FROM THE
MONONGAHELA
TO
LITTLE
BIG
HORN

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIANS IN CUSTER'S COMMAND

BY DAVID LONICH
The first dot of daylight appeared early in the Big Sky over south central Montana on June 26, 1876. For Trooper John Burkman, the brightness of the dawn promised another day of heat and intensifying thirst for he and the other cavalrymen huddled on a hilltop above the river. Some 400 battered soldiers, after 14 hours of combat, faced a new day surrounded and besieged by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors.

Expecting the Indians to attack at dawn, Burkman had worked throughout the raid piling up dead horses and mules to create a barricade.

When the charge came, Pvt. James Tanner was among the first to fall; a comrade lamented, “Poor old Tanner, they got you.” Tanner weakly replied, “Not yet but they will in a few minutes.” Bullets wizzed around and through the huddle of soldiers. One tore through the arm and hand of Pvt. Peter Thompson, who knelt in the prairie dust to comfort the mortally wounded Tanner. His longtime friend fixed his eyes on Thompson’s sweaty, tear-stained face; “Water,” gasped Tanner.

“I will get some,” Thompson promised, “if I live.”

Although the 7th Cavalry’s water supply was exhausted and the enemy controlled access to the river below, Thompson resolved to ease his friend’s final moments. John McGuire, hunkered down behind the equine breastworks, saw Thompson pick up two canteens, slip out from behind the barricade, and enter the mouth of a shadowed ravine that led downhill to the river.
Inspired by Thompson, Edward Pigford shouldered his rifle and followed him into the ravine to offer covering fire. Henry Mechling, a burley blacksmith known as one of the unit’s best marksmen, took his Springfield carbine and crawled to an exposed rocky outcrop as Thompson reached the Little Bighorn River and began filling his containers. As the sun rode across the sky and temperatures rose into the 90s, the troopers endured and returned the enemy fire as their bunkmate repeatedly delivered the lifesaving liquid. The soldiers’ numbers withered by the hour.

By the time evening shadows crept across the battlefield, Tanner was dead. Thompson was sick and dizzy from pain and blood loss. Mechling had miraculously escaped injury, but John McGuire lay incapacitated by a bullet through his right elbow. Pigford had suffered a groin wound. Burkman was so exhausted that he would fall into a deep sleep that caused him to miss a critical moment in his life.

The fighting ended by nightfall. The Indians, whose sentinels discovered a column of cavalry reinforcements rushing toward the scene, simply withdrew. All of the soldiers—incredibly, those mentioned here all hailed from Western Pennsylvania—would, for the rest of their lives, feel the emotional impact of the battle commonly known as “Custer’s Last Stand.”

THE STRANDED CAVALRYMEN had fought the portion of Lt. Colonel George Armstrong’s Custer demise that historians call the “Hilltop Fight.” About 50 soldiers perished in the Indians’ onslaught that day, with roughly an equal number badly wounded.

The Battle of Little Big Horn had begun the day before, on June 25, 1876. As the 7th Cavalry’s force of roughly 650 men approached a Native American encampment along the Little Bighorn River, Lt. Colonel Custer issued what one authority describes as “a reckless and foolhardy” set of directives: one company of troopers was left behind to protect the slow moving pack train carrying supplies and extra ammunition, while three companies, under the command of Capt. Frederick Benteen, were sent to scout for enemy forces to the rear of the column; meanwhile, Maj. Marcus Reno was ordered to attack the south end of the Indian village with three companies, while Custer, leading the remaining five units, would engage the enemy from the eastern side of the river. The commander expected the Sioux and Cheyenne to panic and be caught between his and Reno’s forces.

When Reno’s forces attacked at about 3 p.m. on June 25, a counterattack by what battlefield strategists called an overwhelming number of enemy warriors caused the army’s strategy to deteriorate...
The defeat is, of course, one of the greatest military debacles in U.S. history. Because Native Americans were the opponents, the battle is weighted with potent symbols bound up in white America’s two-century-long campaign to conquer and control the continent’s original inhabitants. Most Americans are generally familiar with the battle, which historian Greg Michno believes to be “the most written about event in American history,” but few are aware of the courageous efforts of individual troopers who participated. Similarly, Bruce Rosenberg, author of The Code of the West, notes that while thousands of illustrations, hundreds of books and articles, and dozens of films and television shows have depicted the event, the focus typically is the flamboyant Custer and his immediate subordinates. The role of rank and file soldiers is consistently overlooked.

