

Frank Monroe

A long time ago we got in some boats and went down the Missouri River with some early traders who lived at the adobe village (Fort Benton). My mother and father and sister, we got on the boat and started out. There were ten boats they had started before us and on our boat there was one jolly man. These boats were loaded with pelts and hides etc. There were no row boats they were big and flat. While they were going down I was sitting in the middle of the boat and one of the chiefs who had gone before (Little-Dog) was also on the trip and while we were going down the river some one saw a bear on the river bank and the jolly man called out to this bear and said "Grandma come on over here. I have some smoke for you and we will have a smoke." The bear was looking at them. When the sun went down we couldn't go any further so we pulled up to the shore and tied up the boats. We had no camps and, of course, slept out of doors. This man that sent the invitation to the bear liked to cut up and they all got together and went to bed and this man was sleeping about in the center and that night the bear came to answer the invitation. The bear knew where these people were. That night the bear came to camp. The bear came and was going and looking through these men and picked out the man who sent the invitation and threw the covers off of him and carried him away and the man yelled for help. Some of the men came to his rescue and he had a light and he saw the bear and he took his gun and he shot the bear and the next morning when they went to see where the bear was it was an old bear who had no teeth and couldn't bite anything. The only injury he had was a broken arm. They were going to Fort Union. Little-Dog was going down to see some men and to have a council and they took my father as interpreter and he took his family. After they arrived at Fort Union my father had to continue the journey with Little-Dog but we stayed with the head man at Fort Union who had married a Sioux Indian woman. About two months after they were gone some one came running and said there was a horseback rider coming. This

rider was coming but they didn't know who he was. When this rider came he said that Little-Dog and Rising-Wolf were coming with some soldiers. When they arrived ~~at~~ at where we were the soldiers circled around the camp. Little-Dog came and greeted us. After they had been here two days they moved on, Little-Dog leading the soldiers. We didn't have any way of going back so my father brought a horse from the Crees and my mother got busy and made a travois and the rest of us walked. We didn't go very far and we camped. We looked ahead there and we saw the soldiers feeding the horses and mules. When we came over the hill, of course, we frightened the mules and they stampeded. They gathered up the mules and some soldiers came to help them and the captain came to help them and he said take the travois apart. We will make room in the wagons for you because if you follow us up with the travois the horses will keep stampeding and get away from us. The soldiers had pitched their camp in a large circle and they moved us right in the center. About the time we were to continue with our journey there was a doctor who came along and he came and asked my father if they could use me. All this time the wagons were in the middle and the soldiers on every side. He asked why and he wanted me to walk with him and help him gather insects and bugs but he didn't want two of the same kind. He wanted them put in a bottle. I went with him to gather bugs and the only thing I fooled him on was a little red bug. I put in two little red bugs. I thought that I was going to get a ride but I walked from Fort Union to Fort Benton gathering bugs for this doctor. After we were there this doctor wanted to take me away without any one knowing it and he hid me but my father was looking for me and he found me. He took me back and went to the Nez-Pierce country and then the Blackfeet came back and in those days they were still fighting so he sneaked home. We meet the soldiers when they came to the bannocks and then they went to the Snake Indians. We stayed here at Fort Benton and pretty soon Red-Neck and Eye-Glasses came. Fort Shaw was right across on the other side of the river

and we could see the buildings. I was under Eye-Glasses and we were starting right across from Fort Shaw which was the first Blackfoot Agency. There was a missionary right above the Agency. He was called Scar-Jaw and he was a Catholic priest. You know that I was at Fort Shaw and there were no Indians there and I used to go to this missionary and he would tell me stories about religion and it would make me feel good. The soldiers had been gone about a year and we didn't know where they were and then came Batiste Champin; a man by the name of Dawson had sent him out with some grub to send to the soldiers and he took me along to take care of the horses. I was glad to go along because I was lonesome and I wanted to go. He told me that the Agent had nothing to do with me going, that it was my father. I had a sorrel horse and an Indian saddle, a stuffed saddle, and I went along. He went to the pack train and the packers began to pack up and they had lots of food and they packed the saddles with crackers, bacon, beans, sugar, coffee, rice etc. When they came to where Helena is now situated we came to a man, a very short man, and he had two boys with him and we didn't know why he was there and we found out that he had found some gold. There was a big river and we got over the mountains and we kept going until we came to another river coming into this one and we stopped at the mouth of this other river and waited for the soldiers. After we had stayed there four or five days the soldiers were coming up the big river. The rider came up. They soldiers and the army were very hungry and they didn't have any provisions. Right across from where we were they camped and they had with them an Indian half-breed and he was killing the game for them. Black-Face-Man and Chicken-Hawk were with them when they started out. We talked with one another across the river. We had food and wanted to get it across the river and the captain of the soldiers said to Chicken-Hawk you go across the river with some mail and finally Chicken-Hawk said he would take the mail across. He had a bag in which he could put the mail and the bag was water proof. He started out and went right into the

