

# 83 Years Fail To Dim Controversy Over Custer's Stand Against Indian Warriors

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Washington—UPI—June 25 marks the anniversary of the most humiliating defeat ever suffered by the United States Army.

On that date in 1876, Gen. George Armstrong Custer and 211 men were massacred in the battle of the Little Big Horn.

The 83 years since then have failed to dim the Custer legend, or the controversy that exploded the moment the 212 bodies were found on a lonely Montana ridge. There have been as many books written about this comparatively minor Indian skirmish as on the battle of Gettysburg.

At least a dozen movies have been made around the Last Stand. More than 100 paintings depicting Custer's death have graced the walls of every kind of establishment from Bowery saloons to swanky museums.

Up to a point, the facts of the battle are simple.

Custer and 10 troops of the Seventh Cavalry, about 400 men, were ordered down the Rosebud river as part of an over-all plan to box in an estimated 8,000 Indians.

Changed Course

Custer started out as ordered, but ran across a fresh Indian trail. There was evidence the Indians were aware of his presence, but he changed course and followed the trail.

On the afternoon of June 25, 1876, Custer found a large Indian village and spotted hordes of braves moving out of the village and away from his advancing cavalry.

Custer, apparently thinking this was the main body of Indians, made his fatal mistake. He sent Capt. Benteen and two troops along the bluffs on one side of the river.

Maj. Marcus Reno was ordered to attack the village with another three troops. And Custer continued along the ridge after the supposedly fleeing Indians.

But the "fleeing Indians" were mainly squaws and children. Reno's charge on the village splintered against hundreds of screaming braves. He retreated to a bluff where he was hemmed in on three sides.

Custer was far up the river—in more ways than one. In following what he thought was the main Indian force, he ran into an ambush. Reno's command heard heavy firing. The shots grew fainter and finally died away. Benteen finally rejoined Reno's troops and their combined forces managed to stave off all attacks until the next day when reinforcements arrived.

That briefly, was the Custer Massacre.

Of Custer's immediate command, there were no survivors except for a horse named Comanche belonging to one of his officers. There also was supposed to have been an Indian scout serving Custer who got away by putting on a Sioux blanket and riding off unnoticed.

Wore Loin Cloths  
This legend survived for years, until research disclosed that June 25, 1876, in Montana was an extremely hot day. The attacking Indians wore only loin cloths and anyone trying to escape in a blanket might as well have been wearing a tuxedo.

The humiliating defeat resulted in loud demands for a congressional investigation. Reno in particular was condemned for failing to come to Custer's help when he heard

the firing, but he insisted it would have been suicide to leave his bluff and try to break through the Indians attacking his own command. But Benteen, who regarded Reno with unvarnished contempt, claimed Reno over-estimated the force attacking him and could have come to the rescue.

At any rate, the House Military Affairs Committee refused to initiate a probe. Reno himself asked for a Court of Inquiry by the War Department. The Court convened in Chicago three years after the massacre, and exonerated Reno of cowardice.

No Formal Verdict  
There never was a formal verdict on Custer's own part in the battle. To this day, military experts and historians disagree on whether Custer was merely a victim of bad luck and too many Indians, or whether he violated orders, made matters worse by dividing his already tiny force into three hopelessly inadequate columns and then blundered into an ambush.

Regardless of his wisdom, there never was any doubt on

the gallantry of the Last Stand. The general was found with one bullet through his heart and another through his brain. Both his pistols were empty.

Some of the "Last Stand" paintings depict Custer as a well-groomed, dashing cavalry officer with flowing blond hair—the locks which had caused the Indians to nickname him "Yellow Hair." Actually, his hair had been closely cropped before leaving Ft. Lincoln on the last campaign. He hadn't shaved for five weeks before the battle.

And when he went down, he was no dashing, debonair, cavalry leader but rather a tired, dirty, bedraggled old soldier who knew death was near when he led his 211 troopers into a trap sprung by the finest light cavalry in the world.

Last To Die  
Some months after the battle, Indians who had taken part told Army officials Custer was the last to die. One brave said, in the simple yet beautiful description so typical of the Indians, "Yellow Hair stood like a sheaf of corn

with all the ears fallen around him."