Such treatments do a disservice to all the veterans but are particularly unfair to Pennsylvanians, for nearly 80 members of the 7th Cavalry—almost 15% of the unit—were from the Keystone State. If it is true that all politics can be traced to the local level, perhaps the same thing can be said of critical events in the nation’s history. For that reason, this article highlights the stories of the Western Pennsylvanians whose lives were transformed by their journey from the Monongahela to the Little Bighorn.

After Custer’s futile last defense, soldiers under the commands of Reno and Benteen were able to unite and hold off enemy assaults during the 36-hour hilltop fight. Surely none of the troopers, like those from Western Pennsylvania, could have imagined that June 25th would end with hundreds dead, a fallen commander, and survivors poised for what some consider the most heroic episode of the battle.

When the forces were split that afternoon, the soldiers rode in four different directions. McGuire and Burkman remained with the pack train. Pigford and Tanner were sent with Reno. Mechling accompanied the Benteen forces, and Thompson rode off down the valley with Custer.

Although these rank-and-file soldiers were “men of widely diverse backgrounds,” as Don Rickey explains in Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay, patterns in their participation are discernible: all were volunteers; few were educated; many were illiterate; average recruitment age was 23; many were recent immigrants; a large percentage were from the bottom of the economic ladder; some were petty criminals; large numbers were rootless, restless, Civil War veterans who knew no home but the army; a significant group were romantic young boys, often under the legal age of 21.

The Pennsylvania troopers who fought at the Little Bighorn do, as we shall see, match Rickey’s general profile.
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LIKE MANY OTHERS IN MID-19TH CENTURY Pennsylvania, Peter Thompson was not a native of America. Born in 1856 in Fifeshire, Scotland, from which he emigrated with his father nine years later, Thompson writes in an autobiographical account that the family first settled in Banksville, Pennsylvania. After his father purchased a farm in Indiana County, and he helped him there for several years, "I took a decided dislike to that kind of work. I went to Pittsburgh in Sept. 1875. While there I heard of an
army recruiting station. I thought ‘now is my opportunity to become a soldier.’”

His enlistment in the cavalry for a five-year stint landed him in the West, fighting Indians with Custer. The 7th Cavalry marched from Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory, near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota.

The night before the showdown with the Sioux and Cheyenne, Thompson could not sleep. He writes of strolling through camp and checking on his horse, “poor and gaunt” from the rigor of the march. When the troops moved out after dawn, his mount managed only a “staggering walk,” and Thompson found himself “gradually left behind”; by late in the afternoon, after the animal completely gave out, he could hear the sounds of fighting. But, realizing he “could do nothing on foot to cope with the scores of Indians on horseback,” Thompson turned back, hoping to meet up with friendly forces. He made his way to the entrenchments on the hilltop above the river just as the “Indians were closing in all around.” He joined his colleagues for an onslaught that became so severe that he wondered “if the time had come ... to wear a pair of wings.” Wounded and fearful, he still summoned the courage to perform his daring acts of delivering water to the dying and hopeless (for which, in 1878, he was awarded the Medal of Honor).

Thompson recovered from his battle scars and was discharged from the service in 1880. He then worked for a number of years in a gold mine near Deadwood, South Dakota. Married after his discharge, he and his wife raised two children. His work in the mines and his subsequent career as a rancher in Montana provided a comfortable living for his family.

After declining requests to be interviewed about the famous battle—“I sometimes think that instead of being there I only dreamt it,” he once explained—Thompson agreed in 1914 to write a series of articles for a local newspaper, the Belle Fourche Bee.

On the 45th anniversary of the battle, in June 1921, Thompson and his daughter attended ceremonies at the Little Bighorn site. A few months later, on November 11, Thompson traveled to Washington D.C., where along with other Medal of Honor winners, he marched in the funeral procession for the burial of the first Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery.