river and his horse swam along but pretty soon his horse got tangled up up in the rope and the river kept getting deeper and Black-Face-Man went out and lassoed Chicken-Hawk and pulled him to the bank but the horse went under. The soldiers were all lined up on the river bank. When they got Chicken-Hawk out of the water they asked Black-Face-Man if he would try to get the mail over. Black-Face-Man was afraid to try it because the mail was heavy. Champin said ~~for~~ me to try it and take just a little mail at a time. I told him I was going to ride a horse. I looked to where the soldiers were and the water was very deep. I went way up the river and Batiste Champin packed me on his back out in the river and I started to swim and I had a small rope so they could send it back and forth and some of the men held on to it and I started and swam with the current and one of the soldiers hung on to each other and reached for me and finally got the rope and stretched the rope across the river. After they got this rope across then they got a big rope across and they put a ring in one end of the rope and then we got wagon posts and put canvas over them and made a sort of a boat so we could send the grub across to the soldiers. I was a pretty big boy now and I went back across again and the man told me I was very good. I met the doctor again and he was very glad to see me. After we got all the things across we began to pack up because we didn't have much food because we had given it all to the soldiers. This was the first time I had ever heard of soldiers. When I got back to Fort Benton Eye-Glasses, the Indian Agent, wanted me to go back but I didn't want to go. Little-Person wanted me to go because the hunting was good but in those days it was not safe to travel across country when you went to the North country. I was lonesome the first day but he told me that I wouldn't be lonesome when I got to Canada. About <sup>as</sup> sun down we camped. We made a fire of buffalo chips and made hot tea. We camped on a high hill and when one scout would come in we could send out another. Pisikin started on top and looked with his glasses. After dark he told us to build a fire and we will

go and leave it. We did this, and then if any enemies came they will think we are here. We travelled all night and when morning came we got down in some deep wash-out and slept during the day time. Just as soon as day broke and the birds began to sing we would stop. You remember in those days we saw many war parties and we had to follow them. We got up in the Red River country and this Pisikin was a Cree and we couldn't understand it and neither could Little-Person and after a little while we went down the Red River to buy some provisions and also we bought some cows. The sister of Metty Fox was over there and Chief Bird was there also. He had his people over there. A scout came and wanted to take me as a guide on an expedition over the country. We started and came to the Beaver river and there was a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company but before we got there the Chippweas attacked us. In those days the Chippweas didn't have any horses and we had wagons and oxen but all we had left after they attacked us was what we had on our backs. We pulled out because we were afraid they would come back and we came to the trading post on Beaver creek. Then we came to the store and the scout ordered some provisions because we didn't have any. There was an officer from Canada so he made good for it. When we came here we meet Joe Kipp and some of the traders and they asked me if I would like to go back. Little-Person came back and with him was George Wren. When we came to the Sarcee tribe we had our horses and they were playing out so we traded them for robes. After we were coming from the Sarcees we were on the road about ten days and we came to the Milk river and came on to one little lonely tepee and the man was hunting and the man was gone. But he saw us and he thought we were going to kill his wife and baby. They were hungry and we told them we were Blackfeet and he treated us nicely and told us to make ourselves at home. When we got back to Fort Benton Joe Kipp asked me to go with him. He was going to trade buffalo robes. We came up to St. Mary and traded with the Bloods. When we got back to Fort Benton Joe Wall who is a Mexican half-breed and who

