

CMH NEWSLETTER

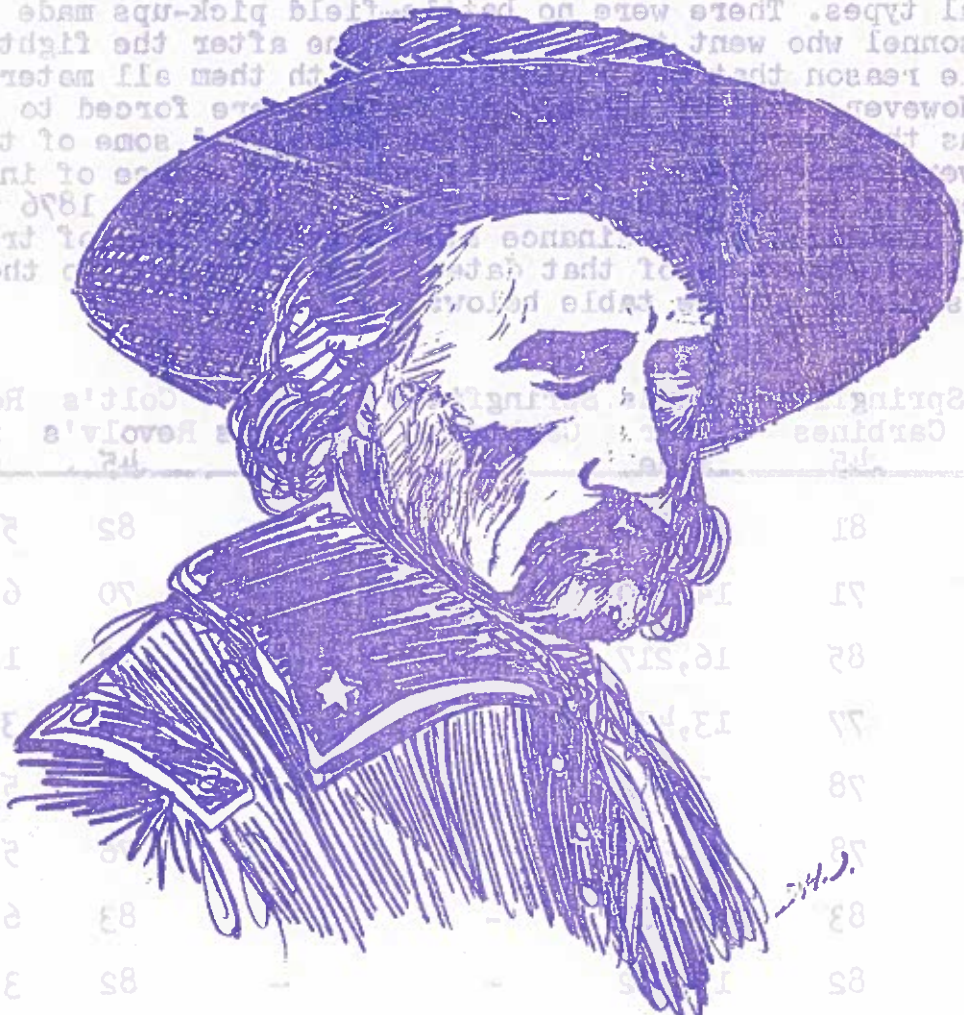
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE COLORADO MILITARY HISTORIANS

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 9 JUNE, 1967

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| Company | Springfield | Carbines | Colt's Revolvers | Colt's Revolvers for arms |
|---------|-------------|----------|------------------|---------------------------|
| A... | 81 | 45 | 82 | 5,945 |
| B... | 71 | 45 | 70 | 6,838 |
| C... | 85 | 45 | 16,217 | 11,960 |
| D... | 77 | 45 | 13,171 | 3,787 |
| E... | 78 | 45 | 7 | 5,698 |
| F... | 78 | 45 | 7 | 5,698 |
| G... | 83 | 45 | 83 | 6,390 |
| H... | 82 | 45 | 82 | 3,750 |
| Adj't | 4 | 45 | 15 | 5,175 |



GEORGE A. CUSTER

Troops C, E, F, and I were the ones annihilated at Custer; all their weapons were lost or expended. Total the 7th lost or expended 38,030 rounds of carbide ammunition and 2,254 rounds of pistol cartridges in the engagement. About 10,000 rounds were estimated.

FIREARMS OF THE "CUSTER BATTLE"

by
J. C. MacLachlan

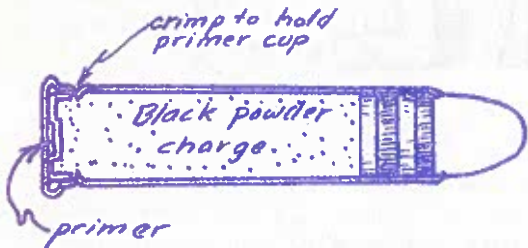
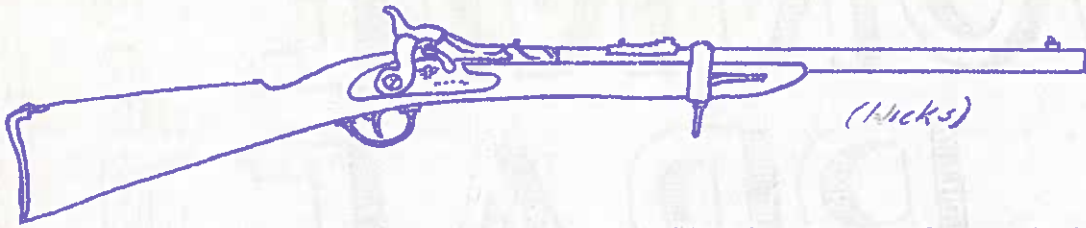
Much has been written in the past 90 years about the short, fierce battle which took place on the 25th of June, 1876. Very few of the authors have been concerned with the weapons used, except to condemn the Cavalry carbine used or to over-estimate the quality and/or number of the guns carried by the Indians. To rectify this situation John E. Parsons and John S. duMont published a short monograph in 1953 titled, "Firearms in the Custer Battle"; this note leans heavily on this source. Other works of interest, and from which some material has also been drawn, are listed at the end of the text.

