General Custer

<http://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-may-not-know-about-george-armstrong-custer>

Sitting Bull

<http://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-may-not-know-about-sitting-bull>

10 myths about little bighorn

<http://www.historynet.com/ten-myths-of-the-little-bighorn.htm>

QUESTION: Did Custer commit suicide?

When a person studies any historical event, whether it be a Civil War battle or the fight at Little Big Horn, he must apply two criteria to his study: factual knowledge and logic. When we apply these criteria to the above question, we can come up with some fairly interesting and logical assumptions.

It is a known fact that George Armstrong Custer was right handed. It is also known that he had received two wounds (one in the left breast and one in the left temple), either of which would have been fatal but not, according to the surgeon accompanying Gibbon's column, necessarily immediately so. It is also known that the Sioux and Cheyenne never mutilated (scalped or otherwise) a body of a foe whom they thought had committed suicide; they thought that individual had "fought like a woman."

Knowing that Custer was right handed and knowing that he had received a wound to the left temple, one must ask the logical question, "Why would he put his revolver to his left temple?" This would, indeed, have been a very difficult maneuver; he would have had to pull the trigger with the thumb of his right hand. This would have been even more difficult if he had received his chest wound first, as many modern historians claim that he had.

Looking at the markers as they now stand atop Last Stand Hill, one will notice that quite a few officers, including Custer's brother, Thomas Ward Custer, died fairly close to him. It was a common idea in the Indian-fighting army to "keep the last bullet for yourself," and many officers and enlisted men held to it.

It would not, therefore, be too improbable (or illogical) to suggest the following scenario take place: Custer was down; he had been hit in the left breast and was now no longer capable of command. His brother, Tom, or another officer who was close by, realized that the situation had become hopeless. Not wanting Custer to fall alive, even though seriously wounded, into the hands of the Indians, this man took his Colt revolver, placed it close to Custer's left temple, and pulled the trigger.

By almost all accounts, Custer's body had not been mutilated. Could this speculation be the reason why? We will never know for sure. Logic says Custer did not commit suicide, but . . . .

By Ernest Lisle Reedstrom