was selling liquor said he lost a horse and asked me to go to Canada and see if I could find it. He said the Bloods had stolen his horse. I went up to the Blood reservation and looked for his horse but I couldn't find it, so I went and told him. After we started on this trip, another trading trip, we had with us Elkwater and Running-Eagle and Bear-Cub and they had whiskey to trade and we arrived at the Piegan camp. After we got to the Piegan Camp I heard the Old-Man-White-Calf was assassinated by the whites at Fort Benton. The Piegans were going to kill us and they wanted to kill the traders. After we got to the camp we had trouble. When we came to the Piegans they saw two negroes and one white man in a party and White-Grass tried to save them and I started with them and White-Calf's brother stuck his head in the tepee and Mrs. White-Grass said don't hurt the people, Rising-Wolf is not to blame because they have the liquor. Then they said they wanted me in White-Calf's lodge and I was ready to cry because he had just received a message that his father was killed and White-Calf was on the war path and he asked me to go to Fort Benton and tell them that as soon as I move camp and I am going to fight the white man. And don't forget to tell all the tribes that we are going to fight the white man. I sent the message and also asked how much ammunition we could get. When we came to the big river we camped and there the Blood Indians had camped and they had camped for the Medicine Ceremony. When they were moving camp the next morning they were going to cross it and they asked some of the men if they knew how to swim and they said no. A few of us were continuing our trip south and one had started so I cut some logs. I made a raft in the form of a travois and on top of the cross-piece we put our saddles and clothing. We had very little grub and old White-Calf gave us a little sugar and that is all we had. We had eight horses and we drove them in the river and forded them. After the raft was built two of the men who knew how to swim, I was one of them, would hang on to the horses and onto the raft and lead the horses and made them swim. There was a negro and a white man along and

there was a big black object on one side of the raft and a white one on the other. When we got across the river we put our saddles on the horses and we saw a buffalo coming over the hill and his leg was broken. Behind this buffalo was a man who was a Chippewa and he had his coat tucked up. It was a war party of Chippewas. There were forty of them but pretty soon they saw us again. We got away again and continued our trip travelling by night with nothing to eat. All we had was a little sugar in a half-gallon pail. We came to the Yellowstone and came to a place where we could camp and sent a scout back and he saw some one coming. After they started in the morning we saw the crows flying around and we knew there must be something there, perhaps dead animals. We went around searching and we found a buffalo and one-half of the body was gone; it had been butchered by some one. This half of the carcass was eaten by the wolves and we got meat from what was left. This journey was from the Piegan camp and we were on our way to the Canadian Blood Reserve. When they got to the Yellowstone they saw many fires and it was the Chippewas again. It was their war party. When we got there we found the fires but no one was around and I told the negro to roast some meat and I sent Little-Person to the hill to watch and he went in that direction. I went over and the colored man had everything cooked and the coffee made. I told him this war party will maybe see us so we had better take what we have cooked and go on and eat it on the way. During this time there must have been a coyote and he had just been shot or something and when we were on our way we saw him and he was bloody and we thought it was an Indian all painted up and we ran and left everything behind. Across from the Missouri the Indians had already had their Medicine lodge and were on the prairie camping. At this place we ran away from I lost one of my shoes so I took the other one off and threw it away. When we came to the Medicine lodge of the Blood Indians there were some things in the lodge that had been given to the Sun and I went in and got some hide to wrap my

feet in. When we saw the camp in sight we came to a rock which was very wonderful and was the shape of a buffalo sitting on the ground. I hid behind it. We had concealed our horses in a coulee and while I was lying behind this rock I saw a crippled horse and the rider had come after this animal. We stayed here all night. When we got to the camp I said to the white man you stay here and I shall go to the camp and rustle something for my feet and I went through the camp and a good many Blood Indians were there and hardly any one was asleep but away from the camp there were two tepees. I went over there and my people were on the warpath and I was afraid they would make us trouble so I went inside and they had lots to eat. I couldn't find anything for moccasins so I should have pulled out but I didn't. While I was looking for moccasins the woman awaked and discovered me and she tells her husband. He says "hello who are you?" And I had to tell a lie; I had to get by and I said hello brother, I was inquiring for you and they told me this was your lodge and we are on a war party and he says "who is your relative" and I said Strong-Buffalo and Many-Big-Crow and he said Many-Big-Crow is up there and he said who is in your party and then I had to lie again. About this time they were ready to chase me. Of course, after we had this conversation his wife built a fire and my hair came down to my shoulders and I had a blanket but no moccasins. The society dish was pounded cherries and backfat and I had to eat it but buffalo ribs would have tasted much better to me. By this time the man was filling his pipe and he passed it over to me and I had my left arm up so that they couldn't see me. All this time the woman suspected me and I was in fear. All this time the woman had her eyes on me and I knew she knew that I was not exactly the right person in the camp. They were in mourning so they camped away from the other lodges. They were in mourning because his relative was killed at the same time White-Calf's brother was killed. I had no business here under those circumstances so I was in fear. I couldn't put on the moccasins because I had on civilian pants and had



