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Cavalier in Buckskin: George Armstrong Custer and the Western Military Frontier. By Robert M. Utley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. Preface, sources, index. 226 pp. \$10.95.

Custer's Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Reconstructed. By John S. Gray. Foreword by Robert M. Utley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. Foreword, preface, appendices, bibliography, index, illustrations, maps, tables, figures. 446 pp. \$35.00.

The Great Sioux War 1876-77: The Best from "Montana The Magazine of Western History." Edited by Paul L. Hedren. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1991. Illustrations, preface, introduction, index. 293 pp. \$11.95.

During the past six years, scholars have produced a wealth of research and analysis concerning the Sioux Campaign of 1876 and its centerpiece, George Armstrong Custer. Among its flowerings are *Cavalier in Buckskin*, indisputably the best biography ever written on the junior commander of the Seventh Cavalry, and *Custer's Last Campaign*, probably the best synthesis of the voluminous testimony concerning what happened on the way to Last Stand. In addition, we now have available a selection of articles on the Sioux War of 1876-1877 published in *Montana Magazine* over the years, with an introductory essay by Paul Hedren that places the material in perspective and summarizes recent scholarship. The anthology does a service in making available some of the classics of the genre, including Harry Anderson's rebuttal of Mark Brown's thesis that the Black Hills had nothing to do with the 1876 campaign, Robert

Athearn's discussion of the impact of the trans-continental railroad on military operations and policy, Paul Hutton's insights into the fashioning of Phillip Sheridan's Indian strategy, and Brian Dippie's analysis of the first use of the Custer Disaster to further political agendas. *Cavalier in Buckskin* is the first in a new biographical series aimed at the general reader, published by the University of Oklahoma Press. Utley sees the story as three dimensional. We have Custer the Civil War leader, who from Gettysburg to Appomattox compiled a virtually flawless succession of battlefield triumphs; Custer the Indian fighter, who finally won notoriety and a new identity after victory in the Battle of the Washita in November, 1868; and Custer the malleable myth, first as the embodiment of forlorn hope and eventually as the focus of misdeeds against Native Americans. Utley comes down fairly hard on Custer the person, presenting evidence that suggests a man suspect in business dealing and, if not hypocritical in other relationships, certainly unpredictable and contradictory. Utley's chapter on Custer's involvement in politics as a conservative Democrat opposed to Grant's Radical Republican views is an important contribution. Unfortunately, in keeping with series guidelines, the book is not footnoted and includes only a suggestive bibliography.

Custer's Last Campaign is the final work of late Northwestern University physiology professor John Gray. The career of scout Mitch Boyer is the focus of the first one-third of the book, while the remainder presents a step-by-step recounting of the path to the Little Bighorn, where Boyer died in Custer's command. Using a standard walking speed of 3 mph for cavalry and a trotting rate of 6 mph, Gray reconstructs the time sequence of the movements of Custer and his subordinates. These "time motion patterns," plotted on graphs, help to reconcile what had previously seemed to be conflicting eyewitness testimony. This system is not a simple one and requires some effort to comprehend. Those who wish to check Gray's research are handicapped by his unorthodox method of citation, roundly criticized by histo-

rians in his earlier path-breaking work, *Centennial Campaign: The Sioux War of 1876* (Fort Collins, Colorado: The Old Army Press, 1976).

In the end, both Utley and Gray defend Custer. On page 202, Utley writes: "Given what he [Custer] knew at each decision point and what he had every reason to expect of his subordinates, one is hard pressed to say that he ought to have done differently." Gray supports the conclusion, and both fault Benteen for his inexplicable dawdling after receiving Custer's message to rush forward. The duo also criticize John Gibbon for not reporting the location of the Indian camp to Terry before the general sent Custer on his way. Utley ends his judgment with the statement that at the Little Bighorn "Custer's luck simply ran out." Paul Hedron follows suit in his essay, stating that, "Cut to its simplest analysis, everything that could have gone wrong for Custer and his soldiers did go wrong" (p. 13).

Missing from the three works is more than passing reference to archeological investigations at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in 1984 and 1986, which have given rise to new interpretations of the last minutes of the battle on 25 June. Nor do the three volumes devote much space to the Indian side of the conflict. *The Great Sioux War* does include Peter Powell's article on the Dull Knife Battle on 25 November 1876, which details the material loss of the Northern Cheyennes, and John Gray does a service in making sense out of the accounts of Curley, the Crow scout who viewed the engagement from a distant point. One hopes that Robert Utley's forthcoming work on Sitting Bull and a soon-to-be-published volume by Richard Fox, concentrating on Indian accounts as explicated and supported by archaeological findings at Little Bighorn Battlefield, will expand the story.

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