

**PMI NJ Chapter
Seminar at Sea 2009
29 August – 3 September 2009**



Project Management in the Far West

**Why General George
Armstrong Custer
should have been a PMP**

Revisiting the battle of the Little Bighorn

Walter A. Viali, PMP, CSQA

Sunday August 30 @ 7:30am – 9:45am

Revisiting the battle of the Little Bighorn

“Well before Custer arrived at the Little Bighorn River, there were signs, or omens, that he was going to have a bad day...”

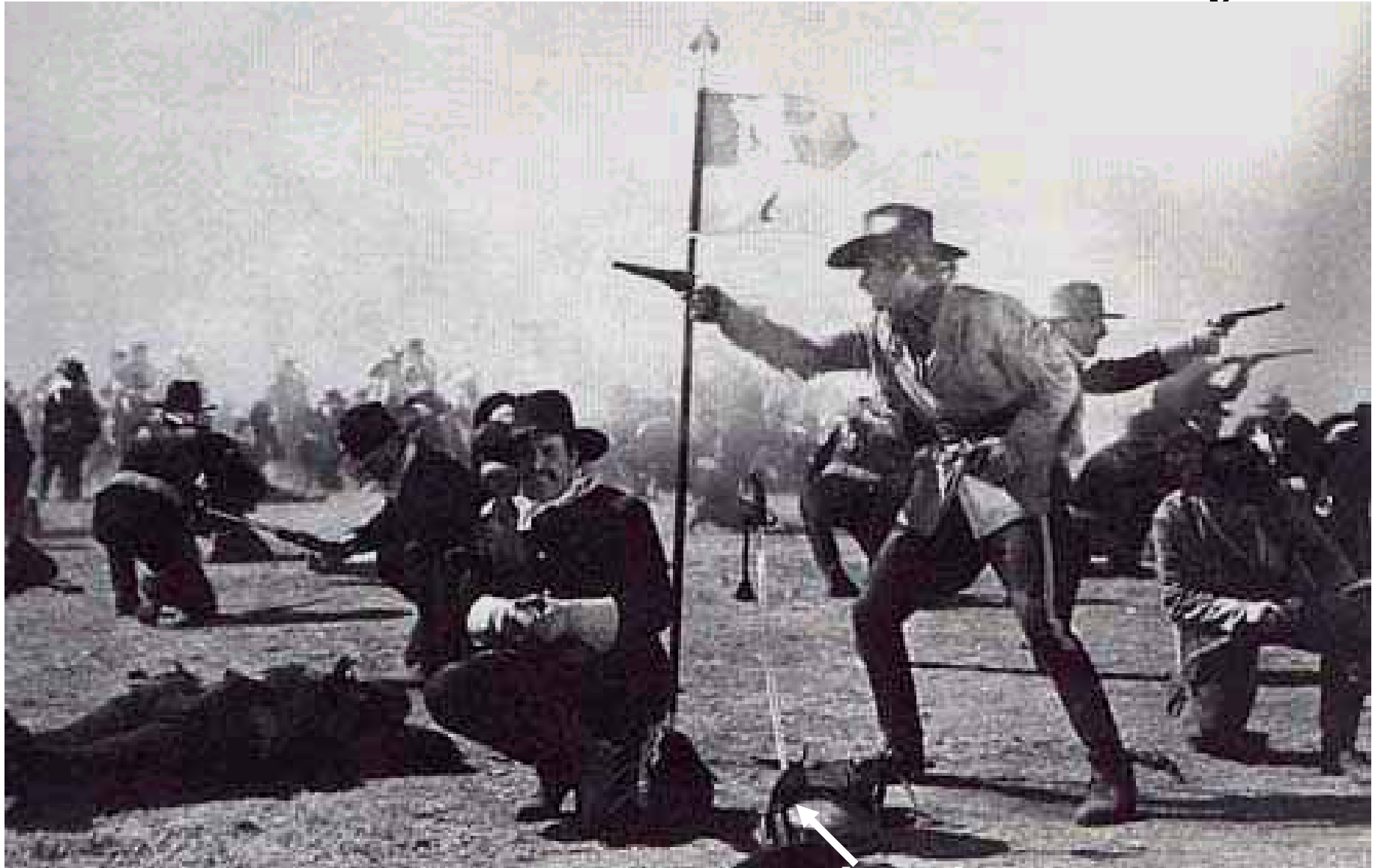


Last Stand Hill

George Armstrong Custer: America's Golden Cavalier

“George Armstrong Custer is one of American history's most mythical and controversial characters. His short, illustrious and tempestuous career is part of American legend. From his early successes in the Civil War that made him the youngest general in American History to his bloody death at the Little Bighorn River in Montana, George A. Custer's flamboyant personal style and forceful personality garnered the attention of his era. Was Custer a magnetic, fearless hero or a shameless glory seeker? Even today the debate continues.”