the blanket around me and if they saw the pants they would think I was a white man because the Frenchmen looked like Indians and he asked who is in your party. I didn't know what to say. This time the woman had her husband by the shoulder and said "that is a white man"; by that time I had passed the pipe to him and he said "my friend you are a white man" and I said "no do you think a white man could speak as good Indian as I do?" This time I left and they gave me moccasins and I pulled out of there. On my way back I fell down and frightened the horses and they all stampeded. There was a white man in camp and he got his gun and started after me. Everyone in camp was after me. It was very dark and I had a hard time finding my party. If it hadn't been for the white man in our party I wouldn't have found them. I would see his face but I couldn't see the negro. We got our horses and pulled out. The following morning after we got away we saw some more camps near Gleason, Alta. Some of the north Piegan Indians and some of the Blackfeet were here and they had a fire. And then a buffalo cow and calf came along. This cow came and just about the time it came close I asked the white man, Bob-Tail, if he had a gun and he shot the calf and we took it to the creek and got some tripe and we ate it raw because we didn't have time to cook it. The negro took the heart and kept it under his arm and whittled it off piece by piece and ate it. After we had eaten the raw meat we went to the bottom of the river and I left Blackie and Bob-Tail and started for the top of the river bank where the north Piegan Indians, Bloods and Blackfeet were camped and went around about the tepees looking around as I did before. I didn't have any moccasins yet. I came to a big lodge where they were having a council and I looked in through the opening and I knew all the men that were in there and I knew their names and during this time there was one man, Medicine-Pipe-Man saw me and followed me and I started off and he followed me and I made up my mind I would go in one of the tepees and I saw a young man sleeping on a bed so I lay down and all this time he kept looking in at the door. In looking around after

I heard this man walk away I made up my mind I would go and look around there and I saw my brother's horses and I thought my brother couldn't be here so right here I thought I would do something. I thought I would steal the horses. This was my uncle and I was looking for my brother. I called out "Morning-Plume" and he answered and asked who was there and he asked who I was, are you Little-Wolf and I said I am Big-Eyes and he said what are you doing here, have you come with the soldiers and I said no I am going north to look for my brother and I have with me Bob-Tail and a colored man and they are down on the river. After we had talked a few minutes my uncle said we will go get the chief, Crow-Big-Chief. He came over and he shook hands with me. Crow-Big-Chief said now Big-Eyes I want you to tell me the truth, I believe you brought the soldiers over. You remember your father. And you know your mother was Piegan and so you have relatives among these people and I want you to tell me the truth. I said that I didn't bring the soldiers. During this time a Blood Indian and a Blackfoot Indian had gone on a war party against the Crees and had stolen some horses and the Crees got up together and killed all of the party and here we were in this tent. We heard a noise and crying and some one came. He was an aged man--sixty or seventy-- and he was very excited and he said the Crees had killed his brother. This man that was running to the Chief's tent, his son was the one that was killed. He was running towards us with his gun in his hand. This man that was running towards us was going to kill us. The woman looked out and saw him and the man stuck his feet in a nd Bob-Tail said, "now, my brother, don't kill us. Here is my gun. Don't kill us" and I jumped up and told Bob-Tail don't give him the gun we need it, keep you gun and we will stand our own ground. We will fight if we are forced to and kill them in order to get away. I knew that we were right and that we were not to blame for the person that was killed and that if they are going to do what is wrong we will do likewise so I told the man to keep the gun and at twelve that night we would sneak out. The

following morning about day break , we didn't sleep much that night because we were scouting, and we saw a man on top of the hill. It was a Sarcee Indian and he told the Crees and they were returning with stolen horses and I went and told the people there and in a short time they were after us. When they got near enough we made signs for them to stop and they didn't stop and when they got close I said we want to talk with you and the big chief, LittleChief, came up. He was chief of the Sarcees. About his time the Sarcees were around us and they wouldn't allow me to explain and they didn't let me shake hands and finally took my horse away from me and coming over the hill was Big-Eagle a sarcee. He came to where we were and he could understand a little Cree and Piegan and he said what is the matter and I told him I was looking for my brother who was at Edmonton and another Blackfoot. The Blackfeet Indians were having trouble with the white man. This man here has a brother in Edmonton and if you make trouble I will shut you off provisions. They finally gave us back our horses. We mounted our horses and started. The next day we came to the settlement the Crees, my relatives were there.