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Chapter 1 : George Armstrong Custer | Biography, Battles, Death, & Facts | theinnatdunvilla.com

Meanwhile, another force, largely Oglala Sioux under Crazy Horse's command, swiftly moved downstream and then doubled back in a sweeping arc, enveloping Custer and his men in a pincer move. They began pouring in gunfire and arrows.

Although born in Ohio, Custer spent part of his youth in the home of his half sister and brother-in-law in Monroe, Michigan. Military Academy, from which he graduated last in his class in June. Later, catching the eye of Maj. In, at age 23, he became a brigadier general of U. Volunteers, leading the Michigan Cavalry Brigade, which consisted of four regiments from his adopted home state. During the closing days of the war, his relentless pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia and Gen. Custer reverted to the rank of captain in the regular army, though he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and became acting commander of the newly formed 7th U. In Custer and his 7th Cavalry reported to western Kansas to take part in Maj. Unable to adapt successfully to Indian warfare, Custer began acting erratically. He ordered deserters shot without trial. Instead of waiting for supplies to be loaded at Fort Wallace, he abandoned his regiment and went to Fort Riley to visit his wife. A court-martial at Fort Leavenworth found Custer guilty of misconduct in and suspended him from rank and pay for one year. Custer and his wife, Elizabeth Libbie Bacon Custer, were deeply committed to each other and wrote long passionate letters when separated. Custer was said to have had a theatrical presence and sensibility. They returned him to duty before his court-martial sentence expired, and in September he rejoined the 7th Cavalry in southwestern Kansas. Black Kettle and his people had already been the target of a controversial surprise attack by the army in known as the Sand Creek Massacre. In Custer led an expedition to investigate rumours of gold deposits in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory now in western South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming. The region had been recognized by treaty as the sacred hunting ground of the powerful Lakota Sioux. National Archives, Washington, D. Battle of the Little Bighorn Many of the Indian bands, in their remote and scattered winter camps, likely did not receive these orders and could not have reached the government agencies as whole communities including women and children if they had. In the face of white threats, these nonreservation bands came together under the leadership of the charismatic Sioux leader Sitting Bull, who advocated resistance to U. When the hunting season arrived in the spring, many more Native Americans left the reservations and headed out to join Sitting Bull, whose growing number of followers eventually made camp on the Little Bighorn River a branch of the Bighorn River in southern Montana Territory. Terry expected Custer to find and strike the Sioux and Cheyenne from the south, driving them into a smaller blocking force that he planned to position upstream on the Little Bighorn River. Custer opted for an immediate attack by the 7th Cavalry into the Little Bighorn Valley. At noon on June 25, to keep the Sioux and Cheyenne from escaping, Custer divided his regiment into three battalions, sending one to charge the village head on, a second to swing south to intercept any Indians fleeing in that direction, and a third under his personal command to strike the village from the north. The unfolding battle, which came to be known as the Battle of the Little Bighorn, confronted Custer and the 7th Cavalry with a series of unpleasant surprises. Rather than seek safety in flight, the Sioux and Cheyenne stood their ground, determined to either live or die in freedom. Earlier army intelligence estimates credited the bands loyal to Sitting Bull with a force of fighting men, but Custer actually found himself facing some 2, Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, many of them armed with superior repeating rifles and all of them resolved to defend their women, children, and older relatives. Custer and Crazy Horse Lieut. Custer bore two bullet wounds—“one in the left breast near his heart and one in front of his left temple—“either of which could have killed him. For many years afterward Comanche appeared in 7th Cavalry parades, saddled but riderless. Owing to his status as a Civil War hero, his death shocked the American people. By the latter half of the 20th century, the gallant Indian fighter had been transformed into a bloodthirsty Indian killer. Though many historians now accept that Custer was neither a spotless hero nor a villain, he and his final battle remain subjects of intense controversy.

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Chapter 2 : Crazy Horse Memorial - The Black Hills

A year earlier, Crazy Horse was among the Sioux leaders who defeated George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana Territory. The battle, in which