“We Ride to Hell... or We Ride to Glory!”



Who Was G. A. Custer?



1839-1876

- **Good news for all underachievers: In 1861, Custer graduated from West Point at the bottom of his class.**

- **However, during the Civil War his skills at war propelled him to the temporary rank of brigadier general.**

- **He remains the youngest general in our history**

Custer: Hero or Glory Seeker?

- **A loose cannon?**
- **Was he ready for the Presidency?**
- **The great General of the Civil War**
- **A huge ego**
- **In constant search of glory**
- **Had his officers shoot deserters**
- **Court martialed for paying his wife an unauthorized visit...**
- **Abandoned some of his troops to their fate in the Washita Indian massacre a few years earlier**
- **Disliked and admired by his officers and troops**
- **In complete control of the 7th Cavalry**
- **Huge confidence that the 7th Cavalry could beat any enemy**



The Environment

Some things never change!

- **Indians desperate to keep their way of life from disappearing**
 - Treaty of 1868 continuously violated
 - Gold discovered in the Black Hills of South Dakota
- **Vast corruption in the management of Indian affairs**
 - Custer very much disliked by President Grant for exposing this corruption
- **Considerable U.S. Army downsizing following the Civil War**
 - U.S. Army Officers looking for glory everywhere
 - Economic slowdown of the 1870s
- **Democratic Convention of 1876 about to start in St.Louis**



What led to the Little Bighorn?

The “Really Big Picture”

**“America’s
manifest
destiny to
subdue the
continent and
everything
that lived in
it.”**



What led to the Little Bighorn?

The “Big Picture”

- **The underlying goal of exploiting gold findings in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the sacred ground of the Sioux.**



- **The U.S. Government’s ultimatum to have all Indians return to their reservation was poorly communicated and eventually ignored.**
- **Indians, continuously betrayed, gathered in great numbers (never seen before) in the early summer of 1876.**

"A very great vision is needed and the man who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky. I was hostile to the white man...we preferred hunting to a life of idleness on our reservations. At times we did not get enough to eat and we were not allowed to hunt. All we wanted was peace and to be left alone.

Soldiers came and destroyed our villages. Then Long Hair (Custer) came... They say we massacred him, but he would have done the same to us. Our first impulse was to escape but we were so hemmed in we had to fight."

Crazy Horse (1845-77)



***Black Hills,
South Dakota***

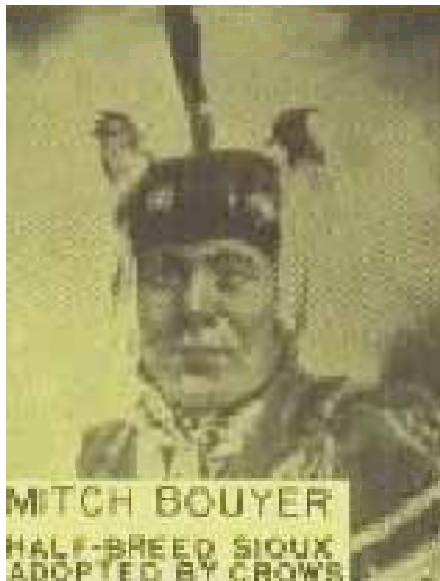
Approaching the Little Bighorn

- Indian trail is wide and recent.
- Indian scouts recognize huge herd of horses in the distance from the Crow's Nest lookout point.
- A band of 40 or so Sioux warriors races towards the Indian camp!
- The 7th Cavalry has been spotted!
- There is no time to waste, as the Indians will disperse!