Thus died George Armstrong Custer and thus was born the Custer Legend.

There are those who say he was more of a bad general than a martyred hero. But there also are those who put the blame for the Custer Massacre not on the man who died, but on Washington—for sending a poorly-equipped vastly outnumbered force to do an impossible job.

The total infantry and cavalry units fighting in the Indian Wars numbered less than 2,700 men. They had to face more than 300,000 Indians.

## Enthusiasm for YCC Said To Be High in Oregon

Washington—Legislation authorizing establishment of a Youth Conservation Corps has stirred enthusiasm among Oregon residents who recall President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, Sen. Richard L. Neuberger told the Senate Tuesday.

The Oregon Democrat is a co-sponsor of the YCC bill introduced by Sen. Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. The bill has been passed by a special subcommittee of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee after five days of public hearings and is now being considered by the full Labor Committee.

Neuberger said in a Senate speech that the new youth corps idea has prompted editorials, resolutions and letters from Oregonians who remem-

ber the old CCC as "one of FDR's important conservation programs."

Vast Significance  
The Senator said the bill "holds vast significance for the development of two very different but vital portions of our nation's wealth: our natural resources of timber, soil and water and our human resources found in the youth of our cities and towns."

"We today can still follow some of the 137,000 miles of trails and roads or camp at picnic grounds built by the youths of the CCC a quarter

of a century ago," he said. "Our valuable timber resources are more plentiful today because of the 60 million acres of trees which were seeded by the CCC."

"But more than these tangible reminders of the natural resource conservation values of this program, in Oregon and in many other states can count among our most respected citizens many who came to the West with the CCC. Some came from broken homes, from the streets and alleys of crowded eastern cities."



**STOWAWAY**—When Sharon Forsberg, 18-year-old coed of San Francisco State College finished her exams last week, she followed a sudden impulse and stowed away on a freighter bound for Hawaii. She had only 90 cents with her. Her startled parents wired money to pay for her passage, and a plane ticket home. Back in San Leandro, Calif., Sharon poses in sarong and Hawaiian lei.

## Beard Contest Winners Listed

Camp White—The beard growing marathon which started in February with at least 100 found only nine veterans at the finish Monday night when the Veterans of Foreign Wars auxiliary held its Centennial dance at the VA domiciliary.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Birch were in charge of the festivities which included contests for best dancers and best costumes among the participants. At least 50 auxiliary women appeared in pioneer regalia.

Minnie Barron of the Ashland auxiliary wore a black shawl worn in 1851 by Betty Walker, grandmother of her husband.

Laurene Kell, retiring president of the VFW auxiliary, department of Oregon, sponsoring the event, was among the patrons of the Centennial celebration.

Music was furnished by the Vic Flood orchestra, of Rogue River, and Vic David, chairman of the Veterans Allied Council, was present to judge the beard growing contest.

The nine bearded winners of prizes were Fred Kemnitz, Ira Pollard, Wilmer Coats, Lester Farlinger, Roy Swelly, Charles Munson, M. T. Jackson, Thomas W. Simpson, and Haven Roper.

The beards were judged for the best Van Dyke, mutton chops, Lincoln and the sorriest trims.

FISHERMEN GET AMNESTY

Seoul—UPI—President Syngman Rhee today granted amnesty to 10 Japanese fishermen who were seized last month for violating South Korea's 60 mile territorial limit. It was the first time such an amnesty has been granted.



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## Woman Bound Over To Grand Jury

Della Louise Iholts, 20, of 401 East Main st., Medford, was bound over to the grand jury on a charge of forgery when she appeared in district court Monday.

Mrs. Iholts is charged with forging a \$20 Travelers' check June 14 and signing the name of Mable R. Garvin, Chicago, Ill., to it.

Mrs. Iholts had waived right to a preliminary hearing and right to an attorney.

POPULATION 177 MILLION

Washington—UPI—The Commerce Department estimates that the U. S. population has passed the 177 million mark. The clock in the lobby of the Commerce Department building posted that figure at 3:11 p.m. (e.d.t.) Tuesday. The clock shows an increase of one person every 11 seconds.

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