Evidence of the weapons carried and used is limited to one of several types. There were no battle-field pick-ups made by the Army personnel who went to the battle scene after the fight, for the simple reason that the Indians took with them all material of value. However, some of these same Indians were forced to turn in weapons they were carrying at later dates, and some of the "Custer" weapons were among them. The best documentary source of information on the weapons is an Ordinance inventory of March 31, 1876 which lists all ordinance and ordinance stores in the hands of troops of the United States as of that date. Data pertinent to the 7th Cavalry is listed in the table below:

| Company | Springfield Carbines 45 | Rounds for same | Springfield Carbines 50 | Sharps Carbines 50 | Colt's Revolv's 45 | Rounds for same |
|---------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| A... | 81 | 16,850 | - | 4 | 82 | 5,945 |
| B... | 71 | 14,940 | - | 5 | 70 | 6,838 |
| C... | 85 | 16,217 | - | - | 79 | 11,960 |
| E... | 77 | 13,434 | - | - | 80 | 3,787 |
| F... | 78 | 3,362 | 2 | - | 72 | 5,698 |
| G... | 78 | 15,390 | - | 5 | 76 | 5,652 |
| I | 83 | 14,700 | - | - | 83 | 6,390 |
| L | 82 | 14,502 | - | - | 82 | 3,750 |
| Adj't | 4 | 5,970 | - | - | 15 | 2,175 |

Troops C, E, F, I, and L were the ones annihilated with Custer; all their weapons were lost. In total, the 7th Cavalry lost or expended 38,030 rounds of carbine ammunition and 2,954 rounds of pistol cartridges in the engagement. About 10,000 rounds are estimated

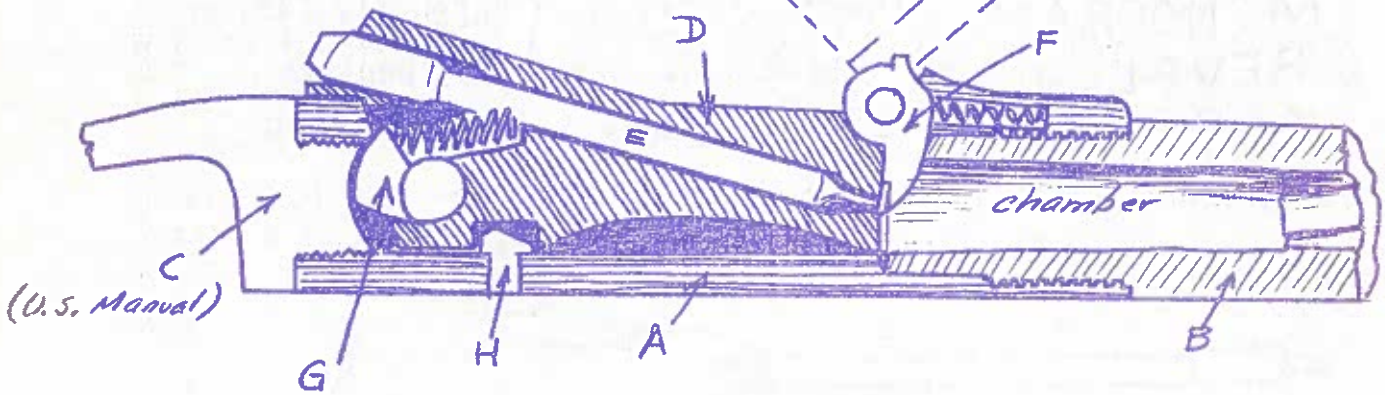
U.S. Carbine, cal..45, M.1873



Folded-head .45-70 round (full-size)

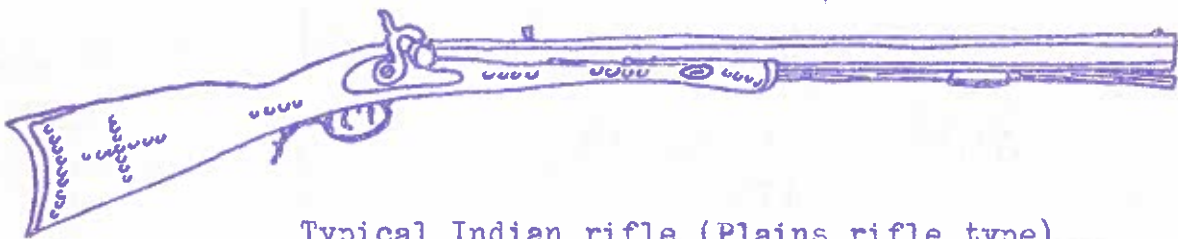
Thumb piece of cam latch

Breach block in open position



Section of receiver, block, and barrel, slightly reduced in size

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| A - receiver | D - breach block | G - cam block (latch) |
| B - barrel | E - firing pin | to retain breach block |
| C - breach plug | F - extractor/ejector | H - ejector stud |



Typical Indian rifle (Plains rifle type)
note the brass tack decoration and wear on forearm