Approaching the Little Bighorn

- Cannot wait for Terry and Gibbon!
- Custer sends Capt. Benteen to look for Indians to the southwest and make sure they don't get away.
- Major Reno is ordered to attack the southern end of the Indian village.
- Custer will move to the northwest and attack the Indian village from the opposite side.

The Indian Scouts Are Released



“You are very young.
You don’t know much
about fighting. Go
back, keep away from
the Sioux and go to
those other soldiers,
there at Yellowstone.
Tell them all of us here
are killed.”

Mitch Bouyer

America Reacts...

The Press:

***“The Worst Defeat
Since the Civil War!”***

“Massacre!”

***“Horrible! The
American Indian
Exalts His
Reputation for
Satanic Ferocity!”***



... And a Myth Is Created!

...with sabers



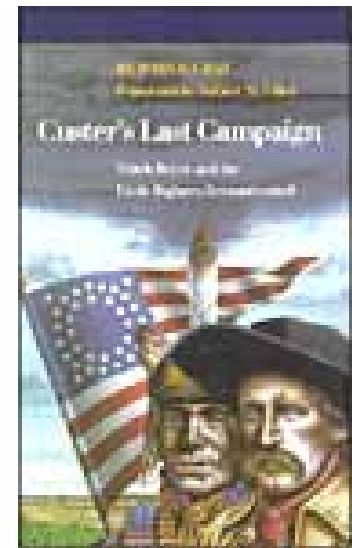
Custer Becomes Part of the American Legend!



What Went Wrong?

Or Where Was the PMBOK Guide When We Needed It?

- Flaws in every Knowledge Area!
 - *“Custer himself was responsible for the Little Bighorn action and it is an injustice to attribute the blame to anyone else.” - Capt. Benteen*
- Disastrous but predictable outcome.
 - *“You and I are going home today - by a trail that is strange to both of us.” - Half Yellow Face*



Project Management in the Far West



**Probably would not
have made PMI's
Project of the Year...**



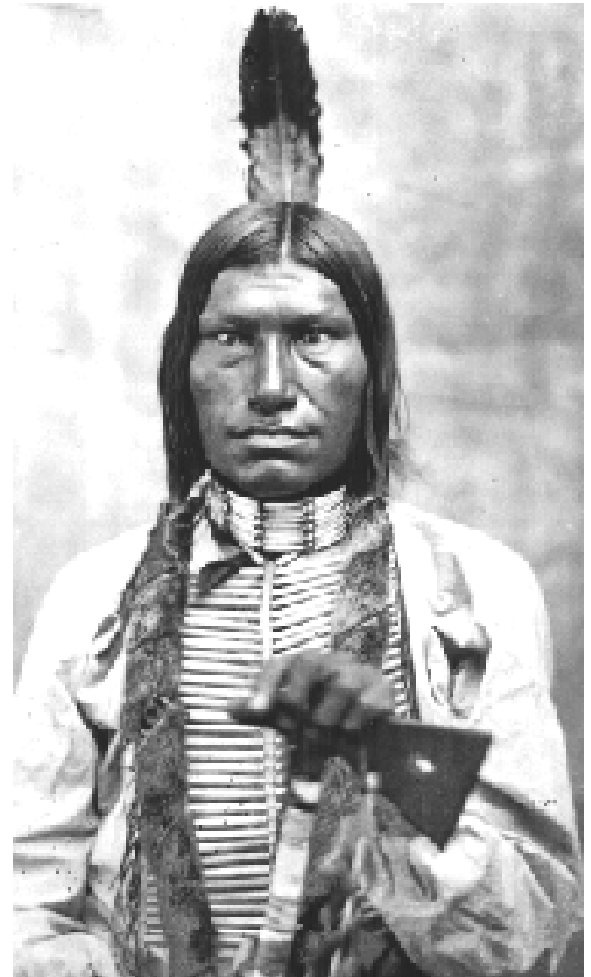
The Knowledge Areas Cluster Never Studied at West Point...

- **Scope Management**
- **Time Management**
- **Cost Management**
- **Quality Management**
- **Human Resource Management**
- **Communication Management**
- **Risk Management**
- **Procurement Management**
- **Integration Management**



Scope Management

- No clear idea of where the Indian camp was.
- No idea of how many warriors the 7th Cavalry would find.
- Limited knowledge of terrain.
- Wrong assumptions!



