

# Substantial Disruption



## The Battle of Little Big Hands

By Mike Tully

He was vain. He was known for his striking [blonde hair](#), cinnamon scented and longer than the fashion of the day, as essential to his image as twinkle to a star. [Gold braids](#) adorned his clothing. He enjoyed success early in life, earning a promotion that made him the youngest general in the Union Army. To honor the occasion, and himself, he donned a special uniform partly because, according to [History.net](#), “he wanted a distinctive uniform so his men could see him during combat.” The impact was not limited to the troops who served under him. As the same website notes, “Superior officers and newspapermen could also see such striking attire, unlike any other in the army.” That was not an accident. He was one of the first [media personalities](#) in American history and was skilled in his use of the news outlets of the day.

He was arrogant and sometimes [broke the rules](#). He violated a treaty and ventured into Native American lands when gold was discovered there, resulting in hostility on the part of the tribes and an effort to confine them to reservations. He once went absent without leave and was [court-martialed](#) twice. He failed to [follow the orders](#) of his commander and, on the second such occasion, did not live to regret it. He was an author and sought out book deals. He publicly [feuded](#) with the President, Ulysses S. Grant, and wrote magazine articles critical of Grant’s attempt to achieve peaceful relations with Native American tribes. He dreamed of [becoming President](#) and told associates his future would include the White House.

He was reckless when he could least afford to be. For most of his career he was remarkably successful and [reliance on his intuition](#) had served him well. He was also a [polarizing figure](#) who was both lauded and vilified by the press. His court-martials jeopardized his military career and his feud with President Grant nearly got him arrested.

The mixture of vanity, arrogance and recklessness is the alchemy of hubris, and hubris killed George Armstrong Custer as surely as [beauty killed the beast](#). He has been [described](#) as “an impetuous and vain romantic with a narrow-minded nostalgia for a vanished past” whose ego eclipsed his judgment at Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876. He refused to follow orders, underestimated his opposition, and made poor management decisions -- the product of [hubris](#).

I find myself thinking of Custer on the eve of Donald Trump’s Presidential inauguration. There are discernible parallels, from hair to hubris. Trump is also a bit of a dandy with golden hair. He is an author, as was Custer. He has also [challenged a sitting President](#) and, like Custer, objected to the President’s [peace-making efforts](#). He has a history of breaking rules: he was sued for [housing discrimination](#); he has been [taken to court](#) by a legion of private and public plaintiffs; he recently had to [settle lawsuits](#) over his allegedly fraudulent “university;” he will arguably be in [violation of the Constitution](#) from his first day in office. He is a skilled manipulator of the

media, as Custer was. His promise to “make America great again” echoes nostalgia for a vanished past. He relies on his [instincts](#), which have served him well. Like Custer, he is vain, arrogant and reckless.

The most damning critique of Trump is that he is [temperamentally unfit](#) to be President and his actions reinforce it. He is an emotional arcade, careening from tweet to tweet, unwilling or unable to demonstrate the emotional resilience expected of an adult, not to mention a president. His humility gene is dormant. His dominant reflex is self-aggrandizement, reinforced by a world view in which he is smartest, his crowds the largest, his narrow victory a landslide, his skill set so massive that he could [simultaneously](#) run his businesses and the country “perfectly.” His reaction to Russian interference with the election was not to condemn and call for retaliation against Russia, but to insist that Russian interference had no electoral influence and, more troubling, to question the intelligence professionals who unmasked the Russians.

The American people are noticing and there is unease in the land. He is the most unpopular President-Elect in memory, polling at 40% ([ABC/Washington Post](#)) and 34% ([Monmouth](#)).

Beginning January 20, 2017, he will have the power to destroy the world. One can only pray that those around him will temper his worst instincts and prevent this arrogant, reckless, and vainglorious man from following his hubris down a path best led untrod into battles best left unjoined. If not, the Battle of Little Big Hands will be a catastrophe.