The next day, at a luncheon for veterans of the Indian wars, he received a shocking reception. His fellow cavalrymen refused to accept that he was Peter Thompson; one veteran called him a “g— d— liar.” The incident appears to have deeply shaken Thompson, who spent his final years at the Battle Mountain Sanitarium in Hot Springs, South Dakota. After his death on December 3, 1928, he was buried not among his military colleagues but rather with miners from the Homestake Mine in West Lead Cemetery, South Dakota.
JOHN MCGUIRE, BORN IN CONEMAUGH Township in 1854, was orphaned at an early age. When he turned 21, records indicate, he was working as a farmer in Indiana County. Other similarities to Peter Thompson's story are that McGuire traveled to Pittsburgh and enlisted in the Army for a five-year hitch, and he escaped sharing the fate of Custer also because of a lame horse. Though McGuire's C Company colleagues traveled with Custer to Last Stand Hill, he was ordered to stay with the pack train because his horse was disabled. When the supply unit met up with the Reno and Benteen forces around 5 o'clock on the 25th, the enemy had begun the "withering fire" that caused the cavalry to dig in on the hilltop. McGuire was quickly assigned the task of "horse holder"—securing on a rope line the pack mules and the mounts of other troopers fighting on foot.

During the night, as enemy warriors crawled close enough "to throw stones into the army entrenchment," McGuire manned a rifle pit. Daylight found him in the same position, from which he witnessed Thompson's valiant quest for water.
After suffering a disabling gunshot wound to his elbow, he was taken to a makeshift hospital at the scene, where he recalled, "every so often a bullet would whiz through the tent." When reinforcements arrived early on June 27th, McGuire, along with Thompson and the other wounded, was transported by steamboat to a hospital at Fort Lincoln in the Dakota Territory.

Though partially paralyzed in his right arm, McGuire remained in the service for an additional 13 years. Ultimately he was granted a disability discharge in April 1889.

He returned home to Tunnelton, Indiana County, in 1890, where he lived on his modest Army pension as a virtual invalid; nevertheless, he married Mary Marrieta, a woman half his age, on May 1, 1890, and pension records indicate a daughter, Annie Elizabeth, was born in 1894.

He liked to talk of his cavalry experiences and was, on occasion, interviewed by local newspapers and historians. McGuire and his wife eventually moved into a small, austere house in Saltsburg, Indiana County. Dorothy Pless and Gilbert Maguire, as children, lived near the elderly veteran. Both have the same recollection: "He would sit at his kitchen window, his useless right arm encased in a sling of black cloth, and watch the neighborhood kids play."

His death on February 12, 1932, was attributed to "organic heart disease." He was buried in Livermore Cemetery. His wife received a $100 federal government funeral allotment and a monthly $30 widows' pension until her death in 1938."
IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON for men with questionable pasts to join the Army under an alias, and when debtor Jacob Gebhart, from the Latrobe area of Westmoreland County, enlisted in September of 1875 he used the name “James Tanner.” He soon found that life in the cavalry was not much better than the one he sought to escape. Days were spent at tiring and monotonous duties. Food was poor and sometimes scarce. Custer could be an extremely harsh commander, and the pay for privates was only $13 per month, before deductions.

Therefore, Gebhart/Tanner had been in the army only a short while before he regretted his decision to join; he solicited his family’s help in getting out. “All you have to do,” he wrote, “is for mother to make a
written statement that I am her only support and it is all done and it won’t cost anything.”

He claimed to have an offer of “$100 a month to run an engine on a saw mill” in the Black Hills. Plus, he stated, “There is plenty of gold up in this country”; once these opportunities were tapped, “I will then come home rich and pay everything I owe in Latrobe.

“If you will try and get me out all is well and my fortune is made but if not I am blasted forever.” Tanner’s pleas apparently fell on deaf ears.

Months later, during the hilltop fight on the Little Bighorn, all Peter Thompson could do after returning from his mission to bring water, was pull Jacob Gebhard’s “cape over his face.”

The next morning, on June 27, the dead were given a perfunctory burial. Working in the hard soil without proper digging tools, the survivors could only dig shallow graves. An official burial detail did not arrive until the next summer, in 1877. By then, the prairie wind had taken its toll, and animal scavengers had devoured the exposed bodies and scattered the bones. Identifications were nearly impossible, so the remains were gathered and consigned to a mass grave on Last Stand Hill.

In 1985, a tombstone engraved with Gebhart’s name and service record was discovered in Mechesneytown Cemetery, near Latrobe. His family, perhaps feeling a unique sense of pride, grief, and guilt, had erected the marker over a vacant grave.8
AT A YOUNG AGE, EDWARD PIGFORD went to work in a coal mine near his home in West Elizabeth, Allegheny County. Despite the daily risks underground, his “spirit of adventure” demanded more excitement, so in September 1875 he traveled down the river to Pittsburgh, lied to the recruiting officer that he was of legal age to register, and became a cavalry trooper.

