

TITLE WITH Bibliographic INFORMATION: *Sleeping with Custer and the 7th Cavalry: An Embedded Reporter in Iraq.* By Walter C. Rodgers. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-8093-2672-8. Photographs. Maps. Appendix. Pp. xiii, 224. \$29.50.

REVIEWER: John Smith

WORD COUNT RANGE: 600-750 Words

FONT/FONT SIZE: 12 point, Times New Roman

SPACING: Single with space between paragraphs

Note: *If you have any questions regarding the format of the template, please contact Patrick Feng at Patrick.Feng@armyhistory.org*

Photo submissions must be in jpeg or tiff file format and must not be embedded in a Word document. Images must be copyright free. Images must also be no smaller than 2x3 inches at 300 dpi.

Body Text: (Word count 784)

The 7th Cavalry is certainly one of the most colorful units in the U.S. Army's lineage and has frequently been the tip of the army's spear during military campaigns. William O. Taylor escaped Custer's massacre at the Little Big Horn and gave us an excellent eyewitness account in his journal published years later. William "Wild Bill" Harris described the 7th Cavalry's race to the Lu as the commander of that storied Regiment in Korea, and Hal Moore and his accidental embed, Jalloway, offered a gripping report of the 7th Cavalry's battle at Landing Zone X-ray in Vietnam. Finally, Walter Rodgers kept us spellbound with his televised CNN reports of the 7th Cavalry's role in the lightning strike that preceded a lingering counterinsurgency crisis in Iraq. Many soldiers from other campaigns rose in the early hours to follow Rodger's progress, reporting on the rapid advance in real time, while families of the troopers directly involved in ousting Saddam Hussein and seizing Baghdad tried to catch some news of their loved ones on the march. Rodgers delivered on both counts on live television.

Sleeping with Custer is partly a written account of the charge of the 3d Squadron, 7th Cavalry, from Kuwait, following the path of the Euphrates River to just west of Baghdad. By reading between the lines, the professional soldier can retrace the cavalry mission of advance guard for the attacking 3d Infantry Division and others units, and then their transition into a screening force against infiltration across the Syrian-facing deserts, and covering thunder runs into the capital. Rodgers gives ample credit in the book to Apache Troop commander CPT Clay Lyle and squadron commander LTC Terry Ferrell for their leadership, and to SGT Paul Wheatley for courage under fire. While Rodgers' narrative is very readable, it should not to be regarded as the definitive history of the squadron's military exploits in this engagement or Iraqi Freedom. The principal aim and accomplishment of the book is a record of an embedded television crew on a thrilling mission.

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Sleeping with Custer is the account of Rodgers and his CNN crew under fire as one team among many in the embed program early in the war. He gives the reader a glimpse into Embed University in Kuwait before the war and provides an appendix with the detailed Department of Defense Embed Ground Rules at the end. During the run into Baghdad, Rodgers describes the choices he and his crew faced, along with CNN management in Atlanta, in covering the fast moving story while abiding by the mandated ground rules in the danger zone. He provides insights into their survival in a thin-skinned Humvee amongst more heavily armored fighting vehicles, enduring the discomforts and dangers of modern warfare, but all from a television reporter's perspective. Rodgers' crew was accepted by the troopers around them and their riveting live reports were made possible because of the openness and protection provided by commanders and men of the heavily engaged squadron.

Rodgers' knowledge of history and experience in the Middle East adds to his account as he digresses into his prior combat reporting and historical and cultural knowledge relevant to the situations they faced. The lengthy epilogue is a reflection on his experience with the 7th Cavalry in the perspective of a return visit to Baghdad in 2004. Rodgers details the possible high level policy errors and misjudgments that allowed a long and costly war to persist, possibly jeopardizing the proud recent achievements of the 7th Cavalry.

Sleeping with Custer will interest followers of the 7th Cavalry during the race to Baghdad but will be of greater attraction to those inquiring about combat reporting and the experimental embed program. This is an eyewitness account of military history through the lens of a television camera, flavored by personal opinions and insights; it may represent a view of the future of combat reporting in the digital age. Thirty-two color photographs enhance the book, but an index would have aided researchers in using it in the future. This is a fast and easy read and adds insights to the stirring television reports of Walter Rodgers covering the 7th Cavalry's race to Baghdad.

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