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THE LEGEND OF LONE STAR

By Bart Ripp; The News Tribune

The Rose Bowl is played in a vast valley illuminated by shadows and populated by legends.

The year's first afternoon starts in vivid sunshine. Like the name Pasadena, the day and the game pass into an intense dusk by halftime, the light glinting off the San Gabriel Mountains, settling into a night saturated with pomp and spectacle and football.

Chasing the day into a cool evening, recalling parade sparkle and game drama make for a parable comparable to the life of a man who was half German, half Oglala Sioux, all epic and doomed to sorrow. His name was William Dietz. Everyone called him Lone Star.

The Lone Star swaggered with talent and confidence. He did so many things that his life, especially the first 40 years, can be called astounding. Greatness enveloped him. He died poor, sick and alone.

Hardly anyone knows the Lone Star. Dietz? Who was Dietz?

Dietz did something nobody has accomplished. He coached Washington State to victory in the Rose Bowl.

Dietz's life could be a book, easily a movie. He would have wanted it that way. Like clouds reflecting twilight on the San Gabriels, and in the great stadium where Ernie Nevers and Johnny Mack Brown and O.J. Simpson chased ghosts across the valley, the lore of the Lone Star is easy to glimpse but hard to grasp.

Lone Star Dietz was an artist so accomplished that he made sketches for Walt Disney in "Bambi." Lone Star Dietz was an actor in movies. Lone Star Dietz was an art teacher, a magazine illustrator and painter of portraits.

Lone Star Dietz was a friend of Jim Thorpe, Walt Disney, Buffalo Bill Cody, George Halas and Glen "Pop" Warner - people who are on postage stamps. All the Lone Star ever got was a handshake and dismissal from teams and schools where he wore out his welcome.

Lone Star Dietz was a foppish dresser who wore spats, pinstripe pants and a Prince Albert cutaway jacket while patrolling the Rose Bowl sideline, smoking a cigar and holding a Russian wolfhound on a leash. Try, just try imagining a coach of anything anywhere doing that today.

Lone Star Dietz was a coach. He coached in two of the first four games of what are called the continuous Rose Bowls, starting in 1916 when his Washington State College eleven beat Brown, 14-0, and lapsing into 1919 when the Halas-led Great Lakes (Ill.) Navy team beat Dietz's Mare Island (Calif.) Marines, 17-0.

He coached Purdue, but got fired in 1922 for buying players from Everett, Sedro-Woolley and Washington State College. He coached the old Boston Braves in the National Football League and so impressed owner George Preston Marshall with his full-length eagle feather headdress, beaded deerskin jacket, fringed trousers, silver and turquoise necklaces and buckskin moccasins that the team was renamed the Redskins. They remain Redskins, and represent Washington, D.C., in the NFL.

William Dietz was born Wicarhpi Isnala - Sioux for Lone Star - in 1884. His mother was Julia One Star Dietz, an Oglala Sioux from South Dakota's Rosebud reservation. Lone Star took the Anglo name of his father, a German civil engineer. According to Lone Star, his father was helping build a railroad across South Dakota's plains when he was captured by chief Red Cloud, given One Star as his wife and allowed to live in a teepee as a trader and Indian agent.

At 8, the Dietz boy was enrolled at schools in Rice Lake, Wis., but was allowed to spend summers with a favorite uncle, also named One Star. Uncle One Star had traveled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The uncle imbued the Lone Star with a theatrical knack.

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In 1904, Dietz was 20. He met a French and Winnebago woman named Angel De Cora. She was an illustrator for Western books and the most celebrated Indian artist of her time. The Lone Star, 13 years younger than Angel, became her student, her teaching assistant and her husband.

When De Cora became head of the Department of Native Indian Art at Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pa., her husband tagged along as a student, art teacher and fullback.

Dietz did increasingly sophisticated illustrations of Indian scenes and people for magazine covers and book dust jackets. He was a 25-year-old student at the prep school. Carlisle coach Warner scheduled big-time Eastern collegiate powers such as Harvard, Pittsburgh and Syracuse. Dietz starred in the backfield with Thorpe, the most celebrated player of the 1910s, and started at defensive tackle - an unheard-of doubling today.

