

I. COMMENTARY [by David Hoadley]

Storm season 1980 is upon us. The grass is greening, buds are opening and chasers turn to the south wind. The annual alchemy begins its subtle transformation. Mild, breezy days and a certain quickness - a special alertness - returns. Surprised, we look up and a small cumulus appears, then two, then three - different from the gray, slate, formless clouds of winter. We turn, and turn again, and - unnoticed by all but a few these first glimmerings of what will come - innocently, unpretentiously - drift by. Yes, there will be more cold days and snow here and there. But a corner has been turned. A mind has just shed itself of winter's scruffy grip, and the spirit readies to soar. All the while the warm front cirrus quietly traces itself across the sky, and we await that which lies beyond - approaching, gathering, darkening .

II. ROSTER

Here is an address change for a previous roster entry:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Chase country - range</u>
Randal Zipser	4214 Wembledon Circle Norman, Oklahoma 73069 (Age 27, single; Employer - Oklahoma Water Resources Board. Began chasing in Oklahoma in 1972.	Canadian border to Gulf, Rockies to Mississippi

A reminder: The purpose of the Roster is to let other chasers know of those interested in making contact and corresponding. Unless subscribers volunteer information in this fashion, I will respect their privacy and not mention them here.

III. BULLETIN BOARD/COMMERCIAL MARKET - \$- FOR PICTURES

IV. CAMERA TIPS

FUNNEL FUNNIES

V. TRAVEL TIPS

VI. FEATURE - "Bear White Child" and the First American Tornado Chase
By John Weaver

Although many people have, in the distant past, probably encountered tornadoes inadvertently (and thus have "intercepted" severe storms), I have always chosen to define a storm chaser as one who becomes fascinated with the grandeur of the event and subsequently attempts one or more purposeful close approaches. The true chaser becomes more a participant than an observer and is rewarded for his efforts by entering, for a short time, into a world of nearly incomprehensible natural forces-- a world seen only by a few, where colors appear and motions occur as nowhere else on earth. In the sense of this definition, I believe that I have stumbled upon an account of the first American storm chase.



This discovery occurred as I was pursuing another interest, that of studying certain Great Plains Indian tribes. In this case, I was reading of the Crow Indian tribe in a book entitled "Two Leggings" by Peter Nabokov (Apollo Editions, New York, N.Y., 1970). The following reviews a small section of that book, with my comments in parentheses.

Long before the American revolution, on the grassy plains of eastern Montana, a small tribe of nomadic Indians known as the Crow fought for their existence and their right to use of the land against many larger, neighboring tribes. The constant struggle left its mark upon the people. Even more than in other tribes, warriors were the tribal heroes and bravery was the mark of a man's worth. Belief in the ability to obtain supernatural help in their uncountable skirmishes left the Crow exceptionally religious, and long rituals honoring the deities of nature - such as Bear Up Above (i.e. the Big Dipper) - occupied large portions of the individual's time. Because deeds of great bravery were so important to tribal survival, the Crow (as well as most other tribes) developed the ability to transmit history verbally, through the generations, with little distortion. Against this background is presented the legend of Bear White Child -- an ancient chief that Nabokov believes is likely to have really existed. The accuracy of some of the meteorological detail leaves little doubt in my mind as to the authenticity of the account.

Once, when Bear White Child was a young boy, an older warrior tried to drown him as revenge for an interclan insult. His family placed his unconscious body beneath a pine tree -- believing him

dead. But Bear White Child awoke and, instead of returning to his people immediately, went into the wilderness to fast and pray in order that he might understand what had occurred.

One day, as the boy was sitting on a rock watching the setting sun (looking west- southwest), he "noticed a black cloud, as if a storm were about to break. The cloud grew larger and more threatening. He felt strong gusts of wind and saw streaks of lightning." It began to rain and hail, and the boy "was afraid the large hailstones would kill him" (They must have been quite large to have frightened a Crow). He was running for a place to hide, but a voice inside convinced him instead to remain with the storm (A chaser is born).

"The hail fell all around, but the boy was not touched" (Again, large hail is suggested, since normally the larger the stone -the smaller is the concentration per unit volume).

"Again, he looked in the direction the storm had come" (southwest); "a black cloud hung in the middle of the hail. The cloud's center began taking shape, and he saw the head Of Bear Up Above" (remember that 'Bear Up Above' is the Big Dipper). "At the moment, the upper half of the bear's body appeared, the hail stopped" (Any experienced chaser will realize what it means to be on the edge of the precipitation shaft, near the largest hail, and find a large lowering just to the southwest which is shaped like the Big Dipper).

"The bear sang a song" (audible tornadoes being well documented) "as it reached down to embrace the boy. It lifted him into the air, and when it had finished singing, put him down." This occurred four times without apparent harm to the boy (Many verified accounts exist of both humans and large animals being lifted -then deposited safely- by tornadoes). The account ends as the storm passes, "leaving behind a clear blue sky."

I am currently trying to learn more about Bear White Child and his encounter with the storm. If able to do so, I will ask the editor to pass it along in the news letter. It is possible that the more scientific reader will find the details of the boy's experience too nebulous to be convincing and the lack of written documentation even more harmful to the story. I only ask that he keep in mind that none of what White Bear Child witnessed those many hundred years ago contradicts what we have 'discovered' concerning the nature of tornadic storms in the modern era. After all, if 'true' science is presumed to be based only upon written experiment, we can all think of examples of written balderdash. If 'true' science is based upon reproducibility, we now know that the boy's experience has certainly been reproduced.

In the final analysis, one must conclude that even science is a matter of faith, that our modern methods are leading us to this knowledge. I am sure that if one were to present recent findings -based on modern methodology- to these early warriors, one would find more skepticism than if they were presented the same facts as a tale of bravery -related by an honest and honorable Indian on the plains of Montana, in the land of the Crow, in the land of the big sky.

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During part of this spring's chase, it is likely that I will be accompanied by a reporter for a large midwestern newspaper. In addition to myself, he may ask about other chasers. I would like to refer him to others in the chasing community -by name- who might be receptive to public inquiries about chasing, selling of slide duplicates, and/or general information about tornadoes. If you are inclined to share a little publicity with me -provided that the reporter's story is so written to include such information- please let me know. Otherwise, I will respect your privacy.

- Dave Hoadley

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As I did last year, I'll again be broadcasting on my CB in the vicinity of severe thunderstorms (possibly at other times) on the quarter hour -each half hour- over channels 6, 16, 26 or 36 (in that order). A "6" sequence was chosen because of the similarity of this number to the tornado "signature" of a radar hook echo. Although my official call sign is KBMI 9180, I will use the "handle" of "Storm Track" and broadcast "Storm Track Receiving." If Channel 6 is busy or becomes so, I will move to the next channels respectively- transmitting and receiving. The quarter hour times were chosen (15 minutes before and after the hour), since the hour and half hour times are better reserved for monitoring latest local radio news bulletins. If you pick me up, we can exchange the latest weather information and, possibly, help each other to a better chase day. Good luck to you!!!

- Dave Hoadley

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This issue was delayed due to a late family decision to go to Florida. However, delay of the May 31 issue of ST may be anticipated, as I expect to be chasing during the last week of May and first week or two of June. Barring one or more memorable storm intercepts which may pre-empt most, of the May issue, that Feature will include an article on a "Search for the First Tornado Photograph" by John T. Snow, who has done some research in this area.