BONNIE BRAE

H
O
B
B
Y

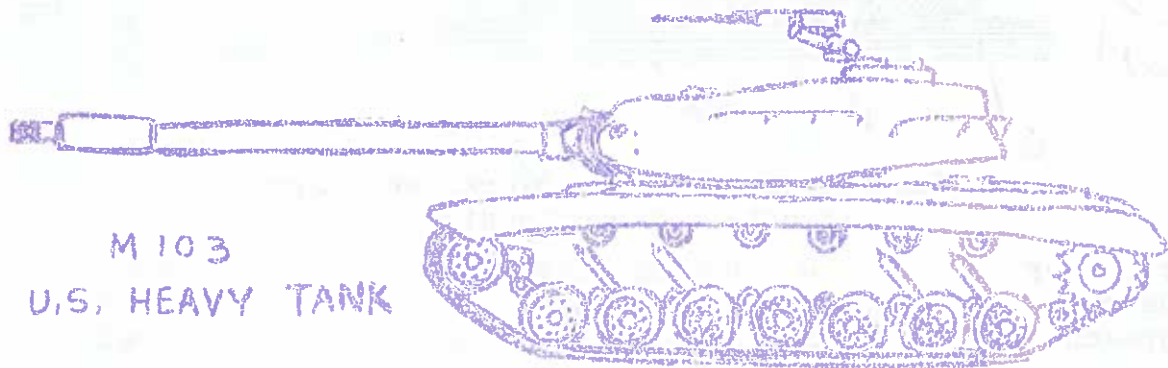
S
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PLASTIC MODELS BY

MONOGRAM
REVELL
AURORA
IMPACT

U.S.G.
HAWK
AIRFIX
L.S.

LINDBERG
RENEWAL
AIR-LINES
HELLER



M 103
U.S. HEAVY TANK

MILITARY VEHICLES
BY

AHM - ROSKOPF
PAINTS
HUMBROL EMRIE - FLOQUIL
DECALS
HIS-AIR-DEC - MAX ABT

THIS VALUABLE COUPON
IS WORTH
50¢
ON ANY \$5.00 PURCHASE
AT

BONNIE BRAE
HOBBY SHOP
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1967

NEWSLETTER

to have been captured by the Indians, the rest can be presumed to have been fired, or lost in the confusion. It should be noted here that the carbine was single-shot weapon (description to follow) and the soldiers of the period developed a method to speed reloading: when taking up a position several rounds-perhaps a dozen-would be removed from the belt and laid out on the ground in a row for easy access. If a change in position, or other movement, were required, some of the ammunition might get left on the ground. A part of this loss could have been missed by the Indians cleaning the field if it were covered by dust from the scuffle.

In a negative way another source of information is the serial number range of the weapons. Unless the number can be dated prior to the battle, the weapon could NOT have been present. For the Colt revolvers this would be below 22,000 and for the Springfield carbines, under 60,300, approximately. The two guns are of a standard type, well known to collectors, and as will be seen from the table, were the dominant weapons used. So orthodox were the weapons, and so routinely carried, that little direct reference was made to them in the testimony following the fiasco - except discussion of the service rendered in battle. Empty cases from the fired ammunition found on the battle field are generally of the proper type: .45-70, folded-head, inside-primed, but I managed to get two cases 20 years ago, at the site of a skirmish which preceded the Little Big Horn fight, and both were the .50-70 caliber used in the Sharps and .50 Springfields listed in the table. These guns were, most probably, carried by the scouts assigned to the 7th, of which there were 44, or by some of the civilians-packers, guides, etc., although it seems likely that the latter were more liable to have had more "modern" weapons.

Mention of the civilians who accompanied the Cavalry on its campaign leads to the most debatable category of weapons. Each was armed as suited his taste, and very little record remains of the weapons carried. Custer should be included in this category, along with his brothers Tom and Boston, since they all were armed, apparently, with non-G.I. weapons. According to Lt. Godfrey-who came on the scene with the relief column-General Custer was armed with a Remington sporting rifle and two British "Bulldog" revolvers with white grips and lanyard rings in the butts. The Remington is well documented, both as an individual piece and as to its presence in the fight. Custer wrote a testimonial to Remington on the gun, and 4 spent cartridges for it were found under his body. The revolvers are still something of a mystery. Several revolvers of the type were owned by Custer, but not having the white grips. It is possible that they were like the revolver owned by Tom Custer (not carried to the battle) by Galand & Somerville. A record of a presentation to George Custer of revolvers by a visiting British sportsman, Lord Berkley Baget, exists, and Parsons and duMont seem to feel that this may have been the pair carried into the last stand.

By inference, not made in any of the sources examined for this short note, other guns may well have been carried onto the battlefield as personal sidearms of any of the soldiers- particularly those who were more able to afford them. During the Civil War it was a standard procedure for any and all to keep at least one small

pistol secret in the belt or pocket - often a presentation piece from the people back home. It seems reasonable that many soldiers of the Indian Campaigns may have continued the practice even if officially not allowed to do so. But -- this is purely a speculation on my part.

(To be continued next month)

"HISTORIANS SCUTTLEBUTT"

On May 21, another mouth to feed was born into the family of former president Dan Jones. Mother and daughter came through with flying colors and both were home in no time at all. Let's all give a hearty welcome to Diana Lynne Jones and congratulations to Dan and Fay.

The Westland Hobby Show was acclaimed a success by all members present. All had a good time in spite of the weather. We even met seven men who were thoroughly interested in our club, and with a little work we might expand our membership by leaps and bounds. The club has asked for a booth twice as large next year. It should be something worth looking forward to.

