

# Christine and Bill: Love and the Big-Time Harvard Football Coach

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Few publicly recognized individuals reveal much of their private lives. Fewer yet keep records of their private lives, especially their sexual lives. There are no known private records of “Eros and Sport” among Big-Time intercollegiate athletic coaches, except for Bill Reid, Jr. Reid coached football at Harvard University for three years, 1901, and 1905-06. Harvard was then considered one of the three most important athletic institutions in America, along with Yale and Princeton. His coaching record in three years was 30 wins, 3 losses, and 1 tie. From 1900 until 1910, Reid wrote and received a series of intimate love letters. In 1900, Reid became engaged to Christine Lincoln, a Brookline, Massachusetts debutante, married her in 1902, had three children in the first five years of marriage, and exchanged scores of letters in the first decade of their love affair.

Karen Lystra in her recent book, *Searching the Heart*, has indicated that “Victorian men were expected to hide their emotions in public and to loosen their expressive controls in private, communicating their hidden selves to the women they loved.” As Lystra has stated: “Culturally speaking, head and heart were split within the masculine role.” Reid conformed to this dual role. For instance, in his 440 page diary of the 1905 year of coaching at Harvard, he spoke of “Mrs. Reid” only a few times, and never with any emotion or hint of passion. Yet letters written between Christine Reid and Bill Reid at that time as well as before and after 1905 were filled with explicit details of their love of the other.

This paper is based upon the private letters between Christine Lincoln Reid and Bill Reid, Jr. from the time of their engagement in 1900, when Christine took a seven month trip to Europe with her family. The letters continued during the first few years of marriage when they were separated for periods of time. The letters follow after he resigned as football coach in 1906 and returned to a schoolmaster’s position on the West coast. The paper shows how Bill Reid, while manifesting a consistently rational and analytical attitude in his public dealings including football coaching, had a private life with Christine Lincoln Reid filled with passion and eros seldom recorded.