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Author

Markowitz, Harvey

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The Scalping of the Great Sioux Nation: A Review of My Life on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations. By Philip E. Davis. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2010. 216 pages. \$31.00 paper.

Nothing sets this ethnohistorian's lips to smacking like the publication of a new, autobiographical account of life in a Lakota Sioux community. As the recent appearance of Philip E. Davis's *The Scalping of the Great Sioux Nation: A Review of My Life on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations* proved no exception to this rule, I was delighted when the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* invited me to review the book for its readers. The fact that the author was not an enrolled member of the Oglala (Pine Ridge) or Sicangu (Rosebud) Lakotas, an anthropologist, or an historian, but rather was a retired professor of philosophy from San Jose State University, made the assignment all the more enticing. As Davis states in his preface, "having been trained as a philosopher I find that I cannot settle for the bare facts alone. . . . [Rather] I want from time to time throughout my narrative to try to understand the presuppositions of the times, white-Indian relations as they existed then and now, the implications of the entire reservation system, then, now, and for the future, and to contrast Indian and white values and practices" (viii). When reading these lines I could not help but sit straight up in my chair. After waiting so long, it appeared that we nonphilosophers had finally been delivered a Socrates who could liberate us from our captivity to the "bare facts" of American Indian histories and cultures and introduce us to the real assumptions that underlie them. I immediately grabbed a freshly sharpened number two pencil and an unused legal pad to ensure that I could take down every insight.

Davis has divided his book into two parts. The first, "The Autobiographical and Historical Context," begins with chapters about his life on Rosebud and Pine Ridge from 1927 to 1939. In these, we are treated to such scintillating observations as, "Living on an Indian Agency is not at all like living in a typical Hometown, U.S.A." and a heart-pounding comparison between his schooling in Shannon County (Pine Ridge) and his middle and high school education in Minnesota (21). This latter discussion is accompanied by photostats of a number of the author's report cards, and he is to be commended for his candor in exposing the side of the seventh-grade card that reveals that he received a check mark for "wasting time." The author also discusses, at some length, a two-car accident that took the lives of two Oglala elders in which his mother was the driver (and he was a passenger) in the other automobile. After several pages detailing the event, Davis reports that there was some worry among the members of his family and white reservation officials concerning how the Lakotas would respond to the tragedy "not only because of the death of

two members of the tribe . . . but also because there was a *hint* [emphasis my own] of favoritism . . . [as the] white survivors were . . . the first taken to the hospital even though their injuries were far less serious." However, a few lines later we are informed that there was "no Indian uprising, revolt, public protest, or lawsuit" and that both Indian and white parties "were willing to accept the judgment of the investigating officer." Despite this outcome, the author mysteriously concludes the chapter with the observation that "in retrospect . . . the incident does strongly suggest that some 59 years after the Little Big Horn Battle, and 40 years after the Wounded Knee Massacre . . . Indian resentments were still very much alive" (31–33). The reader is left to wonder if this is an example of Davis not being satisfied with the "bare facts" alone.

In the remaining four chapters of part 1, Davis summarizes the histories of Indian-white conflicts over Paha Sapa (the Black Hills), the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the battle of the Little Big Horn and the massacre at Wounded Knee, and Indian boarding schools. His discussions of these subjects are by and large accurate, though standard, fare based on secondary sources rather than interviews. He does, however, take some controversial positions; for example, in his account of the Crazy Horse monument, he argues that this much-honored leader was "not a man of great intelligence" and possessed little imagination. "His countenance no more deserves commemoration on Paha Sapa than to the other four on Mount Rushmore" (40). In his chapter about Indian boarding schools, he presents a glowing assessment of Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the nineteenth-century champion of off-reservation Indian education, who is probably best known for his aphorism, "kill the Indian and save the man." In defense of the captain, Davis compares his attitude toward Indians with that of two famous Indian fighters of that day. He thus asserts that Pratt "never subscribed to total genocide . . . as Generals Sherman and Sheridan had" (74). He then goes on to laud every aspect of Pratt's assimilationist agenda, strangely stopping short of fully endorsing its ethnocidal goals by admitting that "certainly Pratt's view was extreme" (76).

When I completed part 1 of the book I realized, with some disappointment, that I had yet to take down a single insight. However, my hopes were revived when I noted that part 2 was titled "Philosophical Reflections and Generalizations." "Now we're going to get down to business," I reassured myself.

This section of the book is divided into six chapters, the first two of which concern the dispossession of the Lakotas from much of their original homelands, the carving up of the Great Sioux Reservation into a number of smaller "reservations" so that the remainder could be opened up for non-Indian settlement, and the allotment of reservation lands with the "surplus" once more sold to settlers. Here Davis journeys over territory that has already been heavily trod by historians and anthropologists. The author's sole original contribution,

and it is a noteworthy one, is his examination of President Thomas Jefferson's Indian Removal policy in terms of selected philosophical treatises by John Locke, David Hume, Thomas Hobbes, and Immanuel Kant, and his conclusion that Jefferson's view of Indian land rights shares much in common with Locke and Kant. Much less interesting is his apologia concerning his use of the metaphor "scalping" for the Lakotas' dispossession of their lands. In Davis's own words, this discussion is a "digression" and, to this reviewer, hardly seems worth the effort put into either writing or reading it.

Davis addresses the lasting mystique of George Custer and its importance in shaping America's view of the nineteenth-century Plains and its Indian inhabitants in chapter 9. Though the author includes some interesting anecdotes about Custer's pre-Little Big Horn career, his conclusion that the lieutenant colonel was vane and intoxicated by fame is identical with that of practically all Custer's scholarly biographers.

With regard to chapter 10, "Federal Indian Law and Self-Governance," Davis focuses on two subjects: first, the problem of Indian alcoholism and how best to confront it, and second, why Indians are willing to police their own people at the behest of their Anglo conquerors. In chapter 11, "Tribal Sovereignty and Casino Gambling," he examines such topics as "who is an Indian," the 1950s US Indian policy of termination, and the nature of sovereignty and how many tribes have chosen to exercise it by establishing casinos. In the book's final chapter, "Justice," he considers the issue of justice with particular reference to Indian religious freedom, the federal government's illegal confiscation of the Black Hills, the status of the reservation system, and the wisdom of anchoring reservation economies on gaming.

Although *The Scalping of the Great Sioux Nation* presents some interesting issues, it provides very little that is new to our understanding of them. However, the greatest disappointment for this ethnohistorian is the virtual absence in Davis's narrative of any primary information concerning Lakota community life during the twelve years he resided on Pine Ridge and Rosebud. The 1920s and 1930s comprised a period of tremendous change for the Lakotas as they adapted to Depression-era conditions as well as the changes in US Indian policy introduced by the Indian Reorganization Act. However, we get no sense at all concerning how the peoples of Rosebud and Pine Ridge interpreted and responded to these changes. As this is the case, one cannot help but feel that the book's title, although technically accurate, promises more than the book delivers. Legal pad and sharpened number two pencil are strictly optional.

Harvey Markowitz
Washington and Lee University