Lemly that his son "would soon have been thirty-seven, having been born on the South Cheyenne river in the fall of In youth, his nickname was Curly. He had the light curly hair, light eyes, and not particularly dark skin. He was next taken west in the direction of the Wakiyans thunder beings and given a medicine bundle that would protect him. His animal protector would be the white owl, which in Lakota spirituality gave him extended life. He was also shown his face paint, which consisted of a yellow lightning strike down the left side of his face and white powder that he would wet and with three fingers put marks over his vulnerable areas. When dried, they resembled small stones or pebbles. He was also given a sacred song that told him he would be a protector of his people. Crazy Horse did not wear a war bonnet. Scant written information exists because the Lakota had no written language, depending only on oral historians. His first kill was a Shoshone raider who had killed a Lakota woman washing buffalo meat along the Powder River. He fought in many skirmishes with Lakota enemies: Crazy Horse fought in many skirmishes and battles against the US Army. Due to his fighting ability, Crazy Horse was made a Shirt Wearer, or leader, in Referred to commonly as the Fetterman Massacre , I prefer Fight. It seems that if the Indians won, it was a massacre. Crazy Horse and 6 other warriors, lured Lt. The Troopers had separated from the Infantry, realized they were cut off from Fort Phil Kearny and vastly outnumbered. The Troopers regrouped with Lt. Fetterman in an attempt to bolster their numbers in a vain attempt to repel the Indians. Almost Braves participated in the trap and battle. The terrain is quite steep and it was easy to hide the Braves and their horses. Corporal Adolph Metzger was honored after the battle, by his enemies, by not being mutilated and having a buffalo cape placed over his body. He fought hand to hand with a bugle after expending his ammunition. Metzger posted in the future. This battle was a victory for the Army as 32 soldiers held off to 1, Braves depending on whom you believe. After a wood cutting crew was ambushed, the soldiers fled to a circle of wagon boxes without wheels, using them for cover to fire at the attacking Indians. The Soldiers had been issued new breech loading rifles that increased their rate of fire from three times a minute to 10 times a minute. Not knowing this, the Braves made repeated charges and were repelled repeatedly. Indian casualties were around killed and injured. Many were buried in the hills around Fort Phil Kearny in Wyoming. Black Buffalo Woman was the wife of No Water, who spent a lot of time near military forts drinking alcohol. Compensation was usually required and the rejected husband was expected to accept the divorce for the good of the tribe. Tribal elders convinced Crazy Horse and No Water that no more blood should be shed. No Water gave Crazy Horse three horses as compensation for the shooting. Because of the incident, Crazy Horse was stripped of his title as Shirt Wearer. Black Shawl was sent to aid Crazy Horse in the healing process. Crazy Horse and Black Shawl developed feelings for each other and married. They had a daughter, They Are Afraid of Her, in late summer of They Are Afraid Of Her died in at the age of two. Crazy Horse participated in still more skirmishes and battles with the whites leading up to the showdown at Little Big Horn. It was the first time the Indians had stood their ground against such a large number of US Army Soldiers in the west. The battle was close to a draw, but General Crook withdrew I feel an Indian victory without informing General Terry and General Custer of the size of the Indian war party or their new tactics. Crazy Horse entered the battle and was a major participant, leading groups of Braves in the remarkable Indian victory. After the US Army recovered from this stunning defeat, the Indians were seemingly always pursued and on the defensive. Crazy Horse and his Braves attempted to rescue the camp but were repulsed. Camp Robinson became Fort Robinson in Crazy Horse resided in a village, near the Red Cloud Agency, for the next four months. Officers at Camp Robinson received word that Chief Joseph and his followers had fled their reservations in Idaho and were headed north through Montana to Canada. Both declined stating they had promised to remain at peace when they surrendered. Some say Crazy Horse

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eventually agreed, after being promised more for his people, saying he would fight "till all the Nez Perce were killed". His words were improperly translated by Army scout Frank Grouard, who stated that Crazy Horse said that he would "go north and fight until not a white man is left". When Grouard had his translation challenged, he left the council. Another interpreter was brought in and quickly detected the growing tension, the damage already done. Another council of the Indian leaders was called, and then canceled, when Crook was informed that Crazy Horse had said that he intended to kill General Crook during the council. Crazy Horse had journeyed to the Spotted Tail Agency with his sick wife, who had contracted tuberculosis. On the morning of September 5, , Crazy Horse departed for Camp Robinson with the soldiers and some of his followers. Crazy Horse was led to the post guardhouse. Once inside, Crazy Horse realized his fate and struggled with the guard and Little Big Man in an attempt to escape. As he fled out the door of the guardhouse, Crazy Horse was stabbed with a bayonet by one of the guard detail. He was treated by the assistant post surgeon, Dr. Valentine McGillicuddy, and died late that night. Some say Crazy Horse died at midnight, what a chilling premonition that is. The great Warrior was struck down and succumbed at the darkest hour of night, the ways of his people also falling into the great black abyss with him. Official military records say he died before midnight, making September 5, his acknowledged death date. McGillicuddy wrote that Crazy Horse "died about midnight. The following morning his body was turned over to his parents who took him to Camp Sheridan, where he was placed on a scaffold. There are thought to be four major possible locations noted on a state highway memorial near Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Years later, the traitorous my opinion Little Big Man told that as Crazy Horse was being taken to the guardhouse he pulled two knives, one in each hand. One knife was reportedly fashioned from the end of an army bayonet. Little Big Man not wanting the soldiers to have any excuse to kill him, seized Crazy Horse by both elbows, pulling his arms up and behind him. I guess it is possible such a freaky thing could have happened, but I have serious doubts that an extremely adept hand to hand weapon combatant like Crazy Horse could stab himself in the back! The "last words" attributed to Crazy Horse contain "I came here with the agent to talk with the Big White Chief but was not given a chance. They tried to confine me. I tried to escape, and a soldier ran his bayonet into me. The Identity of the soldier responsible for the bayoneting of Crazy Horse is also unknown. One account identifies the soldier as Private William Gentles. To this day, the identification remains questionable. There is a great controversy whether Crazy Horse was ever photographed. Crazy Horse was distrustful of whites who can blame him? In , a small tintype portrait reported to be Crazy Horse was published. The photograph had belonged to the family of scout, Baptiste "Little Bat" Garnier. Twenty years later, the portrait was published again with more details about how the it was taken at Camp Robinson. The original tintype is currently in the Custer Battlefield Museum in Garryowen, Montana , and is promoted as the only authentic portrait of Crazy Horse. Both sides of the controversy have valid arguments. I have viewed the tintype in the museum, I have no idea who is correct. I hope it is Crazy Horse, I would like to think I have gazed on the face of this great leader. Both said Crazy Horse was never photographed, and they knew him personally. Like I always state, do your research and read both points of view in depth, and then make your own educated decision.

