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Review of *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder and Other True Stories from the Nebraska-Pine Ridge Border Towns* By Stew Magnuson

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*The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder and Other True Stories from the Nebraska-Pine Ridge Border Towns.* By Stew Magnuson. Foreword by Pekka Hämäläinen. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2008. xvii + 361 pp. Map, photographs, notes, sources, index. \$29.95.

Journalists of late have often been at the vanguard of recent history, using their particular research methodology, which is more comfortable with the elusive nature of the near past, to beat historians to the punch. This has been particularly true of American Indian history. Part-time journalist Peter Matthiessen was among the first to tackle the history of tumult on Pine Ridge Reservation during the 1970s, including the Dick Wilson presidency, the siege of Wounded Knee, and the Leonard Peltier trials. Journalist-turned-literary-scholar Robert Allen Warrior and journalist Paul Chaat Smith were quick to examine the Red Power era more broadly, including the affairs of Pine Ridge. More recently, journalist Steve Hendricks researched the FBI's role in Indian country during that same period. Now journalist Stew Magnuson has taken on one of the pivotal events of the Red Power era in general and the American Indian Movement and Pine Ridge in particular: the 1972 fatal beating of Oglala Lakota Raymond Yellow Thunder by a band of drunken whites in the border town of Gordon, Nebraska.

Magnuson's goal is twofold: he seeks to craft an authoritative and thorough account of the Yellow Thunder killing and its aftermath, all the while composing a history of the often troubled, sometimes intimate relations between Lakotas and white border town residents that stretches from the earliest days of the reservation to modern times. The author succeeds on both counts, but it is in his rendering of the

Yellow Thunder affair that he truly excels. In addition to plumbing archival materials, Magnuson relied upon his journalistic skills to conduct personal interviews of key players in the event. In building his case, Magnuson does not hold back in detailing the wanton brutality of the Yellow Thunder affair, yet he manages to avoid getting trapped by the dialectic that so often shapes discussions of 1970s Pine Ridge. He is an apologist neither for the irresponsible antics of AIM nor the virulent racism of the reservation's border towns. He is, however, sympathetic to the earnest and honest people on all sides of the issue who struggled to find justice in light of a senseless and sadistic killing, as well as those trying to cope with the stunted economy and political entanglements of the present.

Magnuson relied on both popular and scholarly sources to compose his frontier days narrative. These chapters yield fewer new insights, adding less to the scholarly literature. However, *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder* is accessible and well written from start to finish, offering a strong critique of the 1970s that demands a place in the scholarship, while providing nonscholars a good, readable introduction to the history of the region and its people.

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