After assisting Warner for three seasons, Dietz was the first of a triumvirate of Indians who migrated from Carlisle to coach at Washington State College. He was followed by Gus Welch and Albert A. Exendine.

Washington State had losing teams since 1909 and no nickname. Cougars would not come until 1919. It must be noted that Washington was not Huskies until 1923. The UW was the Sun Dodgers. Idaho was the Heckers, then Wreckers before becoming Vandals.

Washington State became winners under Dietz. His defensive strategy and jaunty manner elevated WSC to a 6-0 season, allowing just a touchdown and a field goal in runaway victories and an invitation as the West's best to the Pasadena Tournament of Roses East-West game.

Following Washington State's 17-0 victory over Whitman College, Dietz received a telegram from a former WSC botany teacher and football coach named William S. Kienholz. He was director of vocational education in the Los Angeles public schools. As chair of the tournament's athletics committee, Kienholz wired:

" É Occasion offers splendid opportunity to obtain national recognition. Earnestly urge you to come. Expenses for big squad assured. Quick action necessary. Get busy, consent to come and I will do the rest. Wire at my expense at once."

Quick action was Lone Star's motto. He and the 17-member team left Pullman by Pullman train on Dec. 21 for Los Angeles. They arrived Christmas Day, stayed at the Hotel Maryland and witnessed Dietz transformed from coach to movie star.

Dietz's idea of practice was running a few plays for movie cameras in Hollywood. Dietz finagled a role for himself and extras' jobs, paying \$100 a man, for the players in a forgotten opus called "Tom Brown at Harvard." The best part of the deal was that Dietz could get cozy with Hazel Daly, who played the lead of Evelyn Ames in this story, partially filmed at Harvard, about a college rowing team harassed by gamblers.

History passed down by Washington State says that the film was about football, but the American Film Institute's 1911-20 catalog insists the movie's subject was crew. The sport made no difference to the Lone Star in

his wooing of Daly, an actress of such towering ability that she made "Satan's Private Door" and "The Little Rowdy" in 1919 and disappeared from Hollywood.

A wonderful picture is in Washington State's Historical Photographs Collection. It shows the 1915 players surrounding the charming Daly and the charmed Dietz, with the San Gabriels in the background.

Snow fell on Pasadena two days before the game. Tournament Park, site of Tournament of Roses polo games on burros, sack races and chariot races, was a muddy mess. Trucks hauled sawdust to the field.

Dietz devised a defense to stop Brown's black halfback, Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard. Brown managed 103 yards offense, WSC totaled 329 exclusively by running, scored two touchdowns in the second half and slogged to a 14-0 victory seen by about 7,000 in rickety wooden stands. The Rose Bowl, modeled on the Yale Bowl, opened on the site in 1923.

Pollard, like many swirling through Dietz's life, became famous. In 1920, Pollard played for the Akron Pros. He and a Rock Island Independents end named Robert "Rube" Marshall became the first black players in professional football. Pollard, with Akron in 1921, also was the first black coach.

Dietz rejected offers to coach at California and Wisconsin. He coached Washington State in 1916, losing only to the Oregon schools, and in 1917, going unbeaten with a tie against the 362nd Army Infantry.

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With America's mobilization for World War I, WSC downplayed football, and Dietz left for Mare Island to coach the Marines and appear in a few films. He had divorced De Cora, who died in 1919 in a nationwide influenza epidemic.

Dietz returned to Washington to appear in "Fool's Gold," filmed in the Cascades and at Spokane's Minnehaha Park. The film was a flop.

His reputation was tarnished when a federal grand jury indicted Dietz for false draft registration. Like Thorpe, stripped of his 1912 Olympic gold medals for earning \$78 playing baseball, Dietz was exonerated years later.

Dietz became a nomad coach. He would stay a few years, go to a new school, the next team, another battle, one more bottle. He drank heavily, despite a new wife, Doris Ohm, niece of electric physicist Georg S. Ohm.