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Chapter 3 : PBS - THE WEST - George Armstrong Custer

2. *George Custer American officer: An American soldier on a fast, "stocking-legged" "sorrel horse" made a lone dash for safety at the very end of the Custer fight.*

Visit Website Meanwhile, three columns of U. Stunned by the size and ferocity of the Indian attack, Crook was forced to withdraw. Indeed, his main fear was that the Indians would scatter before he could attack. Rather than wait for reinforcements, Custer decided to move forward immediately and stage an unusual mid-day attack. As the 7th Cavalry entered the valley, Custer divided the regiment of about men into four battalions, keeping a force of under his own command. In the vast Indian encampment historians estimate there were as many as 11, Indians , word quickly spread of the approaching soldiers. Too old actually to engage in battle, Sitting Bull rallied his warriors while seeing to the protection of the women and children. The younger Crazy Horse prepared for battle and sped off with a large force of warriors to meet the invaders. Gradually, it dawned on Custer that his scouts had not exaggerated the size of the Indian force after all. He immediately dispatched urgent orders in an attempt to regroup his regiment. The other battalions, however, were facing equally massive attacks and were unable to come to his aid. Soon, Custer and his men found themselves cut off and under attack by as many as 3, armed braves. Within an hour, they were wiped out to the last man. The remaining battalions of the 7th Cavalry were also badly beaten, but they managed to fight a holding action until the Indians withdrew the following day. The Indians were not allowed to revel in the victory for long, however. The massacre of Custer and his 7th Cavalry outraged many Americans and only confirmed the image of the bloodthirsty Indians in their minds, and the government became more determined to destroy or tame the hostile Indians. The army redoubled its efforts and drove home the war with a vengeful fury. Within five years, almost all of the Sioux and Cheyenne would be confined to reservations. Crazy Horse was killed in after leaving the reservation without permission. Sitting Bull was shot and killed three years later in by a Lakota policeman.

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Chapter 4 : The Battle of the Little Bighorn,

Little Big Man said that in the hours immediately following Crazy Horse's wounding, the camp commander had suggested the story of the guard being responsible to hide Little Big Man's role in the death of Crazy Horse and avoid any inter-clan reprisals.

Movements of the 7th Cavalry A: Ordered to charge, Reno began that phase of the battle. They immediately realized that the Lakota and Northern Cheyenne were present "in force and not running away. The same trees on his front right shielded his movements across the wide field over which his men rapidly rode, first with two approximately forty-man companies abreast and eventually with all three charging abreast. The tepees in that area were occupied by the Hunkpapa Sioux. Neither Custer nor Reno had much idea of the length, depth and size of the encampment they were attacking, as the village was hidden by the trees. He ordered his troopers to dismount and deploy in a skirmish line, according to standard army doctrine. In this formation, every fourth trooper held the horses for the troopers in firing position, with five to ten yards separating each trooper, officers to their rear and troopers with horses behind the officers. After about 20 minutes of long-distance firing, Reno had taken only one casualty, but the odds against him had risen Reno estimated five to one, and Custer had not reinforced him. They forced a hasty withdrawal into the timber along the bend in the river. After giving orders to mount, dismount and mount again, Reno told his men, "All those who wish to make their escape follow me," and led a disorderly rout across the river toward the bluffs on the other side. The retreat was immediately disrupted by Cheyenne attacks at close quarters. Later, Reno reported that three officers and 29 troopers had been killed during the retreat and subsequent fording of the river. Another officer and 13–18 men were missing. Most of these missing men were left behind in the timber, although many eventually rejoined the detachment. Reno and Benteen on Reno Hill[edit] This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. Come on, Big Village, Be quick, Bring packs. The 14 officers and troopers on the bluffs organized an all-around defense and dug rifle pits using whatever implements they had among them, including knives. This practice had become standard during the last year of the American Civil War, with both Union and Confederate troops utilizing knives, eating utensils, mess plates and pans to dig effective battlefield fortifications. Thomas Weir and Company D moved out to make contact with Custer. By this time, roughly 5: The conventional historical understanding is that what Weir witnessed was most likely warriors killing the wounded soldiers and shooting at dead bodies on the "Last Stand Hill" at the northern end of the Custer battlefield. Some contemporary historians have suggested that what Weir witnessed was a fight on what is now called Calhoun Hill. The other entrenched companies eventually followed Weir by assigned battalions, first Benteen, then Reno, and finally the pack train. Growing native attacks around Weir Ridge forced all seven companies to return to the bluff before the pack train, with the ammunition, had moved even a quarter mile. The companies remained pinned down on the bluff for another day, but the natives were unable to breach the tightly held position. Benteen was hit in the heel of his boot by an Indian bullet. Army troops making their last charge at the Battle of the Little Bighorn Crow Indian Reservation, area and Yellow area is Crow treaty land ceded to the U. It was in the red area that the battle stood. The Lakotas were here without consent from the local Crow tribe, which had treaty on the area. Already in , Crow chief Blackfoot had called for U. Later accounts from surviving Indians are conflicting and unclear. They were reportedly stunned by the news. When the army examined the Custer battle site, soldiers could not determine fully what had transpired. Evidence of organized resistance included apparent breastworks made of dead horses on Custer Hill. Custer was found with shots to the left chest and left temple. Either wound would have been fatal, though he appeared to have bled from only the chest wound, meaning his head wound may have been delivered postmortem. He also suffered a wound to the arm. Some Lakota oral histories assert that Custer committed suicide to avoid capture and subsequent torture, though this is usually discounted since the wounds were inconsistent with his

