

Earl's Diary - Sunday - June 2, 2013  
To All my Loyal Readers;



This morning we got to sleep in - hooray!!!!

About 10:00 we set off to see what we could see about this famous place - Little Bighorn. You know, that's where George A. Custer met his Waterloo! Our RV park is right in the middle of where all the action took place.



The first place we stopped at was the "town" of Garryowen. It sits right beside I-90. As you can see, the WHOLE town is shown in the accompanying photo. It's in one great big building that contains a museum, the requisite gift shop, a

Subway sandwich shop, a tiny "telephone booth" post office and a gas station. It even rates its own dot on atlas pages! I asked how it got its name. The answer: Apparently Garryowen is an old Irish song that was adopted, with a little modification, by the 7th Army.

We paid our \$6.50 and went inside to find their Custer Battlefield museum. It was a nicely prepared exhibit and included lots of photographs, artifacts, and letter documents. We also saw a video from A&E TV network on who was at fault at Little Bighorn. Did they prove anything? I'm not sure. It gave me something to think about. Was it Custer's BIG blunder, or did others create the final outcome.



Our next stop was the National Park Historical Site. Since it's in the National Park system, we got in free!

We arrived just in time to take a walking tour which was led by Ranger Steve. He did an excellent job of keeping a very balanced interpretive perspective of the fierce fighting that occurred in 1876. I particularly appreciated his remarks, "It was a clash of cultures." and "We can't blame the soldiers or warriors. They were just doing what they were told." He also mentioned that unlike other wars the U.S. has been involved in, (foreign countries) this war was basically American against American. I like that philosophy. New forensic technology has shed new insights into when and what happened.

I took photographs that show what and where the battle was taking place. Of course, today a person has to overlook the modern additions such as the freeway, homes and barns, fences, railroad tracks, etc. Here is what my imagination shows:



The Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho encampment spread over 2 miles along the valley of the Bighorn River. Imagine the encampment, with the Bighorn River behind the trees in these two photos. If you look closely, the Memorial is on the left hill.

I know most of my readers have already been here, so, here comes a history lesson for those who have not. I do not intend to go over the battle blow by blow. If you are interested in more detail, you can look it up on the internet, OR anyone with an opinion has written a book. On June 25, 1876, approximately 7,000 Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho, including 1,500-2,000 warriors, are encamped along the Little Bighorn River. Let by Sitting Bull, they refused to be restricted to their reservation, preferring their traditional nomadic way of life.

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument memorializes one of the last armed efforts of the Northern Plains Indians to preserve their ancestral way of life. Here in the valley of the Little Bighorn River on two hot June days in 1876, more than 260 soldiers and attached personnel of the U.S. Army met defeat and death at the hands of several thousand Lakota and Cheyenne warriors. (Ranger Steve says it could have been as hot at 100 degrees). Among the dead were Lt. Col. Custer and every member of his immediate command. Although the Indians won the battle, they subsequently lost the war against the military's efforts to end their independent, nomadic way of life.





Looking down toward the Bighorn River. Can you imagine what Custer's men saw coming at them?



Benteen and Reno were hunkered down behind this hill some 5 miles from Custer's unit.



The Bighorn River as it looks today.



A memorial to our Native Americans to give a more balanced approach to the battle has been added. A grass fire in the area in 1997 yielded numerous artifacts and evidence of what really occurred in 1876.



This is the actual photo I took



I was curious how the scene might have looked in 1876, so I photo-shopped the picture from above.

For me, it was an exciting day to actually be in the place where the action took place. It was educational AND interesting. Do I have a different opinion of Custer and his blunder? I'm not sure. It gives me something to think about.

Thanks for being with me on this journey. - - Earl

Tomorrow we pack up and head for Cody, Wyoming and Yellowstone country.