The Big Wargame of the year was held at Dick Moore's June 18th. There were ten gamers present and fighting, three from Colorado Springs, two new ones from this area and five old timers. All different types of games were used. The Springers showed us their Napoleonic game first. We then played a tank game in which the Historian captained his team to two straight victories. Then an air game was toyed with for a while before finishing the day with a Fletcher Pratt Naval game. We all had a great time and proved it by being completely fagged.

Saturday, the 24th of June, saw one man's long Army career come to a well-deserved close; Lieutenant Colonel William Greer retired from service. He joined up in 1939 and went active some time in 1940. He participated in the 1941 and 1940 maneuvers and from what he says he had some fun doing it. He has put in 25 years active duty and a total of 28 years counting reserve. He is moving to Florida where he intends to catch a helluva lot of fish. A small delegation was present at the ceremony representing the Club. Good Luck to you, Bill, from all the members of the Colorado Military Historians.

Be sure to bring enough money. Why? Because the long-awaited auction will be held at the September meeting. Either before the September meeting or at it bring anything that you would like to donate. The Historian will be in charge of the items to be auctioned.



EXPLOSION ABOARD THE LEXINGTON
BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA
BY

Michael Kuhls and Thomas Herman

The situation was critical for both sides. Both feared two big carriers. Both feared an early morning attack. Survival depended on finding the enemy first.

Even before dawn search planes thundered off the decks of the Shokaku and Zuikaku. An hour later Takahashi led 69 more planes which fanned out in a wide search to seek the American fleet. But only ten minutes later, a report was received from one of the previously launched reconnaissance planes. The U.S. Fleet had been found.

The Americans sent out their search at 0625. 18 SBDs from the Lexington flew a 360° pattern due to the complete lack of knowledge of the Japanese fleet. Two hours passed before Lt. J. G. Smith spotted the Japanese ships at 0815, 175 miles N.E. of Fletcher's force. Almost simultaneously the Lexington intercepted the Jap radio message giving their position fairly accurately. The race was on. Out of the briefing rooms the pilots rushed to their waiting planes. Down the short deck and into the air, brave men would see that they got to the target.

Jumping from cloud to cloud to evade being shot down, Flight Warrant Officer Kenzo Kanno kept the U.S. fleet in sight. When he heard of the approach of the attack group, he started for home. But wait, they were going in the wrong direction. He knew he barely had enough fuel to return. He also knew that the American carriers must be sunk. He decided to lead the way.

Kanno swung his bomber into a sharp turn and eased the airplane alongside Takahashi's and motioned to him to follow. With Kanno in the lead Takahashi and his planes dived into the hundreds of black anti-aircraft shell bursts. Seconds later both of their planes blew up, the blazing wreckage plunging into the sea near Yorktown.

Up from the carrier decks came 23 Dauntlesses that were launched to fill the shortage of fighters. The SBDs jumped the Kate torpedo bombers and shot down four of them while losing four of their own. The anti-aircraft fire was very heavy.

The Japanese dive bombers and torpedo planes swooped down on the Yorktown, while Wildcats and Zeke dogfights took place in the midst of the Japanese formations. Eight or nine torpedoes were sent in at the Yorktown and as many as ten 550 lb. bombs were dropped in her direction. Yet by skillful handling, the Yorktown dodged the torpedoes but a single bomb landed near the island superstructure on her flight deck. It tore a hole in three lower decks, causing extensive damage. Two near misses also made her leak badly.

Torpedo bombers came in off both bows of the Lexington and launched their fish. Eleven wakes passed under, alongside and forward of the valiant Lady. It was impossible to evade so many fast torpedoes. One hit her on the port side forward and was quickly followed by a second on the same side opposite the bridge. The dive-bombing attack developed while the torpedo evasion measures were at their height. A 5-inch ready ammunition box on the port side of the forward main deck was hit, and a second hit was scored on the smokestack structure. Near-misses ruptured plates and three boiler rooms were flooded.

Her engines were unharmed and her speed did not fall below 24 knots, but she turned away listing. Shifting oil corrected the list and the fires aboard were quickly brought under control. But her fuel pipes had been damaged and this was to doom her.

While Dixon was shadowing the Japanese carriers, the Yorktown had launched her thirty-nine plane attack group. An hour and a quarter later the Zuikaku and Shokaku were sighted by Yorktown's planes. Shokaku turned into the wind and started to launch more planes for her combat air patrol, while Zuikaku and her attendants disappeared into a rain squall. At 1057, when all Yorktown planes were in position, the attack commenced with Torpedo Squadron 5 leading the way. Wildcats protected the TBDs from Zekes as they came in low to release their fish. Right behind the TBDs came the dive-bombers.

All the torpedoes missed or failed to explode, but the SBDs scored two hits on Shokaku's flight deck. One hit was well forward on the starboard bow and the second was well aft. The forward hit started a gasoline fire.

The cloud cover and rain squalls made it extremely difficult for Lexington's planes to locate the Japanese force. Three Wildcats escorting the SBDs lost them in the clouds and had to return. The torpedo squadron reached the position given earlier and only found the open sea below them. By flying a box search they were able to pick up the enemy, but the dive-bombing squadron ran into thick overcast and never found the Shokaku or Zuikaku and they had to return to their carrier because they were low on fuel. Eleven torpedo bombers, four dive-bombers and six Wildcats managed to find the Japanese carriers.