Low Dog

Time Management

- Hopeless schedule.
- Desire to get things done quickly.
- Need to make triumphant arrival at the St.Louis Democratic Convention?



Crazy Horse?

Cost Management

- Supplier problems became very “costly” at the time of battle.
- This “project” should have envisioned more powerful weapons!
- Overall, Cost Management not a major concern.
(Wasn’t this a Government project anyway?)



*Two Moons
Cheyenne Chief*

Quality Management

- Quality Policy not very demanding.
- Quality of “tools” very questionable
 - Troopers
 - Springfield Carbines
 - Ammunition
- Still a Government Project...



Gall

Human Resource Management

- No team chemistry between Custer and key officers.
- Too many “clannish” attitudes.



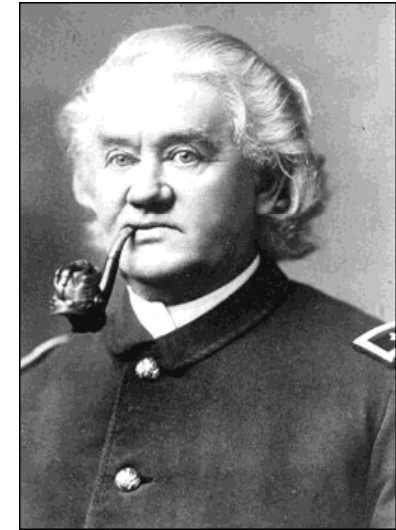
Capt. Tom Custer



Lt. Calhoun



Major Reno



Capt. Benteen

Communications Management

- Custer received ambiguous orders and was in no rush to communicate with his superiors.
- Did not set up a valid communication system.
- Only communication with his officers was to ask for help at the end.



Custer's Crow Scouts



Risk Management

- Lack of Risk Management tied to total contempt for how Indians fought (or were supposed to fight).



7th Cavalry Regimental Standard

Procurement Management

- Springfield rifles could not compete with Winchester repeating guns.
- Did not secure better ammunition for his troops.
- Refused to bring along three Gatling guns!

Integration Management

- There was never a real plan and there was definitely no backup or emergency plan.
- Major Reno was defeated and retreated hastily with his soldiers.
- Captain Benteen arrived with more troops and the mule pack train and “settled in” with Major Reno’s contingent on Reno Hill.
- One attempt to reach Custer failed.
- Custer fell with all his troopers.
- U.S. Army leaders later blamed Custer for the outcome of the battle of the Little Bighorn.

What Happened to the Warriors?

- Crazy Horse eventually surrendered and was killed by a Union soldier on September 5, 1877, betrayed by Little Big Man (no, not Dustin Hoffman).
- Gall escaped to Canada and finally surrendered in the winter of 1880. He died in December 1893.



Why Does Custer Remain Immortal?

- Custer was a true Civil War hero to begin with...
- The Indians in 1876 were considered the “bad guys” regardless...
- News of Custer’s demise reached the nation as it was celebrating its first Centennial...



“Behind Every Great Man... There's a Great Woman”

- Libby Custer survived her Autie by 57 years.
- She spent every one of those years guarding and perpetuating his memory.
- All the 19th Century artists and Errol Flynn did the rest!



In the Final Analysis...

- PMI was established ~100 years too late for General George Armstrong Custer...
- Many Project Managers have an approach to managing projects which is very similar, albeit less deadly (hopefully), to Custer's.
- Make sure you establish a great reputation before you mess up....
- Hope your spouse or significant other is able to keep telling people how great you are as a Project Manager (after you're fired)...
- If all else fails, make a movie about your Project Management skills (even if it's with your own videocamera)....

In the Final Analysis...

If you're a Project Manager...

- Hire people smarter than you!
- Be flexible in organizing your work environment!
- Don't fly by the seat of your pants!
- Delegate! Delegate! Delegate!
- Encourage open communication!
- Don't treat employees inequitably!
- Self evaluate and accept criticism!
- Nurture teamwork at all times!
- Become a legend in your own mind on your own time!
- Heroes have a tendency to get killed a lot!

Custer	You
?	?
No	?
Yes	?
No	?
No	?
Yes	?
No	?
No	?
No	?
Yes	?

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Thank You for your participation

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PMO To Go LLC