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known right-handedness. Other native accounts note several soldiers committing suicide near the end of the battle. He was driven back, retreating toward the hill where his body was found. According to Pretty Shield , the wife of Goes-Ahead another Crow scout for the 7th Cavalry , Custer was killed while crossing the river: Edward Settle Godfrey , Custer did not attempt to ford the river and the nearest that he came to the river or village was his final position on the ridge. The route taken by Custer to his "Last Stand" remains a subject of debate. One possibility is that after ordering Reno to charge, Custer continued down Reno Creek to within about a half-mile m of the Little Bighorn, but then turned north and climbed up the bluffs, reaching the same spot to which Reno would soon retreat. From this point on the other side of the river, he could see Reno charging the village. Riding north along the bluffs, Custer could have descended into Medicine Tail Coulee. According to some accounts, a small contingent of Indian sharpshooters effectively opposed this crossing. Lieutenant Colonel Custer and his U. While no other Indian account supports this claim, if White Bull did shoot a buckskin-clad leader off his horse, some historians have argued that Custer may have been seriously wounded by him. Some Indian accounts claim that besides wounding one of the leaders of this advance, a soldier carrying a company guidon was also hit. Other historians have noted that if Custer did attempt to cross the river near Medicine Tail Coulee, he may have believed it was the north end of the Indian camp, although it was only the middle. Some Indian accounts, however, place the Northern Cheyenne encampment and the north end of the overall village to the left and south of the opposite side of the crossing. Northwestern University Library Edward S. Edward Curtis , the famed ethnologist and photographer of the Native American Indians, made a detailed personal study of the battle, interviewing many of those who had fought or taken part in it. He also visited the Lakota country and interviewed Red Hawk , "whose recollection of the fight seemed to be particularly clear". However, "the Indians had now discovered him and were gathered closely on the opposite side". This was the beginning of their attack on Custer who was forced to turn and head for the hill where he would make his famous "last stand". Thus, wrote Curtis, "Custer made no attack, the whole movement being a retreat".

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Chapter 5 : Indians defeat Custer at Little Big Horn - HISTORY

Crazy Horse's legacy began shaping up when the Lakota leader played an important part in the Indian force that killed Lt. Col. George Custer and his men at Little Big Horn on June , Crazy Horse battled the U.S. Army for another six months.

Many men were veterans of the war, including most of the leading officers. A significant portion of the regiment had previously served four-and-a-half years at Ft. Riley , Kansas, during which time it fought one major engagement and numerous skirmishes, experiencing casualties of 36 killed and 27 wounded. Six other troopers had died of drowning and 51 from cholera epidemics. About 20 percent of the troopers had been enlisted in the prior seven months of an enlisted roll of , were only marginally trained, and had no combat or frontier experience. A sizable number of these recruits were immigrants from Ireland, England and Germany, just as many of the veteran troopers had been before their enlistments. Archaeological evidence suggests that many of these troopers were malnourished and in poor physical condition, despite being the best-equipped and supplied regiment in the army. Sturgis and troopers did not accompany the 7th during the campaign. Number of Indian warriors Edit Army Campaign against the Sioux As the Army moved into the field on its expedition, it was operating with incorrect assumptions as to the number of Indians it would encounter. The Indian Agents based the number on the number of Lakota led by Sitting Bull and other leaders off the reservation in protest of US Government policies. However, the agents did not take into account the many thousands of "reservation Indians" who had "unofficially" left the reservation to join their "uncooperative non-reservation cousins led by Sitting Bull". The latter were those groups who had indicated that they were not going to cooperate with the US Government and live on reservation lands. Thus, Custer unknowingly faced thousands of Indians, in addition to the non-reservation "hostiles". All Army plans were based on the incorrect numbers. While after the battle, Custer was severely criticized for not having accepted reinforcements and for dividing his forces, it must be understood that he had accepted the same official Government estimates of hostiles in the area which Terry and Gibbon also accepted. Historian James Donovan states that when Custer asked interpreter Fred Gerard for his opinion on the size of the opposition, he estimated the force at between 1, to 2, warriors. From his own observation, as reported by his trumpeter John Martin Martini [14] Custer assumed the warriors had been sleeping in on the morning of the battle, to which virtually every native account attested later, giving Custer a false estimate of what he was up against. Looking from a hill 2. When the scouts began changing back into their native dress right before the battle, Custer released them from his command. While the village was enormous in size, Custer thought there were far fewer warriors to defend the village. He assumed most of the warriors were still asleep in their teepees. Reports from his scouts also revealed fresh pony tracks from ridges overlooking his formation. It became apparent that the warriors in the village were either aware of or would soon be aware of his approach. He intended to capture women, children, the elderly or disabled [18]: Connell observed that if Custer could occupy the village before widespread resistance developed, the Sioux and Cheyenne warriors "would be obliged to surrender, because if they started to fight, they would be shooting their own families. Edward Godfrey of Company K surmised: The probable attack upon the families and capture of the herds were in that event counted upon to strike consternation in the hearts of the warriors, and were elements for success upon which General Custer fully counted". Carter, writing to author W. Graham in , discussed the vulnerability of U. Army troops to interception and destruction by Indian defenders, outside the context of the Indian villages:

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Chapter 6 : Custer Battlefield Museum Home

The Battle of the Little Bighorn, known to the Lakota and other Plains Indians as the Battle of the Greasy Grass and also commonly referred to as Custer's Last Stand, was an armed engagement between combined forces of the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes and the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army.