In 1937, Dietz found a home in Reading, Pa. It was his final coaching job and last stop. He was hired to coach Albright, an Evangelical United Brethren college. He coached the Lions to their last unbeaten record - 7-0-1.

"He was a defensive genius, but weak as an offensive coach," said Harry Van Tosh, who played for Albright's '37 team. "He tried very hard and did well by me, but not all the players liked him. They ridiculed him.

"He was Indian. They said he hit the bottle too much. All I know is that he was a magnificent defensive coach."

Albright, like many colleges in World War II, dropped football after the 1942 season. Dietz lost his job. "He was a wanderer," said Reading historian Richard Flannery. "He wandered up to New York City for a few years. He went to Pittsburgh and started an art school that went bust.

"He would pop up at the strangest places. He would show people a letter written to him by Knute Rockne, asking for advice. He was not a buffoon. Time had just passed him by."

Dietz's wife died. He drank. He lived in a housing project called Oakbrook. Only a few people in Reading knew who he was. A physician, Dr. Leon Zientek, visited Dietz regularly to loan him money and listen to his stories.

"He'd drop by my store," said Van Tosh, retired owner of Jaslow's Army & Navy Store, "and talk about football. He liked to be called 'Coach.'"

In 1964, Dietz died of cancer. He was 79, alone and lonely. An obituary in the Reading Eagle reported that Dietz died holding a poem about always trying and never quitting. It was given to him by Pop Warner.

Dietz's body was cremated, but there was no money for burial. His estate was \$101. His ashes were stored in an urn on a mantel at Lutz Funeral Home.

About 1975, somebody from Albright, saluting Dietz's portraits of scholars, athletes and Indians hanging in the college library, paid for him to sleep in a pauper's grave at Schwarzwald Cemetery. A stone was etched with his name, vital dates and the word COACH.

The Lone Star's last stop is along a wall, running beside Oley Turnpike Road. Route 422 heads east to Philadelphia, New York, the big ballparks and bright lights.

Come football in autumn, a maple tree drops golden leaves on Dietz's grave. By winter and the year's first day, shadows rule Reading.

The gray, so different from Pasadena, glimmers over a legend who wandered from the Dakotas to the Palouse. Dietz craved a game where he could dress fancy and strut the sidelines - a stage where there was only one star.

LONE STAR'S RECORD

William "Lone Star" Dietz coached Washington State College to victory in the 1916 Rose Bowl in his first season as a head coach. He concluded his coaching career at Albright College in Reading, Pa.

The record:

Year / Team / W-L-T

1915 / Washington State College / 7-0-0

1916 / Washington State College / 4-2-0

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1917 / Washington State College / 6-0-1
1918 / U.S. Marines, Mare Island, Calif. / 11-1-0
1919 / U.S. Marines, Mare Island, Calif. / 9-2-0
1921 / Purdue / 3-5-0
1922 / Louisiana Tech / 7-1-1
1923 / Louisiana Tech / 9-1-0
1924 / Wyoming / 2-8-0
1925 / Wyoming / 6-3-0
1926 / Wyoming / 2-4-4
1927 / Wyoming / 4-5-0
1928 / Los Angeles Town Club / 10-0-0
1929 / Haskell Indian Institute, Kansas / 9-2-0
1930 / Haskell Indian Institute, Kansas / 10-1-0
1931 / Haskell Indian Institute, Kansas / 7-3-0
1932 / Haskell Indian Institute, Kansas / 4-3-2
1933 / Boston Redskins (NFL) / 5-5-2
1934 / Boston Redskins (NFL) / 6-6-0
1935 / Temple U. freshmen / 7-0-0
1936 / Temple U. freshmen / 6-0-1
1937 / Albright College / 7-0-1
1938 / Albright College / 4-5-1
1939 / Albright College / 5-4-0
1940 / Albright College / 5-5-0
1941 / Albright College / 6-4-0
1942 / Albright College / 4-5-0
Totals / 27 years / 165-75-13