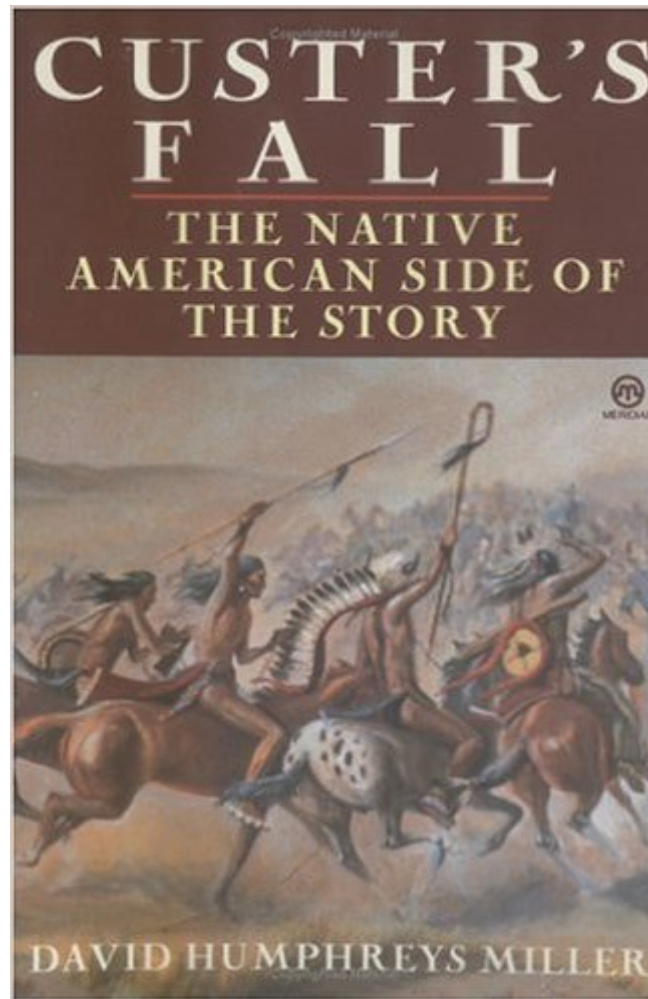


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Custer's Fall: The Native American Side Of The Story (Meridian)



Synopsis

In 1935, David Miller began to gather the stories of 72 elderly Native American participants in the Battle of the Little Bighorn. This work is the result of his exhaustive, 22-year research--a superb oral history told from the perspective of the the warriors who won the battle, but lost the war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book in about 1994 at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument after a very interesting discussion with the very knowledgeable park ranger there. I wish I'd had the opportunity to have talked to him after reading this book. The book does present the battle from the perspective of eye witnesses. Obviously there was no one from the cavalry to report their side of the story so the input of people who were actually there has to be valuable. I enjoyed the book very much. It's not just a Native American version. It's an eye witness version. History buffs have no doubt read versions in which the troops all committed suicide rather than fight. According to the this book that did not happen. According to this book the warrior who supposedly said they committed suicide was asked about it years later when he was an old man and responded basically with "I never said that. I said they were all dead when I got there." He was late. According to this book the confusion resulted from the difficulty of translation into English. I give this as an example of the perspective in this book. It's a worthy book. As a side note to the history buff really interested in this story, go to the Monument if you get a chance. I never could get my arms around what was going on and how the

battle was laid out until I was standing on the hills where the fight took place and looking down on the large wooded flat across the river where the Native American camp was located.

Having read several differing accounts of the battle at Little Big Horn, I find that no one, not even the Indians know what happened that day. Mr. Miller has done his best to present the views of the Indians who fought at the battle as factually as possible. I have not read a recent printing, (my book was printed in 1965, 208 pages counting lists of Indians interviewed or mentioned and the Officers of the 7th Cavalry). I have not been able to find anything in this book, or in any other books to make me believe that Mr. Miller has done anything other than present the facts as best as he could, and I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in the truth about what happened June 25, 1876.

The author started gathering these stories not that long after the battle. They are wonderful stories, although sad, about the battle and the people who were there. One thing I have found in reading about the battle of the Little Bighorn is that the Indian side of the battle is largely passed off as being incorrect. This book explains in a very good way why that is. He relates the stories in context and gives the Indian side a much needed airing. Having read a lot on the subject the last month or so, after visiting the battlefield, I was happy to come across this book. I wish that he had been able to put more of each interview in the book, and maybe some day someone can do that. I would love to hear it in the words of the Indian telling the story. Excellent read, would recommend it to any one who truly wants to understand the battle and why things happened the way they did.

If you enjoy a good narrative tale then this book is for you. It is skillfully written and enjoyable to read. Just be careful not to believe everything you read. The author opens the book with a purely fictional tale about an Indian boy named Deeds and a trooper's box. The details are right with respect to the boy's genealogy and the death of his grandmother but the crucial facts, the ones that really count for the Custer battle are wrong. Deeds did not find the box and his fellow pony herders were not the ones first alert the Indian camp. The box was found by Cheyenne not Sioux and it was found so far from the camp that the battle was finished before any Indian could get safely to the camp. Indeed, early warnings came from several sources located close to the camp, but not because a trooper lost part of his saddle gear far away. They came because Indians out in the hills not far from the camp saw dust from the columns and some made visual contact with the columns. The camp was not caught by surprise as the soldiers had hoped and things went downhill from there. About the little boy called Deeds: yes, he was killed early in the battle on the camp side of the

river, and he did warn his family but the warning was already spreading rapidly through the camp from other sources. His death led to one of the more ferocious acts by an Indian woman. His sister, Moving Robe Woman, joined the Indian attack on both Reno and Custer and it is said, killed troopers just as many other Indian warriors did.

This book provides interesting reading for Custerphiles. It markedly shows that no one, not even the native participants knew what was happening on all parts of the battlefield that day. Each had his own perspective of the area immediately around him and that changed from each individual's perspective. In the long run I would go with eyewitness accounts unless directly refuted with iron clad evidence. The author tried to present the native side as they experienced the battle. He did a great job, but left us with just as many unanswered questions as we started with. Still a good book to include in a library. It is not a favorite with revisionist historians.

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