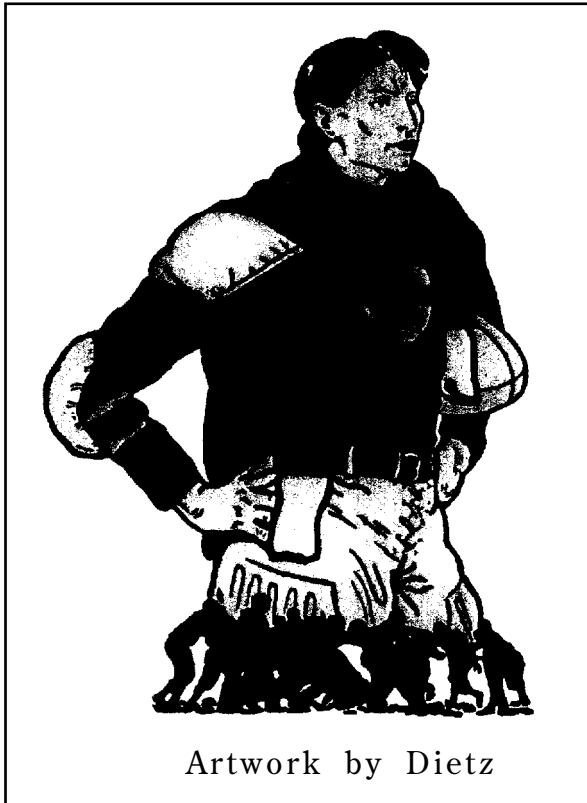


LONE STAR'S LEGACY

By Tom Benjey

The annual return of football always brings to mind a name rarely heard any more, not in Pasadena or Hollywood or Laramie or West Lafayette or Reading or Lawrence or Boston or Ruston, and only infrequently in Carlisle and the Palouse of Washington State. During the first half of the 20th century, a week hardly passed when William H. Lone Star Dietz's name didn't appear in the nation's newspapers. Today his name is seldom heard publicly except in controversies regarding the Washington Redskins of the NFL. In spite of that near silence, Lone Star left a legacy that lives on today in several ways.

His art still adorns the walls of Doc Bohler's alma mater, Albright College. Visitors to the field house can see Lone Star's portrait of Dick Riffle, the small college All-America quarterback of the undefeated 1937 team Dietz coached his first year at Albright. Walk up the stairway toward the athletic director's office to see his stylistic painting of the Albright Lion. Across the campus is the 1959 class gift, Lone Star's most unusual painting - "The Pursuit of Knowledge: A College Fantasy" - which hangs in the Career Development Center where students appropriately see it when they are exploring their after-graduation options.



Artwork by Dietz

The Washington Redskins professional football team has its summer training camp in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which was home to Lone Star when he was at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School from 1907 to 1915. Lone Star and the Redskins have a closer relationship than merely occupying the same geography at different times. Although Lone Star only coached the Redskins for two seasons, they remain eternally tied to him.

Lost to posterity are the details of exactly how it happened, but the Boston Braves football team of 1932 became the Boston Redskins in 1933 when Lone Star took the coaching reins. What is known is that the owner, George Preston Marshall, wanted a name change to differentiate the Boston football team

from the better-known baseball team of the same name. Various renditions exist of how the new name came to be, but not enough evidence exists to determine which, if any, is true. Some say that Lone Star named the team. Others say the team was named in his honor. The team may have been so named because of the heritage of Lone Star and the Haskell Indian Institute players he brought with him. Regardless of which version is true, Lone Star obviously was instrumental in the naming of the team. He may have even designed their logo.

Marshall was a Washington D. C. based laundry tycoon and showman interested in turning the team's financial position around. One of the ways he did this was by capitalizing on the team's assets, a major one being its colorful coach. Marshall exploited Lone Star's Sioux heritage in promotional materials, as fliers featured photographs of Lone Star in Sioux regalia, in a business suit, and in moleskins with his Carlisle letter sweater under his arm. However, his legacy does

not end with the NFL or even the East Coast. He still affects the entire country today.

The nation's New Year's Day football tradition to a significant extent is a result of Lone Star's masterful coaching. Prior to 1916 some football games had been played on New Year's Day, even some intersectional games, including one in Pasadena, California in 1902. But none successfully captured the sports-going public's fancy until Lone Star's Washington State charges proved themselves to be the equal of Brown University, considered by some experts to be the best team in the East that year. Although pundits and oddsmakers considered them vastly inferior, Lone Star and his players put West Coast football on the map by shutting out Brown in the mud, by a score of 14-0. The W.S.C. defense held the Bears' star halfback, Fritz Pollard, to 40 yards net gained for the game. The entire Brown team only gained 96 yards that day. Lone Star's offense operated with precision, gaining 325 yards even though stripped down to its most basic plays due to the poor playing conditions.

When celebrating the 40th anniversary of the historic contest, Rube Samuelsen, Rose Bowl historian, wrote in Goal Post: "That was the game which was to change the face of New Year's Day in the years to come That game provided the stimulus which turned the holiday from 'the day after the night before (of celebrating)' into a day of football in many parts of the country -- yeath, even the world -- as bowl games sprung up without number." Another legacy of that game is that Washington State's now-departing head coach, Mike Price, always kept a copy of the 1915 team photograph on his desk as a constant reminder that Lone Star was the only coach in school history to lead his team to victory in the Rose Bowl.

A photograph from the Washington State University Library, depicting the event as the football team returned from Pasadena, and several pages devoted to Lone Star, are included in Dick Fry's wonderful book about Washington State sports, The Crimson and the Gray: 100 Years with the WSU Cougars. It should be noted that Lone Star was not on the train with his team that day; he was in Hollywood making movies, yet another of his legacies

Perhaps the most interesting and touching legacy Lone Star has left behind is in the hearts and minds of Washington State's most ardent fans Two long-time W.S.U. fans, John and Greg Witter, recall going to their grandfather's home in Spokane to listen to the play-by-play of Cougar football games on the radio on fall Saturday's while they were growing up during the 1970s. At random points during the games, their grandfather, a strapping veteran of two world wars and still strong and sinewy even at his advanced age, would jump up and sing the cheer that greeted the W.S.U. team on its return to Pullman after their glorious victory at the Rose Bowl oh so many years ago. His deep baritone voice would ring out, "Lone Star! Lone Star! Yip. Yip. You! How we love you! Oh you Sioux!" Joining their grandfather in this ritual is one of Greg and John's favorite childhood memories. Now the Witter boys, age 40 and still rabid Cougar fans, have children of their own, and on Washington State football gamedays their young daughters -- cousins Lauren and Megan -- carry on the tradition of singing the "Yip. Yip. You!" chant to their grandparents.

Lone Star Dietz's legacy may continue in another way. Due to his outstanding coaching career, he is eligible for induction into the College Football Hall of Fame and has been nominated for the class of 2003. Election to the Hall of Fame for this colorful personality from college football's past would be a fitting capstone to his many legacies.

The following is from Society member John Daye: "I am in search of coaches and team won-lost records for HBCU, D-III, NAIA, and discontinued football programs to enter into a database. Please e-mail me at: jdaye@sc.rr.com with any questions, comments or information that can be shared. Or write to: John Daye 139 Firebranch Road Columbia, SC 2921-3637."