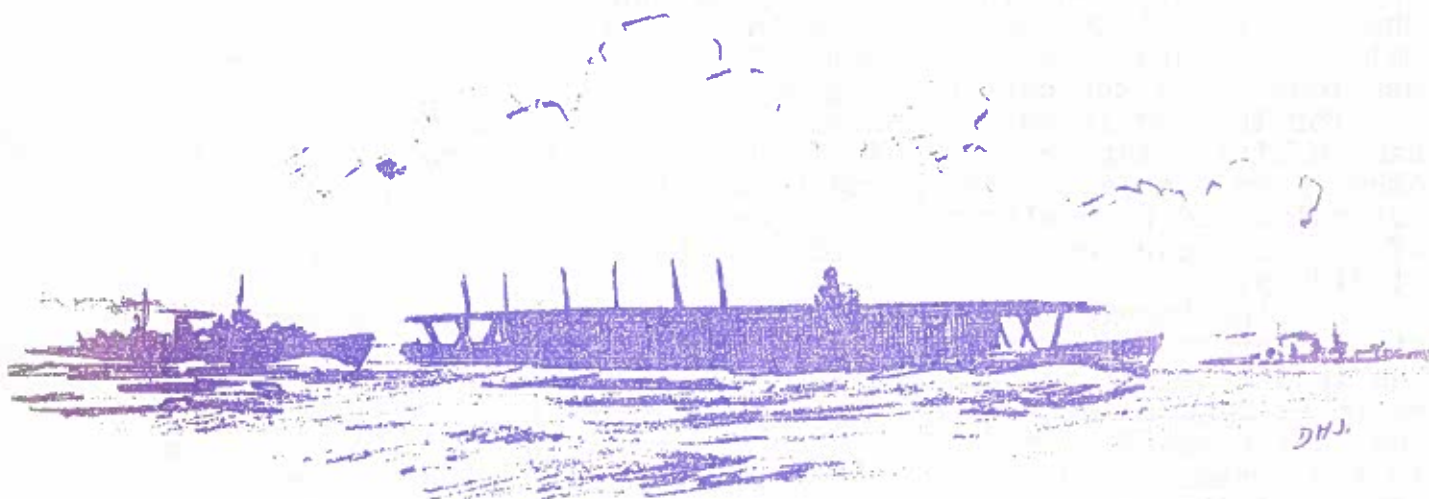
Through a hole in the cloud cover, the TBDs made a spiraling glide torpedo attack, followed by the dive bombers. Only the SBDs damaged the Shokaku with a third bomb hit. Zuikaku and the other ships in the task force were undamaged. All of the planes from the Shokaku were transferred to Zuikaku. By 1300 she headed for home, with all of her fires extinguished. She almost capsized on the way

and arrived in bad shape, but she got there.

The battle of the giants was over by 1145 May 3. As it stood, the Americans could claim the victory. The Japs had lost 1 CVL, 1 DD and several mincraft sunk and 1 CV damaged. The U.S. loses were only 1DD and 1 AO sunk and 2 CVs damaged. But the final score of a naval battle is not made up until the ships return to port, and the one that never did reversed profit and loss in the enemy's favor.

The saga of the Lady Lex is indeed a sorrowful tale. When her pilots returned they saw her steaming majestically at 25 knots. The proud Lady had been blooded but showed none of her pain. Even the damage control officer, Cdr. H.R.Healy, grew facetious: "We've got the torpedo damage temporarily shored up the fires out and soon will have the ship on an even keel. But I suggest, sir, that if you have to take any more torpedoes, ypu take'em on the starboard side." Seconds later, at 1247, a devastating internal explosion shook the carrier from stem to stern. More eruptions followed, each more violent than the last. Gasoline vapors had been ignited by a motor generator which had accidentally been left running. Internal communications deteriorated; Cdr. Healy's control center suffered major damage and smoke poured from below decks.

On the bridge, there was still hope. Planes were still landing, the last plane coming aboard at 1414. But the communications system continued to deteriorate and the officers came to the conclusion taht the "Lex" was doomed. At 1445 another large explosion rocked the ship. Additional vessels came to the "Lady's" aid, but their gesture was ineffective. As Captain Sherman reported in the Lexington Action Report: "By this time the fire was beyond control. Additional explosions were occurring: it was reported the warheads on the hangar deck had been at a temperature of 1400; ready bomb storage was in the vicinity of the fire and I considered there was a danger of the ship blowing up at any minute. I had previously directed sick and wounded to be disembarked in our w haleboats and excess squadron personel had gone on lines to the destroyer alongside."



SHOKAKU

The black gang was ordered up after securing the engine room. Steam safety valves were opened and the ship was drained of her life blood and wallowed to a stop at 1630. Prepare to abandon ship was ordered. Rafts were cast loose, lines trailed to the water and a search made for helpless wounded.

Admiral Fitch called to the Captain, "Well, Ted, let's get the men off." Captain Sherman gave the order that stabs the heart of every sailor who loves his ship--and this happy ship was loved as few ships have been before or since. The abandonment was deliberate, methodical and reluctant. Men placed their shoes in an orderly line before descending on the lifelines. Fortunately the sea was calm and warm. No one who went overboard was drowned; even the captain's dog was saved. Captain Sherman, Cdr. Seligman, the executive officer, made a final inspection. Last three to go were a corporal of mines, the exec and the captain, in that order. Admiral Fletcher directed the destroyer Phelps to administer the coup de grace with torpedoes. At about 2000 the battered Amazon gave up the ghost with one final and awful detonation as, heel up, she slipped into a 2400 fathom deep.

In the afternoon Admiral Nimitz ordered the retirement of Fletcher's force: reasons being, the enemy had retired, saving Port Moresby, and a carrier not completely effective is extraordinarily vulnerable. Most assuredly he was also thinking of the defense of Midway which was coming up very soon. Fletcher took the main group to Tongatabu and then on to Hawaii. Admiral Kinkaid led the rest to Noumen.

