man shouted to another man, "Son, tell that man on the hill his wife came through, and there she goes."

At that instant her husband catching sight of her, immediately mounted, and rode off, to join her, with the Sioux still at their heels. They came on a creek, which was very deep with mud. They had to make it, or else be killed or captured.²³

In his letter Evarts also mentioned two other Pawnee present at the battle. One was Rush Roberts, who he said, "was right in the midst of this battle and he was surprised after it was over to find that he had unthinkingly wrapped his blanket around his waist and had tied it with his horse's rope."²⁴

John Haymond of the Kitkakhaki band, who was about 10 to 11 years old at the time of the battle, said he was so young at the time of the battle that he didn't realize what it was all about, and was just sitting on the packed meat they were going to take home, and was looking around at what was going on and eating some of the fat and dry meat they had prepared, with his coat lying on a pack of meat back of him, and his horse tied nearby. Suddenly to his right he was aroused by a sound and saw a bunch of Sioux headed his way. He grabbed his coat with the meat in his mouth and mounted his horse to escape, and he still lives to this day to tell the tale.²⁵

The author's grandmother and others always stated that a stand was made. The Pawnee warriors and some other tribesmen fought their way to a ridge near some trees, and this is where they stayed and died. Able-bodied women picked up arrows shot by the Sioux and gave them to the Pawnee warriors after all their arrows were gone. Just where this ridge or rise is, Arthur Carmody and I

could not determine, but it may be along the bluff near the main Massacre Canyon.²⁶

One of several Pawnee Scouts who survived was *Ku-ruks-ra-wa-ri*, Traveling Bear, who, according to Luther North, had distinguished himself in past battles. He was left for dead at the canyon, and when a Sioux stooped over to scalp him, Traveling Bear threw his arm around his neck, took a knife away from him and killed him. Though seriously wounded, he later made his way to Plum Creek Station, 150 miles away, and eventually returned to Genoa where he died a few months later.²⁷

One of the curious differences between the account of John Williamson and the Pawnee at the battle is the fate of Sky Chief, *Ti-ra-wa-hut Re-sa-ru*, the leader of the expedition. Williamson said that "Sky Chief, the leader in command of the Pawnees, was shot while skinning a buffalo and also scalped."²⁸ However, there are various accounts by Pawnee that he lived for some time and that he effectively rallied and led the Pawnee warriors against the Sioux. Sky Chief, called uncle by the author's grandmother, came to their earth lodge and visited her mother, his relative, at Genoa where Effie Blaine (mother of author) was born. She mentioned his bravery to the author many times and his behaviour, during the battle, was cited as an example of the sacrifice Pawnee chiefs made for their people. This is what she said:

When a handful of Pawnee warriors made their stand against the overwhelming number of Sioux, *Ti-ra-wa-hut Re-sa-ru* made a gesture to the Sioux to take notice. He made hand signs to them that his two daughters and his wife had been killed by Sioux while they worked in their fields. He went on to say that he no longer cared to live—that where the sun stood this day he would fight to the death. He then took his three year old son who was with him on his horse and slew him with his knife, after saying that he would rather do that than to have him fall into the hands of the enemy. He then rode behind his warriors shouting encouragement to them and saying, *Ti-ra-sa-ka-ri-ki ke-tu-re-tsis a-ki-ta-ru rus-ku-ra-pa-ku ti-ta-ku. I-ri-wa-ru-tu-tsi-ra-ru. I-ri-he-wi-tu-ra-he ku-ra-hus ka-ra-ra-ku-a-ra. Ra-wa-pi-te-sut-ki pi-ta-ra-ku-u.* (Today I may see the tribe you protect here. This is the end. It is supposed to be better old man not to become. Now, men, a man be.)

Robert Taylor said, "I heard Sky Chief say at the battle, today you are seeing a hard time. You are going to be conscious of a difficult time [you may die]." He encouraged them and after they fought awhile, Sky Chief rode out toward the Sioux with his little boy with him. He was between 3 and 4 years old, and his mother had been killed the year before by the Sioux. He was dressed like his father with the same beadwork on his little leggings, everything was the same as his father's. He held him up and yelled to the Sioux, "You will not get this little boy, my son," and he killed him



In August, 1925, Pawnee and Sioux representatives met at Trenton for a peace conference. The Pawnee delegation included Jim Bowman (left), unidentified, Leading Fox, Ruling-His-Son, John Haymond, St. Elmo Jim, Walking Sun, Stacy Matlock, Riding In, and Julius Caesar.

with his knife. This act stopped the Sioux momentarily. He gave us orders to fight and told everyone who could get on a horse to do so as soon as they could and ride toward the river. We did so, young people, women and children."

Old Lady Washington told us that when the fighting got intense, Sky Chief rode among his men and said to the Skidis, "Today, I want to see you fight like men." Where he died is uncertain. The old people said there was one place where they had to get out or they would have all been killed. Beyond that place, which may be almost to the mouth of the side canyon where it is quite narrow, they ran until they got to a group of trees. Nearby is where these warriors are said to have made their stand.