Even if Lieutenant Colonel General to his men George Armstrong Custer came back from the grave to tell his side of the story, the controversy would still not die. The Battle of the Little Bighorn is like a 10,000 piece jigsaw puzzle on the south-central Montana landscape – the stuff of legend and historical gamesmanship. Custer and more than a third of the elite 7th Cavalry Regiment lost their lives in an epic struggle with the Plains Indians. Countless historians, authors and amateur scholars more often than not after coming down with a bad case of the Custer bug and finding it impossible to shake have analyzed the battle. The analyses have sometimes been in direct conflict, since the so-called experts have taken different routes in trying to explain the sequence of events, why things happened and who was to blame Custer, his supporting cast or his bosses for the year-old U. The controversy has not lost its intensity through the years. A previously unidentified cavalry combat position has been discovered near Last Stand Hill also known as Custer Hill, the knoll north of the Little Bighorn River where Custer and about 40 troopers are said to have made a final stand while surrounded. It is my understanding that artifacts have been discovered on private property near the river, says Darrell Cook, superintendent of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Park. The National Park is not involved in this; private individuals have done the research. The exact whereabouts of these newly discovered artifacts remains confidential to protect them from looters, but the general location is close to the Little Bighorn River west and slightly north of Last Stand Hill see map, P. Unlike Errol Flynn see the movie *They Died With Their Boots On*, Custer did not simply ride over the hill to be suddenly surrounded and massacred by thousands of Indians in a few short minutes. There is no record of dead cavalymen being found at this location when burial details were conducted a few days after the battle. This lack of bodies suggests that the cavalry detachment that fought at this position was not overwhelmed by the Indian warriors and was able to withdraw from it in good order, taking any dead and wounded with them. As a result, the public perception of Custer today probably falls somewhere near or below Attila the Hun. Custer, born in New Rumley, Ohio, on December 5, 1839, was a member of the second class of at the Military Academy at West Point, graduating a year early because Southern artillerymen had opened fire on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. Cavalry, was one of the last Union formations to leave the battlefield. Custer went on to distinguish himself in nearly every major battle fought by the Army of the Potomac. Because of his aggressiveness in cavalry charges, year-old Custer was promoted from captain to brigadier general just days before the Battle of Gettysburg. On July 3, 1863, when Maj. Saber-wielding General Custer and his Wolverines were there to stop what some historians have suggested could have been a battle-winning assault. The dashing young general stayed in the spotlight with the Michigan Brigade until September 30, 1863, when he was promoted to major general and given command of the 3rd Cavalry Division. Custer would hold that command post until the end, particularly distinguishing himself during the Appomattox campaign. Phil Sheridan, who had been Lt. I respectfully present to you this small writing table on which the conditions for the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia were written by Lt. General Grant and permit me to say, Madam, that there is scarcely an individual in our service who has contributed more to bring about this desirable result than your gallant husband. That such memorable service should be overshadowed by what happened one Sunday in June more than 10 years later is an injustice that irritates Steve Alexander as much as it does anyone. Alexander has portrayed Custer in Little Bighorn reenactments for more than 15 years and in nearly 20 documentaries, including *Betrayal at Little Big Horn*, *Encounters of the Unexplained* and *Command Decisions*. Custer may be the most misunderstood figure in American history, says Alexander, who has amassed a huge library of Custer reference material through the years. I have studied Custer most of my life and have been continuously amazed at his exceptional courage, military ability and

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character. He was a master at the use of surprise, maneuver and terrain. He led from the front and demonstrated his ability to seize opportunity in an instant; the soldiers he commanded held him in esteem. By the end of the Civil War, Custer had been promoted to major general. In the peacetime Army that followed, his rank would be reduced to that of lieutenant colonel. Custer, as well as other U. Army officers who had been reduced in rank, was referred to in official documents and press reports as General. In he was made acting commander of the 7th Cavalry. For the next 10 years, Custer and the 7th Cavalry would chase hostile Plains Indians and take them on in many skirmishes and two major battles. In November , after a harrowing winter march, Custer and his command attacked and captured a Cheyenne Indian village located on the Washita River in Indian Territory present-day Oklahoma. About Indians were killed, but Custer also took 67 captives, a fact that debunks the charge by some that it was a bloodthirsty massacre. Evidence found within this village and other allied Indian camps nearby, including murdered white captives, demonstrated that these bands were not at peace. At the Washita, as at the Little Bighorn, Custer had Indian scouts who led him to the enemy other Indians and were more than happy to participate in the defeat of people who were also their enemies. When some Sioux warriors tried to raid horses from the expedition on August 4, Custer gave chase. About Sioux suddenly burst out of the timber by the Tongue River, but Custer executed a skillful withdrawal and held them back, later saying that the warriors displayed unusual boldness. After attempts by the Sioux to burn the grass and smoke out the soldiers failed, Custer surprised the enemy with a counterattack and drove them off. Just seven days later, near the mouth of the Bighorn River, warriors fired on the cavalry from the opposite shore. During another counterattack, Custer had a horse shot out from under him but emerged without a scratch. In these two engagements, Custer demonstrated enough leadership and discipline to more than hold his own against a larger force of Plains Indians. Not that it was always smooth sailing for Custer in the West prior to June Back in , the 7th Cavalry had been plagued by factionalism, and Custer had been court-martialed for absence without leave from his command and for ordering deserters to be shot. He was convicted and suspended from command for one year. His testimony was damaging to William W. Grant removed Custer from command of the troops at Fort Lincoln, but under pressure, the president later returned Custer to command of the 7th Cavalry though Brig. On June 25, Custer rode to his death in a cloud of controversies, and his many enemies and later detractors would ensure that the earlier controversies and the ones generated by the military disaster that day would grow after his death. One controversial notion should be put aside right away: That is a myth. When Custer surprised the Sioux and Cheyennes village, he was not attacking peace-loving defenders. Back on March 10, , Indian agent Dexter Clapp of the Crow Agency in Montana said that the Sioux are now occupying the eastern and best portion of their reservation and by their constant warfare paralyzing all efforts to induce the Crows to undertake agriculture or other means of self support, and added that the Crows expect the Sioux to attack this agency and themselves in large force. Other tribes such as the Shoshones, Blackfeet and Arikaras were also victims of Sioux raids and war making. The proud warrior culture of the Plains Indians was one reason that disenchanting Sioux warriors and their allies left their reservations in to join the influential medicine man Sitting Bull, who had never signed a treaty with the United States. Another reason was that the government was not fulfilling treaty obligations, which was something Custer had pointed out when summoned to Washington. In any case, the Indians defiance meant war. Army did have a plan of action to deal with the hostile Indians. The Terry and Custer force that departed Fort Lincoln on May 17, , consisted of the entire 7th Cavalry of 12 companies, three companies of infantry, three Gatling guns, Indian scouts and a huge wagon train. Two other columns were also dispatched to seek out the hostile tribes. Plains Indians fought Brig. A scouting party headed by the second-ranking officer in the 7th Cavalry, Major Marcus Reno, had discovered a huge Indian trail leading toward the Little Bighorn Valley. In a communication addressed to General Sheridan dated June 21, Terry said, My only hope is that one of the two columns will find the Indians. His belief that either of the two columns would be able to handle any hostile warriors was realistic. Custer did not heedlessly rush into battle against the advice of his scouts. I told [guide and interpreter] Mitch Bouyer it would be a good thing if they would hide here until night and then surprise