On the Japanese side, confusion reigned. Inouye ordered Takagi to Truk and the Port Moresby invasion was postponed until July. Yet Yamamoto insisted that Takagi give chase, but it was much too late for that. On the 10th Takagi finally received definite orders to proceed to Truk and refit. Now, without air cover, no Jap ship would sail around New Guinea. The A.A.F. would see to that.

What did the two countries people know about the battle? Both Japan and America made exaggerated claims of sinking enemy combat vessels. Yet neither nation told its citizens of the damage inflicted on its own navy. For instance the American public didn't find out that the "Lady Lex" had been sunk in the Coral Sea until after the Battle of Midway. Even by August of 1942 the press hadn't even mentioned that the carrier Yorktown was in the Coral Sea Battle.

For the Jap it was definitely a tactical victory since they had inflicted far greater loss than they had received. But on the other hand the Jap strategy had been foiled and the threat to Australia had been eliminated. They also lost the immediate service of two fine carriers which could have been the margin of victory at Midway.

For the Americans the morale value of the battle was tremendous since Corregidor had fallen while it was in progress. Once more the inadequacy of the U.S. carrier aircraft was emphasized. The ratio of fighter planes to bomber and torpedo planes was increased and in the short month before Midway some improvement was effected in the organization and precision of air attack. There is no teacher of combat that can even remotely approach the value of combat itself; call Coral Sea what you will it was an indispensable preliminary to the great victory of Midway. Surely the Rising Sun had reached HIGH NOON.

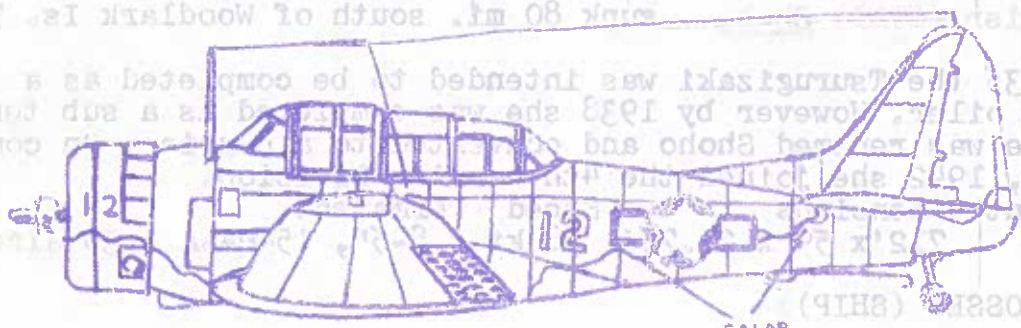
JAPANESE SHIP LOSSES:
HOBBY
SHOP

Judsons

2428 So. Federal 934-0022

— SPECIALIZING —

PLASTIC MODEL AIRCRAFT
KITS — DECALS — PAINTS



SBD-5 DAUNTLESS

COLOR
LINE

COMPLETE LINE OF KITS BY

- MONOGRAM U.P.C. LINDBERG
- AIR-LINES HAWK RENWAL
- AURORA AIRFIX REVELL

— PLUS —

DECALS BY
HIS-AIR-DEC MAX ABT

AND ALWAYS A COMPLETE STOCK
OF
'PROFILES'

JAPANESE SHIP LOSSES:

Auxiliary Minesweepers: No. 1, No. 2...Sunk at Tulagi, 4 May, 42

Built of wood these vessels were of a simple design based on that of a fishing vessel and these were to be converted to such a role after the war.

| Displacement | Dimensions | Speed | Armament |
|--------------|----------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| 215 tons | 97'x 19.3'x 7' | 9½ kts. | 1-3", 1-7.7mm, 6 depth charges |

Converted Merchant Ship, Minesweeper: Tama Maru...sunk-Tulagi, 4 May. 42

Displacement: 260 tons.; Dimensions: 120'x 24'x 16'

Destroyer (DD): Kikutsuki...sunk at Tulagi, 4 May, 42

This was in the Mutsuki Class. They were the first ships to carry the new 24 in. torpedo, a deadly weapon in skilled hands. The Kikutsuki was commissioned in 1926.

| Displacement | Dimensions | Speed | Armament |
|--------------|------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| 1,313 tons | 336'x 30'x 9.75' | 37 kts. | 4-4.7", 2-.30", 6-24" T.T. |

Light Carrier (CVL): Shoho...sunk 80 mi. south of Woodlark Is. 7 May '42

In 1935 the Tsurugizaki was intended to be completed as a high speed oiler. However by 1938 she was completed as a sub tender. In 1941 she was renamed Shoho and converted to a carrier. On completion in January, 1942 she joined the 4th carrier Division.

| Displacement | Dimensions | Speed | Armament |
|--------------|-------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| 11,262 T. | 712'x 59'x 21.75' | 28 kt. | 8-5", 15-2" A.A., 30 aircraft. |

AMERICAN LOSSES (SHIP):

Oiler (AO): Neosho...sunk in the Coral Sea 11 May, 42

| Displacement | Dimensions | Speed | Armament |
|--------------|----------------|----------|--------------------|
| 1,570 T. | 553'x 75'x 32' | 18.3 kt. | 1-5", 4-3", 8-40mm |

Destroyer (DD): Sims...sunk in the Coral Sea 7 May, 42

Sims was completed in 1938. In Nov. 41 she was on convoy duty in the Atlantic. She was with the USS Enterprise on the pioneer raid on the Marshalls and Gilberts in Jan. 42.

| Displacement | Dimensions | Speed | Armament |
|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| 1,570 T. | 348'x 36'x 10' | 34 kt. | 5-5", 4-1.1" A.A., 12-21" T.T. |

