

I WAS THERE

by Juanita Sparks

June 27, 1876: I woke up in pain. My head ached, and every bone in my body felt sore. Painfully I got to my feet. and looked around. I was the only life around. I was alone, all alone, and I was wounded.

The day promised to be hot and dry and dusty. The blazing Montana sun poured down on the white sandy soil to make the heat even more intense.

What had happened? Where was everyone? How did I get so wounded? I limped around the compound for a few minutes before my head cleared a little and then I remembered. There was a fight. A terrible long-lasting fight, that started when it was still light, and continued through the night.

On June 25th, in the daylight. Col. George Armstrong Custer of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry spotted an Indian village about 15 miles away. He had orders to wait, and attack the Indians in an organized way. Custer ignored the order to wait. Instead, Custer sent Captain Benteen and Major Reno in different directions in an effort to trap the people who lived in the Indian village.

Now all members of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry were new to the Montana area, and did not know the kind of land that was between them and the Indian Village. This land was a maze of bluffs and ravines that had to be overcome.

Custer had planned to attack the village, but what he didn't know was that the number of warriors in the village was at least three times greater than his forces. The Indians knew the area very well, the soldiers did not. The soldiers tried hiding in the brush and timber around the river; this was indefensible.

A mixture of Cheyenne and Sioux quickly pursued the Cavalry forces. They forced the soldiers back to a long high ridge. Meanwhile Sioux and Cheyenne troops, led by Chief Sitting Bull and Chief Crazy Horse trapped and massacred the attacking Cavalry troops.

The rest is history. George Armstrong Custer, who graduated third from the bottom of his West Point class, attained his place in history, shameful as it was, by losing his own life and the lives of the men he had in his command.

My name is Comanche. I am a horse, and the only survivor of Custer's Last Stand, also known as the Battle of the Little Big Horn.