The Sioux told of this battle, and it appears on several winter counts. Iron Shell's winter count, 1873, shows: "Many Pawnee Killed. A large Pawnee hunting party encroaching upon Sioux territory was routed by the Sioux. Many Pawnees were killed, including women and children."²⁹

In the 1920's when the author was young, some Sioux would occasionally come to visit in Pawnee, Oklahoma, but I do not recall which bands they were. Old Pawnee men would visit them and say, "Do you remember when back in such-and-such a time we were living on this or that river or place and some Sioux came and we had a fight?" And they would ask questions about it. The Sioux and Pawnee each would tell their stories.

They would talk about Trenton and say, "that time before you attacked there, how come we would see you every evening—a few of you up on a hill?" One Sioux said:

"Our men didn't want to fight you because we felt that there were not many of you, but there were many of us. Our main chief said we are not going to go look for them, we are going to be right here, but if they are going to come this way, then we'll fight them right here. We tried to be up on the ridges where you could see us and thought you might go another way."³⁰

They would ask about Sky Chief, wanting to know why he had killed the little boy. It would be explained that we called the Sioux, *pa-rik-su-kat* or cut-throats, and it was known that when anyone made a good stand against them and they killed him, they cut him up, cut off his head, and dismembered him. Sky Chief knew this would happen if he was killed and did not know what they would do to his son, and so he said, "I will kill him myself so he will not suffer." The Sioux understood this.

A more recent Sioux account of events during the battle was given the authors this past summer (1976) by Kenneth

Bordeaux.³¹ His kinsman, Fool Bull, told about a Pawnee who was mounted on a buckskin horse at the battle. He would ride into the mounted Sioux, whip them, and knock them off their horses with a war ax. He rode through them time and again, without their being able to stop or kill him. They believed that he must have had supernatural power. Fool Bull said, "I often wondered who he was on that buckskin horse." He thought he might have been a medicine man or a chief.

Fool Bull recalled that during the battle he charged a group of Pawnee and a boy about 10 years old came up out of the crowd and fired at him with a pistol—point blank. That was all he remembered. It knocked out his eyesight temporarily. The boy had run close to Fool Bull's horse and pulled the trigger. The horse reared and threw the rider. He was helped back on his horse, but when he got back to Fort Robinson he was still stunned. It was several months before the powder burns healed, and he could see well again.³²

The above accounts describing some of the Pawnee and Sioux experiences at Massacre Canyon do not give a complete sequence of events, which will probably never be known. These narratives reflect only a small segment of the total experience of some 350 to 400 Pawnee who participated in and observed skirmishes and happenings of the day. Differences between the official and Pawnee accounts exist. One consideration that must be given is that in telling an event or writing a story it is a human failing to overlook one's errors in judgment and to tell the best version of one's experience. Some old Pawnee men who encountered Williamson years later are supposed to have said to him, "How would you know what happened there? You ran off and left us." Although Williamson's account written in later years does not substantiate this, Ralph Weeks' story of his fleeing down the canyon (if it is accurate) may suggest this happened.

It has been suggested that the battle at Massacre Canyon was a major turning point in the history of the Pawnee, one that played an important part in a decision to remove from Nebraska to Indian Territory. It may have been so, but in the memories of the Pawnee known to the author, it was not of this great significance.³³ A tragedy it was, but it did not have any greater psychological effect upon the tribe than did a long series of adversities that had visited the people since the signing of their

first land-cession treaty in 1833 and their subsequent loss of political sovereignty and cultural integrity. Epidemics and war drastically reduced the population from an estimated 10,000 in the 1830's to less than 3,000 in 1873, and no family stopped mourning during those years. Sioux attacks on their villages continued, and in late years before removal, crop failure due to grasshoppers caused starvation periods.³⁴ All contributed to the difficulty of life. The old people talked about the battle with sadness but never gave it as their reason for leaving Nebraska and their homes. Although there were parties of Pawnee who had gone to live among the Wichita in Indian Territory as early as 1872-1873, the majority of the tribe, especially the chiefs and leaders, did not want to leave Nebraska and did so reluctantly in 1875.

NOTES

1. Observation given by Samuel Clay Bassett, "This Sioux-Pawnee Battle—Letters," *Nebraska History*, XVI (Lincoln: July-September, 1935), 156.

2. Information given about the Pawnee is from the author's family history or oral tradition of others unless otherwise stated.

3. In the Treaty of 1833 (7 Stat., 448) the Pawnee ceded title to all land lying south of the Platte River. Article II stated that within that area land should remain "a common hunting ground for the Pawnee and other friendly Indians." Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs, Laws, and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 416. Paul D. Riley, "Massacre Canyon," *Nebraska History*, 54 (Lincoln: Summer, 1973), 234.

4. A. C. Shallenberger, "The Last Pawnee-Sioux Indian Battle and Buffalo Hunt," *Nebraska History*, 16 (Lincoln: July-September, 1935), 138.

5. "Indian Office Documents on Sioux-Pawnee Battle," *Nebraska History*, 16 (Lincoln: July-September, 1935), 150-151.