Carrier (CV): Lexington...sunk in the Coral Sea 8 May 42

Laid down as a battle cruiser but converted while building following the Washington Naval Treaty. When completed she and her sister, Saratoga, were the largest aircraft carriers in the world, remaining so until the Midway Class carrier was completed in 1945. Complement: 3,300

| Displacement | Dimensions | Speed | Armament |
|--------------|-------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| 33,000 tons | 888'x 105½'x 24½' | 34 kt. | 8-8", 12-5", 90 aircraft |

A Short Summary of "Custer's Last Stand"

After the end of the Civil War, the white man quickly resumed his westward emigration. Treaty agreements and sacred hunting grounds meant nothing to these new settlers. The Indians had but one choice- to fight back. By 1863 a new treaty had been signed with the Sioux. They were given the western half of South Dakota, with hunting rights to the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming. IN 1874 prospectors who had accompanied Colonel Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry Regiment on an official reconnaissance into the Black Hills discovered gold. In no time at all hordes of gold seekers invaded the region.

The Indians watched their treaty rights smashed and the sincere but hopeless efforts of the Government to halt the miners. They even watched hundreds of miners evicted by the Army, but they also saw thousands of them arrive. The Indians listened to the chiefs who counseled renewed resistance. Finally they began leaving the reservation and heading west. Hostilities steadily increased. The Indian Commissioner ordered them to return before January 31, 1876. When the Indians failed to comply, the Army was called upon to enforce the order.

The Army plan called for three columns to converge on Southeastern Montana. Here were the majority of the hostile Indians. Here too was the dynamic leader Sitting Bull. First contact was made by Brig. Gen. George Crook's column, which was approaching from the South. At the Battle of the Rosebud on June 17, Crook was attacked by a large force about 25 miles south of the Custer battlefield. After a hard fight, Crook withdrew and took no part in the Custer debacle.

Meanwhile the other columns from east and west met on the Yellowstone River about 70 miles from the Custer field. Col. John Gibbon commanded the column from Fort Shaw, Montana Territory. Brig. Gen. Alfred Terry, overall commander, led the last column from Fort Abraham Lincoln, near Bismark Dakota Territory. The 7th Cavalry was the main contingent of Terry's force. On June 21 Terry gave orders for the attack. Custer would proceed to a point south of the Indian encampment. Gibbon would then march up the Yellowstone River, placing his force along the Indian's northern retreat line. Trapped between the two forces, the Indians would have to stand and fight.

On June 22 Custer started South. By the 25th of June he was just a few miles east of the ridge that separates the Rosebud from the Little Bighorn. On the ridge his scouts spotted signs of the Indian encampment. Simultaneously the column saw a few Indians, presumably scouts, directly in front of them. Custer feared that the Indians might escape if he didn't act fast. Forward was the order. During a short halt he divided his regiment into three battalions. He kept five companies himself, gave three each to Majors Reno and Benteen and assigned one to guard the pack train.

Benteen was immediately ordered to scout the bluffs on the left. Then Custer took his and Reno's battalions and headed down what is now Reno Creek, leaving the pack train behind. About 2 P.M., as they neared the river, they saw a group of Indians a short distance away. Reno was ordered to pursue. At a trot Reno took out after the fleeing Indians. Soon afterwards the Indian village came into view. From its southern fringe Sioux warriors in heavy force rode out to intercept him. Meanwhile Custer continued north along the east side of the river.

Seeing the charging Indians rushing towards him, Reno formed his men into line. Forward they rode, appalled by the numbers of Sioux. Reno saw no hope of charging through this horde and decided to fight on foot. The men dismounted and formed line again, while the horses were to some timber.

Easily outflanked the troopers withdrew to the cover of the woods also. The Indians quickly infiltrated this wooded area and eventually surrounded the outnumbered troops. To save his men, Reno led a wild retreat across the river and up onto the bluffs on the eastern side. The Sioux attacked mercilessly and casualties were high. About 4 P.M. Reno finally reached the heights. Routed, exhausted and almost out of ammunition, they would surely have been annihilated had not the main Sioux force hurried northward after Custer. Minutes later, Benteen joined the shaken Reno.

The combined command made ready for action. Heavy gunfire to the north indicated that Custer had found some action too. As soon as the pack animals arrived, the ammunition was distributed. By 5 P.M. Reno started north to join Custer, carrying his wounded with him. When they reached a high bluff about a mile from their starting point, they observed a large group of mounted Indians milling around a further 4 miles up the river. Nothing could be seen of Custer or his men. The Indians soon turned their attention to this new group of soldiers. Reno was forced on the defensive again. He and Benteen ordered a withdrawal to their original position. Fierce fighting continued until nightfall, when the Indians retired. Thoughts of the tired men turned to Custer. Surely he was holed up like themselves or perhaps he had retired northward to contact Gibbon.

On the 26th the Indians renewed their attack. The wounded suffered terribly from thirst in the dusty heat. Many heroic deeds were performed—some by a group of volunteers who left the hill entrenchments to go to the river for water for their wounded comrades. Late that afternoon the Indians retired. A few remained behind to keep the soldiers under fire until 6 P.M.. In the valley below the great Indian encampment filed off to the Big Horn Mountains.

Reno stayed put that night. The next morning scouts of Gibbon's column discovered the dead of Custer's command. Subsequently, contact was made with Reno's force. It was then that the Reno-Benteen group first learned of Custer's fate.