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the camp, scout White Man Runs Him later said. Then the two Sioux appeared over there and I said we had better hurry and get over there just as soon as possible. Custer was able to pull off a surprise attack. Sheridan reported on November 25, , If Custer had not come upon the village so suddenly, the warriors would have gone to meet him in order to give time to the women and children to get out of the way, as they did with Crook only a few days before. Custer divided his command into battalions, and retained personal command of two battalions five companies, about men. Reno was given command of three companies and most of the scouts about men. Captain Frederick Benteen was given command of three companies about men. One company and six men from each company about men were assigned to protect the pack train and provide a rear guard for the advance. It has often been claimed that this decision doomed Custer, but never before had a battalion let alone an entire regiment of cavalry been whipped by Plains Indians. Neither Custer nor any of the officers with him would have doubted that each of these commands, with the exception of the pack train command, was a formidable offensive force. It is accepted military doctrine that forces divide and maneuver for the offensive while they concentrate for the defense. Custer had divided his forces many times during the Civil War, as well as at the Washita and during the Yellowstone Expedition. As would be expected, Custer commanded the largest force and planned to strike the main blow at the enemy. Captain Benteen would later refer to these men, along with a few others, as the Custer gang. Perhaps so, but none of these proven soldiers would have conducted themselves the way that Reno and Benteen seemingly did at the Little Big horn by disobeying orders, exhibiting dereliction of military duty and displaying cowardice. Benteen, by most accounts, resented Custer and had publicly criticized his conduct at the Washita. Their personal animosity was still going strong in What legitimate military purpose this order had, if any, has been much debated. Schreffler adds, I believe the tactics used by Custer very possibly would have been used by any other officer of that era in his position and possessing the same information. As the main force approached the Little Bighorn Valley, hostile warriors were seen, and Custer ordered Reno into the valley to attack the Indian camp while he turned to the right to advance upon the camp from the hills overlooking the valley. Reno crossed the Little Bighorn River and charged down the valley until he halted to form a skirmish line. According to the original map of Lieutenant Edward Maguire, who arrived with General Terry and the reinforcements two days later, Reno stopped his advance about two miles from the main Indian camp. The accounts of the Indian participants frequently conflict, but one thing almost all the old warriors agreed on was that their camp or village was unprepared for the sudden attack. Reno was able to form a dismounted skirmish line in good order, and the horses were sheltered in low benchland near the river. While this is sometimes portrayed as a defensive action, Reno was actually creating a diversion while Custer maneuvered for a flank attack. It is evident to me that Custer intended to support me by attacking the village in the flank, Reno later said. Reno then ordered the skirmish line into a wooded area, where the men remounted. Had Reno been in a defensive mode, he most likely would have concentrated his forces and kept his men on foot. At this point, a bullet struck the scout Bloody Knife in the head and a shower of gore sprayed the face of Reno, who was standing next to him. Reno lost his composure, ordering his force to dismount, and then to remount again.

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Chapter 7 : "Who Killed Custer?" by Bruce Brown

Although some soldiers ran from Custer's Hill, they did hold their ground and fight from their position as long as they could. The participating warriors called it a Last Stand. Deal with it The Battle of the Little Bighorn, fought on the banks of the river of that name in Montana Territory in.

