



The Journey of Crazy Horse: A Lakota History

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Drawing on vivid oral histories, Joseph M. Marshall's intimate biography introduces a never-before-seen portrait of Crazy Horse and his Lakota community

Most of the world remembers Crazy Horse as a peerless warrior who brought the U.S. Army to its knees at the Battle of Little Bighorn. But to his fellow Lakota Indians, he was a dutiful son and humble fighting man who—with valor, spirit, respect, and unparalleled leadership—fought for his people's land, livelihood, and honor. In this fascinating biography, Joseph M. Marshall, himself a Lakota Indian, creates a vibrant portrait of the man, his times, and his legacy.

Thanks to firsthand research and his culture's rich oral tradition (rarely shared outside the Native American community), Marshall reveals many aspects of Crazy Horse's life, including details of the powerful vision that convinced him of his duty to help preserve the Lakota homeland—a vision that changed the course of Crazy Horse's life and spurred him confidently into battle time and time again.

The Journey of Crazy Horse is the true story of how one man's fight for his people's survival roused his true genius as a strategist, commander, and trusted leader. And it is an unforgettable portrayal of a revered human being and a profound celebration of a culture, a community, and an enduring way of life.

The Journey of Crazy Horse: A Lakota History Details

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Maddy Barone says

This book is excellent. Rather than focusing on dates and white American interpretations of events, the author tells of Crazy Horse's life as the man lived it, bringing to the fore the people and events that were important to Crazy Horse. Dates are occasionally listed, but only rarely. If a reader would like to know what Crazy Horse's life was like and what mattered to him, this is the book to read.

Brian Glass says

Hau kola! Interesting take on a biography of Crazy Horse. Marshall skillfully avoids the "look-how-many-Lakota-words-I-know" trap of most native writers and gives a not-always-flattering portrayal of the Oglala leader. The tales come alive, and in so much more clarity and strength than any other portrayal of Crazy Horse I've encountered (I'm talking to you, *Son of the Morning Star* author). Both the author and I are Sicangu, and members of the same tribe, so there's a certain kinship I feel that I suspect might not translate. I was also, again, given to wonder if there had been a greater resistance at the outset, had the Lakota adopted the whites method of warfare earlier, what would the outcome of the Great Sioux War have been? The Lakota were limited by two key factors: 1) an initial unwillingness to engage in outright warfare, and 2) divided attention between being warriors and providers for their families. The Long Knives certainly proved their willingness to massacre the elderly, women, and children and the warriors had little choice but to divide their attentions between defense and repulsion. I hope my non-Indian friends give this one a try. I promise we only *look* mad in all those pictures. But, yes, we would like the Black Hills back, please.

Jason Koivu says

You read or hear about Gen. George Custer and think, "oh I know all about Little Big Horn, Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse" but upon reflection you realize you do not know a damn thing about the Native American side of things...and then you go and do something about that.

Joseph M. Marshall III

The name doesn't sound very "Native American," but Marshall is about as close as you'll get these days. According to his Wiki page he speaks Lakota and "can craft a Lakota bow in the traditional style. He was on the founding board of the tribal college, Sinte Gleska University, on the Rosebud Indian Reservation. Joseph is an enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Joseph grew up in Horse Creek Community near White River (Maka Izita Wakpa, Smoking Earth River) on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota."

He is Lakota. He studies and teaches the Lakota ways and history. What better person to tell you about one of the Lakota's greatest heroic figures of all time?

Marshall's *The Journey of Crazy Horse* gives the reader more of an insight into the true daily life of this northern plains tribe than most depictions of Native Americans often receive.

How do we know this is true? Granted, much of this is taken from oral history, since written accounts of Crazy Horse have mainly been from whites, soldiers, boastful victors and the sour defeated (funny how the US Army named their loses as "massacres" back then, isn't it? Makes it sound like they were blind-sided in a unfair fight).

I'm on the side of Native Americans and their gripes about the Europeans that took their lands. If there's anyone in America with the right to complain about illegal aliens it's these guys. However, I'm not a fan of whiny losers. You fought, you lost, the victor gets your shit. That's the way war works. Were the Americans underhanded in their dealings with the Native Americans? Hell yes. Did the Romans treat the Celts kindly or did they hunt down their leaders and holy men and stamp out their culture? Did one tribe wipe out another? When they had the chance. It's the way of conquerors. Much of human history is about war. Just think about what gets recorded and retaught, the battles or the times when blood-shed was avoided? History bluffs are more apt to read/write about the strategies at Waterloo rather than poring over the notes and lab hours of Louis Pasteur. To this point, we've been a war-like people. Expect it. Don't be surprised and shocked by its disgusting ways when it shows up upon your doorstep. My point is, I have a low threshold for listening to or reading "woe is us" laments from the losing side. Genocide of a peaceful people is one thing. They can righteously complain all they want and have my heart and ear the whole way through. But a people that pride themselves upon their fighting prowess, and the Lakota certainly did, get a little less sympathy from me.

