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Review of *To Hell With Honor: Custer and the Little Bighorn* By Larry Sklenar

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on the Great Plains. Consequently, new studies of the battle and the personalities involved regularly appear each year. *To Hell With Honor* is one of the best recent works to join the steady stream of Little Bighorn literature.

Author Larry Sklenar, in his own words "an analyst by inclination and by experience," could not resist trying to untangle the puzzle of what happened that fateful day. Sklenar examined the vast array of reports, testimony, recollections, and previous assessments by battle scholars to come up with convincing new theories on the defeat of Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer and a good part of his famous regiment. Contrary to general opinion, he contends Custer did have a valid battle plan, one that required his battalion commanders Major Marcus Reno and Captain Frederick Benteen to perform as expected. Unfortunately for the Seventh Cavalry, they did not; the result was the greatest defeat suffered by the US Army in the Plains Indian War.

The author does an excellent job of placing Benteen's long-standing animosity toward Custer in its proper context and examining Reno's weak battle performance and questionable leadership. These two factors ultimately led to the failure of a strategy that could have resulted in victory over the Sioux and Cheyenne warriors instead of ending up the other way around.

Reviewing the subsequent board of inquiry held on Reno's conduct, Sklenar concludes that certain Seventh Cavalry officers readily committed perjury, hence his title. As a result, researchers and students of the battle have accepted contrived testimony. Sklenar also pays more attention than previous writers to battalion organization and lesser-known incidents that beyond doubt influenced Custer's decisions.

For the past century conflicting opinions of what Custer had in mind as he proceeded to attack the village on the Little Bighorn have created the massive historiography that today's researcher must be familiar with. To this reviewer, who has read more than his share of "Last Stand" literature, Sklenar's work is a

To Hell With Honor: Custer and the Little Bighorn. By Larry Sklenar. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000. Photographs, maps notes, selected bibliography, index. xv + 395 pp. \$29.95.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn is seen as one of the paramount events in the long struggle between whites and Native peoples

welcome and valuable contribution I can recommend to anyone wanting a better understanding of a legendary yet significant event of Great Plains history.

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