Pigford was in Maj. Reno’s initial charge at Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876. After Reno signaled the advance, Pigford galloped with the column through the valley toward the Indian village. “Instantly,” he would recall, “the entire country seemed alive with Sioux... Indians riding about in all directions firing and yelling and whooping like incarnate fiends.” Panic consumed the soldiers, and a chaotic, demoralized retreat began. Terrified and confused, Pigford dodged bullets and arrows as he splashed back through the shallow waters of the Little Bighorn, desperately hoping to find cover on its eastern banks. Alongside Bill Meyers, a private from Pittsburgh, they “scrambled up the steep slopes of the bluffs” as slippery as a “greased pole.” As the two frightened men neared safety on the top of the ridge, Myers turned to Pigford and yelled, “This is damn hot.” Anxious to reach safety, Pigord replied: “Go on, we’ll talk about this later.” At that instant, a bullet blasted through Meyers’ eye, killing him instantly and splattering Pigford’s face. The traumatized Pigford dashed the remaining yards to shelter, threw himself into a shallow trench, and spent the remainder of the afternoon and evening “fighting back the Indians, who were now coming from all directions.”

Pigford found the bravery to assist the water detail the next morning, and was shot for his efforts. Although his “wounds hurt some,” he refused to be transported to Fort Lincoln with the other injured troopers.

His first taste of combat, however, apparently satisfied his quest for adventure. He applied for an early discharge and was released in October 1876 due to his age. He returned to the Pennsylvania coal mines and settled in Lock Three, near Elizabeth, Allegheny County, where he married Phoebe Haire in 1882. He raised three children in a “comfortable miner’s house up the hollow a short distance from the lock.” During his 78th year, he boasted of the accuracy of an Army
doctor's diagnosis "that unless a bullet ended his career he would live to a good old age."

A local reporter, interviewing Pigford a few months before his death in 1932, believed his mind to be "as clear as it was 56 years" earlier; but the old warrior told a fanciful tale in his final account. He claimed he crawled out from the entrenchment to a point where he saw "thousands of Indian warriors circling around and around," and, he asserted, "actually saw the gallant Custer exterminated by the Sioux wave of destruction."

A noted historian evaluated his story as "of little value if measured in terms of the truth," but the veteran's errors cannot be simply attributed to deliberate lies or senility. Numerous false images of the battle portrayed in popular art, literature, and even a 1912 motion picture had permeated the old man's mind. Even as he spoke to the reporter, Pigford "seized a color supplement of a Sunday newspaper and showed a copy of the famous painting 'Custer's Last Stand' by John Mulvaney. 'It's just like I saw it there on the Little Bighorn,'" Pigford insisted. (In Custer's Last Stand: The Anatomy of an American Myth, Brian Dippie concludes that fallacies grew, in part, because of misinformation fanned by those "supposedly informed" — namely, many participants.)

Not long after the reporter's interview, Pigford cut his hand on a rusty lock while trying to open a trunk in his home. It became infected and he succumbed to septicemia on December 16, 1932. He is buried in Dravosburg Cemetery."
A HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER would have been hard-pressed to find an actor who physically resembled a cavalry hero more than the handsome Henry Mechling, a 21-year-old blacksmith from Mt. Pleasant, Westmoreland County. With his broad shoulders, massive arms, and thick handlebar moustache, Mechling was the stereotypical “village smithy.” He also was uncommonly accurate with his .45-55 single-shot Springfield rifle.

During the battle, when the Benteen column met the retreating Reno forces about 4:30 p.m. on June 25, Mechling rode near Capt. Benteen. The disheveled Reno, wearing a red bandana, greeted the galloping forces with the distraught plea, “We are whipped. For God’s sake, Benteen, halt your command and help me.” Benteen quickly deployed his troops into a defensive position and Mechling was sent to protect the extreme left perimeter. With his deft aim, he held the point throughout the remainder of the afternoon and night, but the next morning the enemy over-ran his position. He scrambled back to the relative safety of the dead horse barricade, only to abandon the shelter to provide covering fire for the famous water detail led by Thompson.