So, with that rather long harangue in mind, I'm happy to say Marshall's *The Journey of Crazy Horse* does not go overboard with the laments. Yes, there is sorrow for the tribe and hatred for the whites, which I suppose some with a lower threshold for complaints might balk at, but I didn't have a problem with it. I've seen worse.

(From a '70s anti-pollution campaign. Which bothers me, because the Native Americans were some of the worst polluters. Look into the heaping midden piles they left behind. Again, I'm on their side. I'm glad there are anti-pollution campaigns, but let's have some perspective...and less misguided melodrama, please.)

As far as biographies go, this sets a good tone and pace, and it's the perfect length. I sensed that creeping feeling of boredom I get with a book that's pushing it's interest-limits coming along just as it ended. It's a tough subject to tackle. It's so much easier to research written histories from a people long-versed in writing things down. The Lakota were not that kind of people. However, they did have a long and rich oral history from which Marshall has crafted a fine biography upon a figure that would be intriguing no matter what people Crazy Horse came from.

Feisty Harriet says

Waffling between 3 and 4 stars (honestly, it's probably a 3.5 star book). This isn't exactly a biography, although Marshall has done extensive research into the life and times of Crazy Horse, Lakota warrior in the 1860s and 1870s in what is now the Dakotas, Montana, and Wyoming. Most notoriously (to white Americans) is his defeat of Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn, however Crazy Horse led the Lakota people in battle for years, fighting for their independence from white annuity payments and "peace papers."

Ok, I learned a lot about the Lakota, Crazy Horse, and their history. The first 180 pages of this book tell the mostly chronological story of Crazy Horse's life. The voice took some getting used to, the tale is told as--I believe--it would have been told in an oral history from the ancient ones. Time and place are all Lakota, as they should be, but without a footnote or parenthetical translation of what month or in what geographical space we were talking about, I got lost easily. There is a map at the beginning, but it wasn't all that great for me. An example: Crazy Horse's mentor was an older man named High Back Bone, which I interpreted as Hunchback (he is called Hump sometimes too), as a description of his physical form. It wasn't until almost 200 pages in that Marshall explains that High Back Bone/Hump meant like that of a buffalo, which makes WAY MORE SENSE than what I had been imagining. So, again, this is my fault for not fully understanding, but I also felt like if I'm reading this book specifically to learn about the Lakota some footnotes or other explanations would have been helpful. "Moon of the Popping Trees" is a mystery for me, but a quick (December-ish) parenthetical would have helped immensely. General Custer was referred to as Long Hair, which is what the Dakota called him, but as I am unfamiliar with all the details surrounding Little Bighorn that battle was over completely before I realized that I'd just read about Crazy Horse and his band of warriors most famous (to white Americans) deed. The few chapters at the end use English/American dates and names, and were much easier to follow. I am not asking Marshall to change his storytelling voice for the Lakota legend, NOT AT ALL, but a few footnotes or explanations to help me connect the dots would have been really helpful.

Rachael Lind says

This book is amazing, especially for a required history text. It told the story of Crazy Horse in a novel form, rather than reading about it in a textbook. This caused personal feelings to develop for characters and the tribe. Even when I knew the outcome of the story would not be in the Lakota's favor, I couldn't help root for them the whole while. Definitely a recommended read, whatever your interests.

Larissacherpeski says

I think because I was just recently at the Crazy Horse Monument by Rushmore and because I have some really good Lakota friends this book really affected me. It was a beautifully written Lakota perspective, and I feel like I got more insight into the Lakota culture as well as Crazy Horse himself. It's hard to read at times, because you know how it's going to end.

Ctgt says

An interesting hybrid of traditional and oral history. The author is a Lakota who was born and raised on Rosebud Indian Reservation and grew up surrounded by the stories and legends of Crazy Horse. The author makes a point early on about the shift from the oral tradition of history and he argues that too often those types of "history" are ignored or neglected. As a result there are moments throughout the book where the author takes some liberties with dialogue or actions and makes assumptions on what might have been going through the head of Crazy Horse and others. I have read some criticism of the book for this method of writing but I think that is missing the point of what the author is attempting to achieve with this blending of sourced and oral history. It is also interesting to read a book from the "other" side of the history. Structurally the book suffers a bit from jumping out of a linear chronological mode and repeating some

moments throughout the timeline but overall there is a decent flow. I listened to the audio narrated by the author and would recommend this format.

8/10

Alene says

I grew up in Montana and remember studying some key battles and some key Native American figures, but this was really the inside story it felt like. It was both truly heartbreaking and truly inspiring about how leaders should serve their communities, being first an example above all other things. It has made me want to learn so much more of the Lakota history and of course reminded me how much I want to teach my children about having character.

Jimmy says

Main flaw for me: I'm looking for accurate information. I felt I was reading historical fiction because some of the scenes could not possibly be known. But no one can do Crazy Horse accurately. Excellent reading by the author on the cd.