In his dream, a great dust storm swirled down upon a small white cloud that resembled a Lakota village. Through the whirlwind, Sitting Bull could see soldiers marching. The little cloud was swallowed up for a time, but the storm eventually dissipated and the village emerged unharmed. It was an encouraging dream. And in the spring of , the Lakota needed encouragement, for General Philip Sheridan had already drawn up a plan that would send three columns of soldiers to find Sitting Bull and drive him and his followers onto the reservations. Custer, dressed in a dashing suit of buckskin, is prominent everywhere The General is full of perfect readiness for a fray with the hostile red devils, and woe to the body of scalp-lifters that comes within reach of himself and his brave companions in arms. There they held their most sacred ritual -- a sun dance -- in which prayers were offered and vows made to Wakan Tanka, their Great Spirit. Sitting Bull slashed his arms one hundred times as a sign of sacrifice. Then he had another vision: And armed with this vision the warriors go out looking for somebody to fight. Then, suddenly, Crazy Horse and more than Lakota and Cheyenne warriors rode down upon them. Unnerved by the enemy show of force, Crook withdrew the next morning. The Lakota and Cheyenne moved north and formed a new camp, where for six days they celebrated their victory along a winding stream they called the Greasy Grass. Whites called it the Little Bighorn. Terry ordered Gibbon to march to the mouth of the Little Bighorn, while Custer and the Seventh Cavalry would try to locate the Indians and drive them down the valley toward Gibbon and annihilation. They are magnificent-looking men, so much handsomer and more Indian-like than any we have ever seen, and jolly and sportive; nothing of the gloomy, silent red-man about them That was the kind of man they wanted to fight under; they were willing to eat mule, too. Why would a tribe of Indians decide to fight other tribes in behalf of the white man? The exhausted troopers began to grumble about the man they privately called "Hard Ass. In the last few days, 3, more Indians -- Lakotas, Arapahoes and Cheyennes -- had left the reservations to join Sitting Bull. His encampment now stretched out for three miles along the Greasy Grass, a gathering of more than six thousand Indians, eighteen hundred of them warriors. On the evening of June 24th, Sitting Bull made his way to a ridge that overlooked the encampment, gave offerings to the Great Spirit and prayed for the protection of his people. Wakan Tanka, pity me. In the name of the [people] I offer you this sacred pipe. Wherever the sun, the moon, the earth, the four points of the wind, there you are always We want to live. Guard us against all misfortune Sitting Bull The next day was June 25th, a Sunday, cloudless and hot. Even with a telescope, he was unable to see much more than a white blur on the valley floor. His only concern was that he had already been spotted, that unless he attacked right away, the Indians would split up and flee in so many directions that he could never stop them. So he pushed to an attack as quickly as it could be mounted -- a dreadful mistake on his part because his men were exhausted. With the weapon of surprise, a victory seemed just as likely here. Custer hurried toward the Little Bighorn. He saw dust rising over a ridge just ahead of him and thought the Indians were already on the move to escape. It was now or never. Some 40 warriors appeared, then began racing back toward their camp. Custer sent Major Marcus Reno and three companies -- men -- in pursuit, promising to support them. The Battle of the Little Bighorn was about to begin. They were soon outnumbered and Reno ordered a retreat. More warriors swarmed out of the village, but still Custer did not come. Instead of following Reno, he had led his five companies of men toward a ridge, convinced the Indians were fleeing and that by charging down into the village from there, he could cut them off. He went over there and pretty soon he beat it back. He was all shook up, as they say, you know. My grandfather used to say, Custer looked whiter than ever. Stunned at the sight of hundreds of warriors headed right at them, Custer and his men stopped short and began a headlong retreat toward the summit of a long, high ridge. Some of the Indians remembered later that the legs

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of the men and the horses trembled as they scrambled up the slope. I called to my men: As we rushed upon them the [soldiers] dismounted to fire, but they did very poor shooting. Low Dog I charged in. A tall, well-built soldier We grabbed each other and wrestled there in the dust and smoke He hit me with his fists on the jaw and shoulders, then grabbed my long braids with both hands, pulled my face close and tried to bite my nose off I yelled as loud as I could to scare my enemy, but he would not let go. Finally, I broke free. He drew his pistol. I wrenched it out of his hand and struck him with it three or four times on the head, knocked him over, shot him in the head and fired at his heart That was a [good] fight, a hard fight. But it was a glorious battle, I enjoyed it. White Bull The soldiers, one Lakota remembered, "were as good men as ever fought. It was the greatest Indian victory of the Plains wars. This was done to improve his hearing, as it seemed he had not heard what our chiefs in the South had said when he smoked the pipe with them. They told him then that if ever afterward he should break that peace promise and should fight the Cheyennes, the Everywhere Spirit surely would cause him to be killed I often have wondered if, when I was riding among the dead where he was lying, my pony may have kicked dirt upon his body. Kate Big-Head Americans were celebrating their centennial that summer, proud of years of independence. The news that Custer and all his men had been killed by Indians was greeted with disbelief: How could native warriors with absurd names -- Low Dog, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull -- have defeated so gallant a soldier? General Philip Sheridan, architect of the plan that had ended in disaster, promised Custer would be avenged, and 2, additional cavalymen hurried west. Miles crisscrossed the Powder River country hunting down the bands that had split up after the Custer fight. One by one, all were forced to surrender. The reservation chiefs were forced to accept all of it. But Sitting Bull would not accept defeat. He and his followers had fled beyond the reach of American troops, across the border into Canada, which he called the "Land of the Grandmother," in honor of Queen Victoria. When General Alfred Terry traveled north to offer him a full pardon on the condition that he settle on a reservation, Sitting Bull angrily sent him away. This country is my country now, and I intend to stay here and raise my people to fill it. We did not give our country to you; you stole it. You come here to tell lies; when you go home, take them with you.

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Chapter 8 : Custer's Last Stand

Crazy Horse was an Oglala Sioux Indian chief who fought against removal to an Indian reservation. He took part in the Battle of Little Big Horn. Crazy Horse was born c. , near present-day.

