

revive nearly a dozen more Beaver Bundles over the following years, several of them very old ones coming back to tribe members through museum repatriation actions. Without this old man, the bundles might still have come back, but the more important ceremonial knowledge would have been lost. He was the last person in all the Blackfoot Confederacy with both the transferred rights and the skilled understanding of the complex Beaver Bundle songs and rituals. All four Blackfoot divisions now have Beaver Bundles active again, with qualified men who can lead the ceremonies. All of them are using what Mike Swims Under's parents handed down to him, songs and knowledge that he generously passed on to anyone who came to him with proper respect and Blackfoot protocol.

Many of these songs and rituals are the same for both the Beaver Bundle ceremonies and the Okan, or Medicine Lodge, so he is largely responsible for the continuing existence of both. His repertoire seemed endless, as were his stories and ceremonial knowledge. Not wanting these to be lost upon his passing, he urged me from the start to keep tapes and written records. He had them himself at home, dates of Sun Dances from the past, names of people who ran them, notes for his songs written so that only he could decipher them. He was a smart man, spoke good English, able to read and write, did artwork and wood carvings all his life for part of his income, taught himself to play nearly a dozen different instruments, but was most proud of the vast traditional knowledge imparted to him by buffalo-era elders. More than any other person, he influenced my determination to complete this Pikunni photo history project.

When Mike Swims Under first looked through my collection of Pikunni photographs with me, I realized that he knew more about them than most people still living back then, in the 1980's. Generally, by that time, I would show my photos to five or six elderly people in a row without getting a single new identification. I had thought this part of my work was over. But with Mike it seemed to start anew, partly because he'd been around traditional people and events all his life, but also because he lived in a different part of the reservation than my previous elders. Best of all, he genuinely enjoyed looking through the old photos over and over, telling me whatever he knew about each one of them.

Mike Swims Under occasionally recounted aloud

for others his main ceremonial initiations, thereby declaring his traditional authority to speak on certain ritual subjects, such as the Okan and the medicine bundles. Like Ben Calf Robe, he was adamant that this knowledge was his to share, and to pass on as he pleased. Furthermore, knowing of my family's history as bundle holders and sponsors of the Okan, he assured me that the same traditional principles applied to whatever I have learned from my elders. He said the fact that I am a white man has absolutely nothing to do with it. Like Ben, he realized that some of his fellow tribe members would see this differently. Mike gave me a written statement, signed by himself and witnessed by his son, Joe Swims Under, saying that I should use all of his stories as part of my book work. Once or twice over the years he also made such statements during our tape recordings. This is my response in advance to those who will look at this book and say, "You should not have written about this, or you should not have published these photographs."

"They're not right," said Mike Swims Under whenever we talked about this. "That's not the way the Pikunni thought. They were proud to have their pictures taken. They liked for other people to see them and be interested in their ways. There's nothing to hide or be ashamed of. There are no secrets, except what we keep personal."

Money will be another major issue about these books for some people. They will say, "You should not have written this for money." To that I can only repeat that I worked on this project for forty-four years without receiving any pay whatsoever. No grants, no tribal funds, no government assistance or any other special programs. How many of you would be willing to work on a single project for more than forty unpaid years? Instead of money, my rewards have come in other ways. The bounty of supportive friends and relatives; the many ceremonial blessings and initiations; the knowledge gained while gathering these stories and materials. It has been a labor of love throughout my adult life. I'm humbled to have been given that honor.

The further labor and materials needed to turn this into actual books will only come at a substantial cost. Because of that, these book will be relatively expensive, though efforts are being made to keep the prices as low as possible for members of the Blackfeet Nation. Still, if the price seems high to you, compare it to the cost of a weekend on the town with your fam-

ily, then ask yourself which is the better value in the long run.

While looking through these photos with many elders over the years, I always kept pen and paper on hand to scribble down notes, keeping track of each photo by its assigned number. Later, I put these notes into an index file where I could refer to them easily. After some years that file became among my most valued belongings because of all the time and effort it contained, not to mention the irreplaceable knowledge from departed elders.

I preferred to tape record stories that were lengthy or unusual, so that they could be carefully transcribed later. When I went to someone's house with my albums of pictures they usually offered me coffee or tea and I was often fed, since a good session of photo looking invariably ran into lunchtime or dinner. I often brought tobacco as a traditional gift, along with copies of photos, or other gifts. If we did much tape recording, I tried to bring a sack of groceries as well. For 'payments' I preferred giving beadwork and other cultural materials, rather than money, unless I knew an elder was really broke. I had no funding to work with those few 'professional' elders who specified cash prices for their traditional knowledge. Medicine bundles and other cultural relics were then still being sold to collectors and museums, making it hard for me at times to convince people that I had neither the money nor the interest for such transactions.

Ghost houses, as museums are called in Blackfoot, played a major role in my early years of studying Blackfoot history and culture, since so much of what was left could even then be found only in their collections. About a half dozen large museums house the majority of Blackfoot materials and records in North America. Over the years I spent countless hours and days inside all of them, naively breathing in the dust of crumbling old field notes and the odors of fumigated relics, seeing each one as another step towards understanding those people of the past. Wolf Old Man painted my face and gave me his own horse raiding blessings before the first of those many museum adventures, telling me that as a Medicine Pipe bundle holder I need not fear seeing or handling anything I might find. He was at that time the oldest and most revered medicine man living among all the Blackfoot divisions.

The great amount of material from the Blackfoot