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# College Football Historical Society

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## BOOK REVIEW

Benjey, Tom *Keep A-Goin': The Life of Lone Star Dietz*. Carlisle, PA: Tuxedo Press, 2006. Pp. 368. Notes, illustrations, index. \$19.95 pb and \$32.95 cb.

Despite our best efforts, the long history of college football is still filled with the untold stories of many teams and individuals that played significant roles in the game during their days. Fortunately, one of those cases has now been resolved with the recent release of a very good biography on the life of William "Lone Star" Dietz by Tom Benjey.

Dietz, who spent his adult years claiming to be one-quarter Indian, grew up in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, which in 1900 was not far removed from being a frontier town. His parents, William and Leanna, were both white and fairly well off for the time, which made it difficult for little Billy to accept the frequent taunts of playmates who called him an "Indian" because of his facial features, which did bear a slight resemblance to typical Native Americans.

Apparently, when Billy was 15 years old he overheard a quarrel between his parents during which he learned that his real mother was an Indian woman -- although both parents later refused to discuss the matter with him. From here begins the odyssey of his life which the author lays out in considerable detail-- despite the fact that Dietz left little or no real personal correspondence behind. After finishing high school at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, he attended Friends University in Wichita briefly. Even though still bearing the brunt of racial harassment at these schools, Dietz continued to immerse himself in what he now believed was his Indian heritage. At the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis he was employed for his artistic skills as a member of the Chiloeco School party that operated the Indian exhibits at the Fair. There Dietz met an attractive woman named Angel DeCora, a leading Indian artist of her day, who would eventually become his first wife.

Dietz eventually ends up at the Carlisle Indian School where he plays college football for three seasons as a lineman, marries Ms. DeCora, and becomes an assistant football coach and protégé under Pop Warner. At some point along the way Dietz had taken to using the name "Lone Star," a story of Indian heritage which was difficult for this reader to follow, and which, with his claims of being one-quarter Indian, were sources of major controversy throughout his life.

From Carlisle, Dietz moved to Washington State as head football coach from 1915-1917 here he began the first of many reconstruction projects for schools that previously had struggled on the gridiron. During World War I Dietz served as head coach of the Mare Island team of the U.S. Marine Corps, although he was never officially inducted into the service. After the war the nation went on a binge of bringing to justice men that had dodged their war-time duties -- and incredibly Dietz was considered to be one of them. His trial by the government and the eventual 30-day jail term actually begin the struggles that stretch across the rest of his life.

Dietz eventually coached at a number of colleges, and the author gives us plenty of details about his teams and seasons along the way. Dietz was an excellent artist - the book is highlighted by many of his drawings - and he also dabbled in the movie making business. The author carefully follows Dietz through his life and struggles in this substantially researched work, and while there are a few minor errors in the text, none detract from the overall quality of this biography.

Despite Dietz having apparently left behind nothing of his thoughts other than the occasional bland newspaper quotes, Benjey has done an excellent job of digging out the details and has given us a very easy-to-read tale. *Keep A-Goin'* will be considered the definitive biography of a potential Hall of Fame football coach.

--R. Schmidt