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Biography explores the life of an Albright legend



Dan Kelly

Kee a-go'in'.

It was the slogan of one of the most famous people ever associated with Albright College.

But though William H. "Lone Star" Dietz may have been famous when he arrived in Reading in 1937, he has been a fading memory of late.

That was until retired University of Maryland mathematics professor Tom Benjey wrote a biography of Dietz.

Dietz began his football career at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Cumberland County, blocking for the Indian legend Jim Thorpe under the tutelage of the great Coach Glenn "Pop" Warner.

Dietz took Warner's football coaching style to his first head coaching job at little known Washington State College. He took the team to national prominence by winning the 1916 Rose Bowl.

Dietz also coached professional football in the early 1930s when the Boston Braves were moved to Washington and renamed the Redskins in part because of Dietz's American

About the book

To get a copy of "Keep A-go'in': The Life of Lone Star Dietz," contact Tuxedo Press at 546 E. Springville Road, Carlisle PA, 17013, or call 717-258-9733 or fax 717-243-0074. You also can visit the Web site www.lonestardietz.com or e-mail lonestardietz@pa.net.

Indian heritage. Dietz is enshrined in Redskins team lore.

Dietz accepted the job as head football coach and athletic director at Albright in 1937. He led the Lions to their first undefeated season.

He coached here for six years until 1942, when World War II shut down the college's football program.

Dietz's coaching record at Albright was 31-23-2.

Dietz also had gained a reputation as an artist and flashy, sharp-dressed showman who made the most of his Indian lineage.

He did so even though in the 1920s he had been found guilty of evading the draft by impersonating an Indian.

People jealous of his success checked into his history and found records that showed he was the son of a white couple.

It's a long fascinating story fleshed out in Benjey's book and on Internet Web sites, where researchers take positions pro and con.

Benjey believes Lone Star was an Indian.



Photo courtesy of Albright College

Legendary athlete Jim Thorpe, left, shows off his ball-handling technique to Albright College football player Leo Disend and head coach William H. "Lone Star" Dietz in 1937.

"In those days, there really was no incentive to pose as an Indian," Benjey said. "It really doesn't make any sense to make something like that up."

Benjey's book takes its readers on the journey through what must have been a wonderful life.

That was until the end of his career at Albright.

Lone Star started an art school near Pittsburgh. He was a very good painter and sketch artist throughout his life and had been employed by many newspapers and magazines over the years.

Some of his art still is on display at Albright.

But just as the war had taken the young men away from the gridiron, it also took artistic young men and women out of his art school because they were needed in the factories.

The art school failed, and Dietz returned to Reading broke. Sam Codi, a 1942 Albright graduate who played for Dietz for four years, said it was sad to see the great coach who had inspired him so many times appear defeated in his final years.

"He could inspire you to run through a brick wall," Codi said. "But he was also very foxy."

"My senior year I was team captain and I was having dinner at his house and he said:

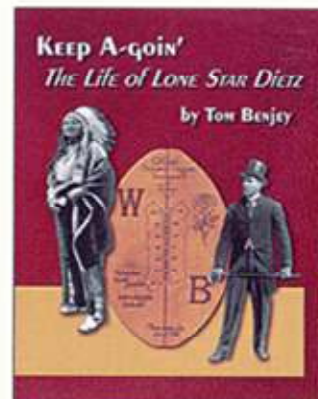


Photo courtesy of Tom Benjey

Tom Benjey, a retired University of Maryland mathematics professor who lives in Carlisle, Cumberland County, chose a football pigskin background for the cover of his biography of Albright College football legend William H. "Lone Star" Dietz.

"Tomorrow, no matter who wins the toss, we want to kick, not receive." He said we'd do an on-side kick against Franklin & Marshall, and we did, and it was successful and within a few minutes we scored."

Even though Lone Star came to Albright as a conquering hero, when he died in 1964 at age 79 he couldn't afford a funeral.

"Dick Riffe, star of the 1937 team, and I were the only ones at his funeral," Codi recalls.

When he died, Dietz was clutching a poem written by Pop Warner called "Keep a-go'in'."

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