George Armstrong Custer Flamboyant in life, George Armstrong Custer has remained one of the best-known figures in American history and popular mythology long after his death at the hands of Lakota and Cheyenne warriors at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Custer was born in New Rumley, Ohio, and spent much of his childhood with a half-sister in Monroe, Michigan. Immediately after high school he enrolled in West Point, where he utterly failed to distinguish himself in any positive way. Several days after graduating last in his class, he failed in his duty as officer of the guard to stop a fight between two cadets. He was court-martialed and saved from punishment only by the huge need for officers with the outbreak of the Civil War. Custer did unexpectedly well in the Civil War. He fought in the First Battle of Bull Run, and served with panache and distinction in the Virginia and Gettysburg campaigns. Although his units suffered enormously high casualty rates -- even by the standards of the bloody Civil War -- his fearless aggression in battle earned him the respect of his commanding generals and increasingly put him in the public eye. His cavalry units played a critical role in forcing the retreat of Confederate General Robert E. In July of Custer was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the Seventh Cavalry. The next year he led the cavalry in a muddled campaign against the Southern Cheyenne. In late Custer was court-martialed and suspended from duty for a year for being absent from duty during the campaign. Custer maintained that he was simply being made a scapegoat for a failed campaign, and his old friend General Phil Sheridan agreed, calling Custer back to duty in Custer was sent to the Northern Plains in , where he soon participated in a few small skirmishes with the Lakota in the Yellowstone area. The following year, he lead a 1, person expedition to the Black Hills, whose possession the United States had guaranteed the Lakota just six years before. Grant that he relieved Custer of his command and replaced him with General Alfred Terry. Popular disgust, however, forced Grant to reverse his decision. Custer went West to meet his destiny. The original United States plan for defeating the Lakota called for the three forces under the command of Crook, Gibbon, and Custer to trap the bulk of the Lakota and Cheyenne population between them and deal them a crushing defeat. Custer, however, advanced much more quickly than he had been ordered to do, and neared what he thought was a large Indian village on the morning of June 25, On the verge of what seemed to him a certain and glorious victory for both the United States and himself, Custer ordered an immediate attack on the Indian village. Contemptuous of Indian military prowess, he split his forces into three parts to ensure that fewer Indians would escape. His defeat at the Little Bighorn made the life of what would have been an obscure 19th century military figure into the subject of countless songs, books and paintings. His widow, Elizabeth Bacon Custer, did what she could to further his reputation, writing laudatory accounts of his life that portrayed him as not only a military genius but also a refined and cultivated man, a patron of the arts, and a budding statesman. All of these paintings -- as did the misnomer "the Custer massacre" -- depicted Custer as a gallant victim, surrounded by bloodthirsty savages intent upon his annihilation. Forgotten were the facts that he had started the battle by attacking the Indian village, and that most of Indians present were forced to surrender within a year of their greatest battlefield triumph.

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Chapter 9 : PBS - THE WEST - A Good Day to Die

The Fetterman Massacre was a battle on December 21, , between the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians and soldiers of the United States Army.

The eye-witness answer to the eternal question Who Killed George A. None of these esteemed warriors actually killed Custer, though, based on the eye-witness record of the battle. To find who really killed Custer -- or at least identify the most likely suspects -- it is crucial to know the appearance of Custer and the other officers in his command on June 25, This gave him opportunity to sight his rifle while riding. His rifle lay horizontally in front of him. Custer -- the man the Sioux called Long Hair -- had recently cut his hair short , and Thompson , John Martin and the Arikara scout, Soldier , all said Custer had taken off his buckskin coat and was in his shirt sleeves. Unfortunately, any number of Seventh Cavalry officers could fit this general description: Most observers agreed with Godfrey and Seventh Cavalry surgeon Dr. Porter that Custer was shot twice, once through the ribs below the heart, and once through the left temple. It is also useful to know that unlike most of the Seventh Cavalry dead , Custer was not badly mutilated. Armed with this information, we at Astonisher. The second most likely possibility is that Custer killed himself. Either of these top two scenarios could be true, but White Cow Bull is the prime suspect, based on the eye-witness record of the battle. The other candidates in the Astonisher. Part 2 -- And the winner is The two of them had just "settled down to telling each other some of our brave deeds in the past " when another alarm ran through the camp, this time announcing that the Americans were charging to attack the village at Medicine Tail Coulee across the river from the Cheyenne camp. Happily considering themselves free to join the fight against this immediate threat, White Cow Bull and Roan Bear ran to the river, where they found Bobtailed Horse , White Shield , Calf and a couple other warriors, most without guns. The Indians whipped their ponies across the ford at Medicine Tail Coulee moments ahead of the Americans. The American soldiers halted on the opposite shore and dismounted , waiting there for a few minutes until a man in a buckskin jacket "shouted something and they all came charging at us across the ford. White Cow Bull said: The man who seemed to be the soldier chief was firing his heavy rifle fast. I aimed my repeater at him and fired. I saw him fall out of his saddle and hit the water. White Cow Bull said as soon as the officer on the "sorrel horse with The American soldiers who jumped in the river were probably one or more of the four Custer family members with Custer when he fell, including his brothers Thomas and Boston. White Cow Bull said the officer he shot in the middle of the Little Bighorn was wearing buckskin and riding a " sorrel horse with Part 3 -- Does his story check out? In a word, yes. White Cow Bull said three Crow scouts rode to the edge of the bluff above the river and fired down at them witnessed by Goes Ahead , Hairy Moccasin White Cow Bull said Custer and his men were hotly pursuing a small band of Indians when they reached the river witnessed by: Foolish Elk , George Bird Grinnell White Cow Bull said Custer and his men encountered Indian fire from the other side of the river when they reached the Little Bighorn witnessed by: Peter Thompson , White Shield White Cow Bull said he was one of the few warriors there when Custer charged into the river and the Indians opened fire witnessed by: White Cow Bull said Custer -- the officer on the "sorrel horse with Curley , George Glenn , Jacob Adams Either way, Custer was the only Seventh Cavalry officer on a sorrel horse with four white socks. Part 4 -- The Runners-up As He Dog told it: One soldier with a stocking-legged horse got away, around the big body of Indians, toward the north. He had a very fast horse and was pursued until they were about to give up the chase, when he shot himself with his revolver and the horse was caught. White Cow Bull added the graphic detail: I saw him yank out his revolver and thought he was going to shoot back at these warriors. Instead he put the revolver to his head , pulled the trigger, and fell dead. This suicide story has two important elements for identifying Custer -- the crucial sorrel horse with four white socks, and the fatal bullet wound to the head. But there are two more Cheyenne kill stories involving an American officer on a sorrel horse at the end of the battle. The same sort of problems plague all the candidates on Astonisher. In fact, the eye-witness record indicates Custer was either

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killed or badly wounded before any of the other warriors on Astonisher.