As soon as the scene of Custer's stand was discovered, attempts were made to reconstruct his battle plan. But the real plan rests with him. Definitely known are these facts: (1) About 3 P.M. Custer was on the eastern side of the Little Bighorn River, heading north;

(2) some miles further on they moved onto the ridge now called Custer Hill, dismounted, fought and were destroyed by possibly 2,500 to 4,000 Indians; (3) when Reno's command reached Weir Point between 5 and 6 P.M., observers could not detect Custer's command, although they did see a large mass of mounted Indians about 4 miles northward.

Indian accounts reveal some features of the fight. Early in the struggle, War Chief Gall led a mounted charge that apparently overwhelmed the southern part of the battleline. Yet most of the fighting was on foot. The Indians covered their movements by using the many ravines and ridges that mark the battlefield. A favorite tactic was to creep up close and arch arrows into the soldiers. Thus the Indians wrought havoc without exposing themselves to retaliation. When defenses were weakened they could finish the soldiers off in final, deadly rushes.

Beyond these facts little is known. Only the statistics remain. In the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the 7th U.S. Cavalry lost the five companies under Custer, while the other 7 companies under Reno and Benteen suffered added casualties of 47 dead and 52 wounded. Altogether, the dead numbered 261 officers, men, civilians and Indian scouts. Except for Custer and his officers, those killed are buried around the base of the granite memorial on the Custer battlefield. Most of the officer's bodies were exhumed and sent elsewhere a year after the battle. Custer's remains are interred at West Point.

Indian losses are not known. Some estimates are less than one hundred killed.

Taken from the pamphlet "Custer Battlefield"

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COMING ATTRACTIONS:

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Conclusion of Firearms of the "Custer Battle".
History of the 30th Regiment up to World War I.

The October issue will feature the 1812 period. If you wish to write on this topic, do so now and turn your article into the Editor for space is limited. Deadline: Sept. 1, 1967. If you don't, Herman will write another World War II article.

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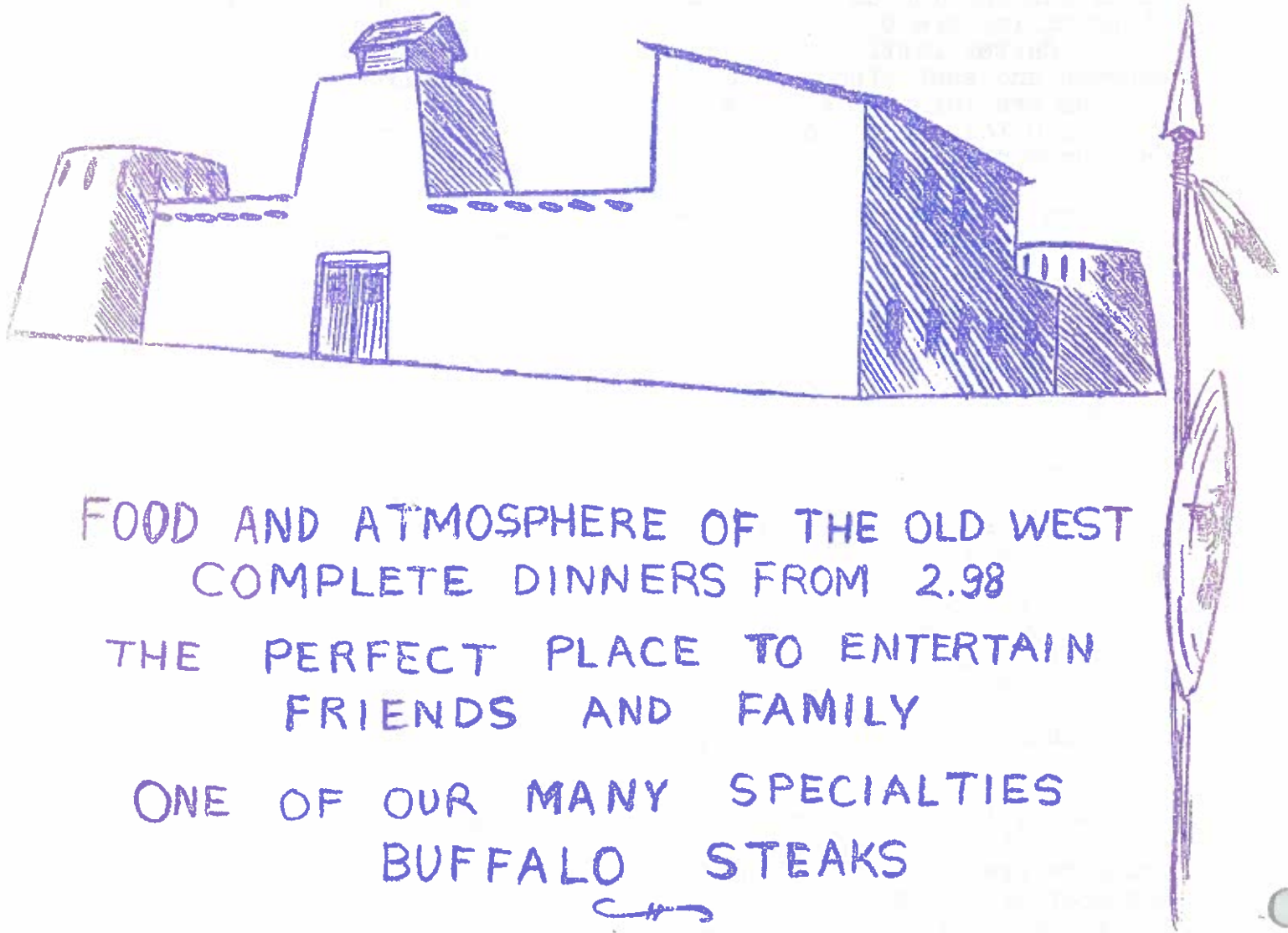
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