Jerome says

Like I said previously, the book suffers greatly from the author's relentless interjection of his life into that of Crazy Horse's journey.

I also find it interesting that he has exact details of experiences Crazy Horse had when he was alone. It's hard for me to believe because he paints Crazy Horse to be a man of solitude who did not speak about himself. So, how did some of these elaborate details make it to the surface when the only person that was present would most likely not speak of these details?

On a positive note, there is plenty of great information resulting from the oral accounts. If the oral accounts were presented untainted and each piece of information was credited to the appropriate individual, this project would have had a greater voice. Instead, the knowledge of numerous individuals is mashed together and presented as one flawless, highly detailed story. My suggestion would be to give credit to the storytellers within the body of the text. Unfortunately, the storytellers are listed at the end text...almost as if it was an afterthought.

Joan says

This book about Crazy Horse is an eye-opening experience because of the perspective of its Lakota author. I listened to it on Audiobook, where it was beautifully read by the author. Living in Nebraska, very close to the region where Crazy Horse lived and led his Lakota people, made the story especially meaningful.

Understanding history requires our attention to the narratives of the different groups of people who played a part in that history. Marshall is an excellent voice for the "Lakota narrative." One of his goals is to teach the reader to separate the myth of Crazy Horse from the man, and to appreciate the complexities of the pressures that influenced him. While many Lakota found it expedient to cast their lot with the "agencies" of the US government, and receive the benefits of food, shelter, clothing, and safety that they afforded, Crazy Horse chose to defend the Lakota way of life and resist the enticements of the white man. Eventually, knowing he was outnumbered and outgunned, he, too, submitted, and ended up being captured and murdered by his guards. But this book is an excellent way to "feel" the encroachment of the Euro-American immigrants into Lakota territory from the Lakota point of view and to develop an appreciation for the values and traditions that Crazy Horse was trying to protect.

Tim says

Like Crazy Horse the author, Joseph M. Marshall is a Lakota himself and in his introduction tells us how the legendary Lakota leader was his boyhood hero thanks to the stories told to him by his elders. He says these were merely stories to his boyhood sensibility but that as he grew older he realised they were also essential historical and cultural insights into his people. He finally tells us this biographic narrative is an attempt to unfold the life of Crazy Horse as a storyteller would and this is the great triumph of this biography – it possesses all the vitality and detailed cultural fabric of a well written novel. Crazy Horse's biography would be any novelist's dream – he has to overcome outsider status, there's a tragic love story, there's betrayal from his own kin, there's a spiritual quest, alienation, persecution and ultimately the fight to the death to protect his family and friends and withhold the values he cherished above even his own life.

Another facet of this book that makes it so compelling is the author's intimate insight into the detail and rituals of life as a Lakota in the 19th century. Of course it's a culture that never was going to survive into the 20th century without massive compromises and time and time again, because of the author's detailed insight into and account of a culture that had much that was poetic, beautiful and deeply spiritual I was made to feel the tragedy of this loss. You could say Crazy Horse was the prototype or inspiration for the likes of Luke Skywalker and every other Hollywood hero or heroine who fights for his homeland against oppressive intruders - except the accepted notion of him is still essentially as an outlaw, a wild savage. Okay, he was never going to win the Nobel Peace Prize but surely it's time Crazy Horse was honoured as a noble and courageous man who did everything in his power to preserve a culture that still has so much wisdom to offer the world. We don't have to demonise his oppressors to do that. We all know they were essentially unwitting agents of history. The author has done a great job of changing popular perception in this book. I just wish Hollywood would make it into a film.

Thank you to Joseph Marshall for this beautiful and profoundly moving book.

And here's a beautiful Sioux song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n--U_...

CindySlowReader says

All the battles just ran together in a river of sad.

Dzi? Ba Hadadolgháásh says

Joseph Marshall creates a personalized story of the life of Crazy Horse by webbing together Lakota traditional stories and knowledge of the man with European settler historical information. He does a good job showing the true side of the story between the confrontation of the settlers and Lakota people, which is mainly the struggle of the Lakota people to keep living their way of life and practice the beliefs and teachings of their ancestors. One thing that stood out for me was the comparison of waging war or battle by the two different cultures. For the Lakota they connected battles or war with gaining courage, strengthening the people, making boys into men, or sometimes to get even for wrongs done to them. They did not just do it to kill of an enemy or exterminate them, this may be why counting coup was thought of as being more courageous than killing or mortally wounding a foe. This differs greatly with the European settlers though, who fought to either take out Indigenous nations completely, whether it be by war, colonization, forced secularization, or oppressive education. A favorite read for me, and a great story put together to show the Crazy Horse as how he was known to be by the Lakota, which makes for a more authentic account, although Joseph should of gave credit to the people with this traditional historical knowledge in the very body of the text.

If his life was made into a movie it would be epic, but even he would not want this, how much more humble can one get. Shirt wearer for life.

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

The story of Crazy Horse is tragic on so many levels. This book gives a fair and balanced portrait of a true American hero.
