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## Review of *The Dull Knives of Pine Ridge: A Lakota Odyssey* By Joe Starita

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*The Dull Knives of Pine Ridge: A Lakota Odyssey.* By Joe Starita. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995. Photographs, maps, bibliography, notes, index. x + 388 pp. \$24.95 cloth. \$14.00 paper.

Joe Starita's book centers on five generations of the Dull Knife family from the 1870s until the present. The original Dull Knife was a Northern Cheyenne who, with Little Wolf, led his people north from Indian Territory in 1878. The flight became one of the more famous episodes of the Indian wars. His son, George Dull Knife, born in 1875, probably came north to the Pine Ridge reservation several years later and identified with the Lakota rather than the Northern Cheyenne. George worked in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and later served as a tribal policeman. His son, Guy, Sr., attended Haskell Institute, fought in World War I, and represented his people on the tribal council at Pine Ridge for many years. Guy, Jr., born in 1947, grew up in a traditional environment, spent a tour in Vietnam, and eventually became an artist-sculptor. The children of Guy, Jr. constitute the fifth generation.

The author's approach combines passages in which he discusses stories from the Dull Knife family history with passages that attempt to provide a general background and context. Although Starita's efforts to weave the specifics with the broader events has some merit, he has problems fulfilling the full potential of his approach. He does not, for example, always show how larger trends affected the family members. Similarly, he does not always ask the questions that would have fully illuminated the Dull Knives' actions. Finally, Starita, a former journalist, tends to oversimplify matters by depicting Lakota history as a series of dark conspiracies perpetrated by the army, farmers, ranchers, and energy companies.

Far more detailed research on family members in agency records, council minutes, newspapers, and other local sources would have relieved many of the book's weaknesses. Starita shows the benefits of such research in

his discussion of the three years Guy, Sr. spent at Haskell. By combining interviews with student records, Starita is able to disclose George's motives in sending his son to boarding school and to humanize the intense difficulties Guy, Sr. experienced there.

Despite several problems, Starita's book will likely appeal to general readers. His account of the Dull Knives is readable and interesting, showing how one family made the difficult transitions from the beginnings of reservation life to more recent times. He is also effective in laying out how Lakota women adapted to changes and managed to influence events even though not allowed to take a direct role.

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