Some critics, such as historian Richard Roberts, view the failure of the Reno and Benteen forces to assist Custer as “deliberate treachery and disobedience.” But Mechling insisted his captain “saved the day,” for without his cool-headed orders, “not a man would have been left to tell the tale.” Benteen, in turn, recognized Mechling’s “distinguished gallantry and soldierly qualities.” He recommended the blacksmith receive the Medal of Honor (awarded in October 1878).

The day after the hilltop battle, after the Indians had broken camp and left the area, Mechling was among the troopers sent to “seek comrades who had died with Custer and pay respects by a scant and hasty burial.” The soldiers encountered a ghastly scene. The remains of horses and dead troopers, “stripped and shockingly mutilated,” dotted the prairie for over a mile. Former bunkmates were found “split through the center of the body and through the muscles of thighs and arms,” unrecognizable from “throats cut and heads smashed flat.” Interestingly, although most accounts say Custer’s body was stripped but not mutilated, Mechling claimed to have cut a button off Custer’s coat and passed it on to his children.

Mechling remained in the service for four more years, participating in several more campaigns against the Indians in the West. After his August 1880 discharge, he returned home to Pennsylvania to the simple life of a working man. In 1890, he paid $100 for a position in a blacksmith shop in Mt. Pleasant, pursuing a career as a “Practical Horse Shoer and General Blacksmith.” His shop ledgers indicate he was also doing automobile repairs in the last years of the 19th century.

Around this time, he married Julia Ella Stevenson, 17 years his junior, and began to raise a
family, which included a son, Henry Frederick, named after troop commander Benteen. A daughter named Minnie Grace, born when Mechling was 56 years old, eventually would become the last surviving immediate family member of a Little Bighorn veteran. She remembered her father as a good-looking man who “didn’t believe in whippings,” and who taught his children to “think of God and He will guide you through life.”

For some years, the family enjoyed domestic happiness, but then Julia Mechling developed cancer. Despite her father’s advancing age, Minnie remembered he “took good care of the kids when mom went to the hospital.” The mother died in 1919 and Henry, nearly 70 years old, “wasn’t with the kids a lot after that.” He took up residence in the U.S. Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C. Though seldom able to visit his children, he wrote frequently and signed his letters “with love, with kisses, with best wishes.”

Mechling died April 19, 1926, of heart failure. Sadly, his daughter was not notified of his death until after his burial, and because of her difficult financial circumstances she could not visit his grave for another 14 years. In 1993, the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps dedicated the Appomattox Water Training Site at Fort Lee, Virginia, in honor of Henry Mechling. His souvenirs and artifacts, including the Custer button, are part of the collection of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument Museum in Montana.
A SMALL AMERICAN FLAG adorns the simple white gravestone on Lot A-1463 at the National Cemetery at the Little Bighorn Battlefield. The cemetery guidebook describes the veteran who rests there as a “lonely man, one of the many tragic figures left in the battle’s wake.” Truly, John Burkman’s post-cavalry years were the most melancholy of all the Pennsylvania veterans.

Burkman, born in Allegheny City in 1839, enlisted in the Army during the Civil War. He did, as the modern advertisements offer, “find a home in the Army,” and became a member of the 7th Cavalry in 1870. Unable to read or write, and with few friends in the outfit, “somehow or other Custer took a shine to the trooper,” which other soldiers nicknamed “Old Nutriment.” Custer made Burkman his “striker,” a combination military orderly and personal servant. A major part of Burkman’s duties was to look after Vic and Dandy, the Kentucky thoroughbreds that Custer rode.

Burkman pulled himself out of his bedroll not long after midnight on June 25th to ready the colonel’s equipment. He anticipated Custer would ride Dandy. But the order came to “saddle my war horse, Vic.”

When the forces were divided before the battle, Custer gave him the simple, yet fateful order to “remain with the pack train” and attend to Dandy. “I would rather have taken my chances at the front,” the striker later told Mrs. Custer, “but you know I had to obey orders.”
He did not learn of Custer's demise until the evening of the day after the hilltop fight. Overcome with exhaustion, he had fallen asleep early that morning and slept the entire day, while the other troopers attended to the grisly chore of burying the dead on the Custer battlefield. Hearing the news after his long nap, he experienced the first pangs of grief, guilt, and regret that were to haunt him all of his days. "He was not allowed to die with Custer and when he got to the battlefield all he saw was a grave," Elizabeth Custer recounted years later.