6. William Burgess, U.S. Indian agent, Pawnee Agency, to John W. Williamson, July 2, 1873, *Pawnee Volume 1*, Indian Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society (henceforth abbreviated as IADOHS). See Riley, "Massacre Canyon," 231.

7. Bassett, "The Sioux-Pawnee Battle—Letters," 158-159.

8. *Ibid.*, 165.

9. A recently discovered account by L. B. Platt which appeared in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, January, 1888, and reprinted in the *Omaha Daily World-Herald*, Sunday, January 22, 1888, 9, says the Pawnee camped on the south side of the Republican the night before the massacre. The authors thank Paul Riley of the Nebraska State Historical Society for sending them a copy of it.

10. Antoine Janis, in charge of Oglala Sioux band, to Colonel Woodward, commanding post, Sidney, Nebraska, August 5, 1873, *Army and Navy Journal*, August 23, 1873, 21.

11. "Indian Office Documents," 149.

12. J. W. Williamson, "The Battle of Massacre Canyon," *Republican Leader*, Trenton, Nebraska, 1922, 7.

13. Stephen F. Estes, Subagent to Major F.A. Howard, U.S. Indian Agent, White River, Dakota Territory, August 6, 1873. "Indian Office Documents," 150. William Burgess to Barclay White, August 9, 1873, *Ibid.*, 147.

14. Arthur Carmody once accompanied a Mr. Berger on a visit through the Massacre Canyon battle site. Berger said he had been in the canyon two days after the massacre and

bodies and possessions could be seen as far down as the timber grew, about a mile and a half from the battle's origin point (Carmody to authors, Massacre Canyon, July, 1976).

15. "Indian Office Documents," 148-149; Williamson, "The Battle of Massacre Canyon," 7. Williamson re-visited the site in September, 1921, with Arthur Carmody, Luther North, Addison E. Sheldon, Elmer E. Blackman, Rush Campbell, A.L. Taylor, and William Otis.

16. Bayard Paine, *Pioneers, Indians, and Buffaloes* (Curtis, Nebraska: Curtis Enterprise, 1935), 131-132. Donald F. Danker, ed., *Man of the Plains: Recollections of Luther North, 1856-1882* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 177.

17. L. B. Platt, "A Story of the Plains," 1888, transcript in the Archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society, 9.

18. J. V. Troth, Pawnee Agent to L. Webster, Yankton agent, July 11, 1872, in *Pawnee Volume I*, 58, IADOHS. Agent Troth, in a letter dated December 13, 1872, reported that some Yankton visited the Pawnee and were hospitably received by them. *Ibid.*, 218.

19. Robert Taylor lived to be an old man at Pawnee, Oklahoma. I often heard his stories of his days as a Pawnee scout.

20. Her name and birthdate appear on the Pawnee Annuity Roll of 1913. *Pawnee-Per Capita*, 1913, IADOHS.

21. A total of eleven prisoners were noted as taken by the Sioux. According to Antoine Janis the Oglala took seven prisoners, three women and four children, all girls from 2 to 10 years. The Brule took two girls, and a woman and a boy. Riley, "Massacre Canyon," 240; *Army and Navy Journal*, August 23, 1873.

22. This account was told to the author and Robert Taylor by an old man whose name is forgotten.

23. Evarts' reference to running or standing water in the canyon is interesting. Platt's account, 16, also mentions a pool of water in the canyon.

24. Rush Roberts, a mixed blood, was about 13 years old at the time of the battle. In later years he claimed to have been a Pawnee scout. According to my grandfather, Wichita Blaine, or *Ta-kah* as he was known in the Scouts, Rush, too young to be a scout, spent most of his time near the wagons. He later married my maternal grandfather, John Box's sister, and served as interpreter for him and his brother White Eagle, hereditary chiefs of the Skidi Band. On this basis he later called himself chief of the band after their deaths. This was not valid since he was not in the hereditary blood line.

25. John Haymond, a Kitkakhaki band member, was about 11 years old in 1873. He was one of the Pawnee who returned to Trenton in 1925 for a commemorative ceremony concerning the Massacre Canyon battle.

26. Luther North said that Weeks reported the battle lasted two hours until the Pawnee ran out of ammunition and arrows. Danker, *Man of the Plains*, 176-177.

27. *Ibid.*, 178.

28. Williamson also said Sky Chief died at the onset of the battle. "Indian Office Documents," 149.

29. Royal B. Hassrick, *The Sioux, Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 331. Also, see Garrick Mallery, *Fourth Annual Report*, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1882-1883, 145; *Tenth Annual Report*, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1888-1889, 386.

30. The statement given by the old men may have been made in a conciliatory way and may not have reflected the feelings of a younger warrior of 1873.

31. Kenneth Bordeaux, whose mother was Oglala and father, Brule, is descended from Louis Bordeaux, a mixed blood, and nephew of Swift Bear, whose sister married James Bordeaux, a trader from St. Louis stationed at Fort Laramie in the 1840's.

32. Interview with Kenneth Bordeaux, July, 1976, Lincoln, Nebraska.

33. Riley reached the same conclusion after his study of contemporary documents concerning the battle. Riley, "Massacre Canyon," 245.

34. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1874, 207.