

## Jealous Squaw Was Obstacle To Old Belching Bear's Stage Career

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11-17-66

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MERTZON — When the Indians realized their carefully planned ruse to give token resistance to the white man's invasion of the Shortgrass County was successful, the red men used their newfound leisure to study the frontiersmen's customs.

The most astute observer was a double-feather wise man named Belching Bear. For many moons, this highly respected sage had been recognized for his work in the field of comparing primitive cultures. He was also widely known as a master spy, gifted by being capable of checking on the enemy by either the old-timey, behind-the-bush techniques of his ancestors, or his modern, self-designed 21-inch conjured vision that would, if necessary, reach into the next county.

Spying and analyzing savage behavior patterns wasn't the only specialty of Belching Bear. Every since passing into manhood, he had been heralded as a polished actor of the neo-bison period. His close associates were willing to bet big wampum there wasn't an Indian this side of St. Louis who could match him when it came to playing the sad redskin in the forever popular end-of-the-trail scene.

In brief, Belching Bear was about as close an answer to the modern jet age movie-star politician as those times ever produced.

In view of these talents, it's easy to see why this sage to end all sages was the natural choice to spy on the white man. All he had to do was ride up on a high point, take a mournful stance as if he'd just lost his best scalping knife, and — except for discouraging the interest of artist and camera bugs — spend the day observing the settler's activities without a chance of detection.

At nightfall, when his paper work was completed, he would call the tribe together and dramatize the antics of what he called the pseudo-white aborigines.

Without exception, these dramas were met by an enthusiastic audience. On several occasions he nearly brought down the lodge poles, demonstrating how the pioneers packed water into the lodges only to have the pioneeresses pitch it out the back door later on.

His imitation of backbreaking efforts involved in building rock corrals was a steady sellout. And the first night he pulled off the skit explaining how the new people were planning to organize their tribe so that taxes could be paid to chiefs in a distant hunting ground, the hysterical laughter of the braves became so wild that it appeared outside help might have to be summoned to quell the outbreak.

Chances are that if his wife, Mush Omelet, had not intervened, Belching Bear's act would have made the outer tribal entertainment circuit. But just like a wife of any other age, Mush Omelet soon got plenty fed up with seeing the old ham in the limelight.

One night, after the squawlets had literally torn out their braids laughing at the show, Mushy Omelet led the star aside and said, in effect:

"If your eyes are pleased by the rising sun, and if your ears are entertained by the meadow thrush's song at dusk, you had best quite cavorting around in front of those flirty young squaws. Otherwise, I am going to perform a tomahawk operation on your skull that will tend to limit both your vision and your hearing."

Fame had dulled Belching Bear's senses, but not to the extent that he didn't perceive the importance of his wife's proclamation. Therefore, in less time than it takes to brush the lint from a buffalo robe, he had completed all the formalities that go with breaking away from the stage.

As it turned out, this was a timely decision, because shortly after Belching Bear's retirement the young braves began to imitate the white man. It wasn't long until the youngster began to put great store by rock corrals, water buckets and — worst of all — taxes.

So, as history reveals Belching Bear's demise was the end of any formal work on the Indian's viewpoint of the new people. It's a shame, too, because the old thespian really had things going in his favor.