She added that the world of Burkman, "encompassed by two horses, some dogs, and one yellow-haired officer," was shattered by the events. In *Son of the Morning Star*, Evan Connell wrote: "He never got over this. As an eccentric, cranky old man he complained about it. Always, he felt, he had been left behind." This sense of being left out, unable to tend to his officer's final needs, plagued him.

When Burkman was discharged from the service in 1879, he settled in Billings, Montana, near the battlefield. He never married, lived on his pension checks, and spent most of his time consumed by thoughts of the man he referred to as "The General." He maintained his relationship with his dead commander by regular communication with Mrs. Custer: "I go over to the battleground frequently and things look lonely." For her part, Elizabeth Custer demonstrated a sincere fondness for Burkman—"slow of speech, thought and action."
In one of her last letters to the octogenarian Burkman, she urged him "to have the courage to get out to California" and to not "spend the winters in any cold climate." Heeding her advice, he traveled to Sawville, California, in 1925 and applied for residence at the Soldiers Home; he was rejected and returned to Billings, where his despondence degenerated into total depression.

On November 5, 1925, Burkman "purchased a .38 caliber revolver of cheap make." Acquaintances aware of his mental state were not overly concerned because the old man had repeatedly commented, "It takes a brave man to kill himself. I can't do it for I'm a coward." The next afternoon, sitting on the porch of his boarding house, the 85-year-old Custer striker committed suicide.

The Billings Gazette, reporting on the tragedy under the headline "CUSTER SURVIVOR TAKES LIFE," commented that finances were not the reason for the tragedy because $80 was found in his pockets. The newspaper, however, may have erred; Evan Connell notes the money was actually two "gold coins dated 1839 and 1876, the beginning and end of [Custer's] life."

As he requested, Burkman was interred at the Custer National Cemetery. The following June, the semi-centennial of the battle was observed. After 50 long, lonely years, the "silent soldier" was at last reunited with his commander.11

Don Rickey, whose analysis helped introduce this article, attributes "perseverence, endurance, initiative, loyalty and courage" to the soldiers of the western army, and notes that they did "their great work without receiving even crumbs of recognition or appreciation."12 For six western Pennsylvanian troopers, at least, the latter statement is no longer true.
NOTES

1 The anecdotes and quotes for the opening story were taken from the following sources: Belle Fourche Bee articles, Feb. 19. April 9, 1919, by Peter Thompson, File A-312 C-12499 Little Bighorn National Monument Archives; Gebhart/Tanner File, Latrobe Area Historical Society; transcribed letters dated Mar. 16, 17, 1876; Paul Kennedy, Tribune Review, June 21, 1998; Kenneth Hammer, Men With Custer, Biographies of the 7th Cavalry (Fort Collins, CO, 1976); Hammer, Custer in 76 (Norman, 1990); Walter M. Camp interview with John McGuire, Letter to Camp from McGuire, Dec. 4, 1908, Walter Mason Camp Collection, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Earle Forrest, Witnesses at the Battle of the Little Bighorn (Monroe, 1986); W.F. Beyer, and O. F. Keydel, Eds., Acts of Bravery (Stamford, 1994).

2 W. A. Graham, The Story of the Little Big Horn (Mechanicsburg, 1994) 23.


5 Don Rickey, Jr., Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay (Norman, 1963). Chapter Three.


7 Pigford sources: Forrest, Witnesses at the Battle of the Little Bighorn—this book is a reprint of a series of articles Forrest wrote for the Washington Observer in Oct. 1932; Camp interview of Pigford, Camp Collection; Pigford Pension File, National Archives.

8 Much information about Mechling was obtained in numerous interviews with Mrs. Minnie Grace Mechling Carey, and through an examination of the family records maintained by Mrs. Carey.

9 Information on Burkman was found in: "Little Bighorn Battlefield National Cemetery Guide," Camp Collection, Little Bighorn Archives; Letters to Elizabeth Custer from Burkman Feb. 3, July 12, 1911; Letter to Burkman from E. Custer undated; Billings Gazette Nov. 7, 1923; Evan Connell, Son of the Morning Star (New York, 1993).

10 Rickey, Forty Miles a Day, 351.

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Richard Fox, Archaeology, History and Custer's Last Battle (Norman, 1983).
Charles Windolph as told to Frazier and Robert Hunt, I Fought with Custer (Lincoln, 1987).