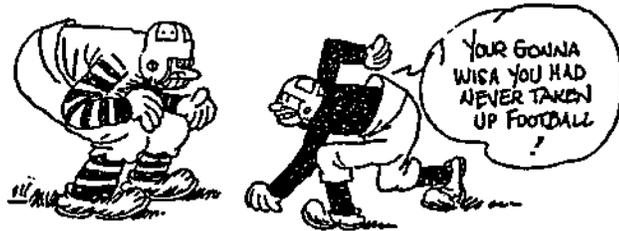


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# College Football Historical Society

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## Coach Henry Lever of Linfield

By Tim Marsh

Henry Work Lever (pronounced "Lee-vur") was born in Loveland, Ohio, near Cincinnati, on October 4, 1883. His genealogical "roots" were English and German immigrants, who settled in Pennsylvania in the 1770s, later moving to Ohio. He survived a near fatal burst appendix at age 15 with a life-saving operation on the kitchen table of his family's farm home. Surviving appendicitis typified his life. Small in stature - standing about 5-foot-9 - Lever was always a fighter, determined to succeed, and usually doing so, in everything he took on.

After graduating in 1901 from Loveland, Ohio, High School, one of his successes was college football. There are indications he may have played football at three Ohio colleges. His daughter, Margaret Lever Dement of Madras, Oregon, said her father studied "engineering, math and football. In those early days, football was extremely rough and tough with practically no uniform or headgear protection." He studied at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and Ohio Northern University in Ada, before graduating from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, in 1908.

Engineering, math and football did not get all of Lever's attention in college. For example, during his senior year The Athena, Ohio U's student yearbook (he was its sports editor), says he was in the Philomathean Literary Society, Scientific Literature Club and YMCA. He was also track team captain and Phi Delta Theta fraternity president. In summary, Dement said, he was a "Big Man on Campus."

In September 1908, Lever started his first job at what is now Valley City State University in Valley City, North Dakota. He was athletic director and taught in the math and physics departments. He also coached football, men's and women's basketball, baseball and track. While it may have been his first job after college, Valley City State's The Blizzard student yearbook says he was assistant athletic director at Ohio University, 1907-1908.

At Valley City State, he met Marguerite E. Sherburne, an education student who enjoyed music and art. She also was an outstanding basketball player, playing forward and guard, for the women's team he coached. She was part of the music conservatory and active in group vocal (Choral Society, Glee Club) presentations on campus. Involved in drama and an officer in the Clionian Literary Society for women, she started attending Valley City State at age 15 and graduated August 28, 1909, with a four-year elementary degree, preparing her to be a school

teacher. Henry and Marguerite married in September 1909, and they would have nine children during their marriage.

"After about three years in frigid North Dakota, the Levers moved to the warmer and beautiful Ozark Mountains of Missouri to farm," said Dement. "Farming did not work out well," so his family stayed in Missouri and he coached football in 1911 and baseball in 1912 at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. He then coached football in the 1913 season and men's basketball in the 1912-1913 and 1913-1914 seasons at Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

About 1916, the family moved to Alberta, Canada, with dreams of becoming rich when "irrigation was to come to the dry land prairies," said Dement. Wet weather helped produce bumper wheat crops and financial success. However, the good weather was followed by about five years of grasshopper plagues and severe drought. Farmers' resources were drained and most, including the Lever family, were broke. During these Canadian years, Lever used his engineering abilities while working on the Lethbridge Northern Alberta Irrigation project.

About 1921, the Levers returned to the United States, settling in a Yakima, Washington, farming area. Later, they moved to the southern Oregon coast where Henry managed a large ranch at Wedderburn. Soon thereafter, apparently, the Levers moved up the Oregon coast to Myrtle Point, where he taught algebra and geometry and coached football, basketball, baseball, and track at Myrtle Point Union High School. Eventually an ability to coach "all sports," and his reputation as a hard-worker and leader at Myrtle Point, convinced Linfield College President Leonard W. Riley to hire Lever in 1930.

It was a wise decision for Linfield. Serving the college until 1949 as athletic director, he coached football, basketball, baseball, and track and field. He became known as the "Grand Old Man" of Linfield athletics. Lever's initials, H.W., stood for "Hard Work." During summers, he helped recruit Linfield students, including Irene Hartman, who later became the wife of Linfield President Harry Dillin. She remembered Lever serving during World War II as Linfield's purchasing agent and college commons manager.

Lever was the Linfield Wildcats' football coach from 1930-1938 and 1940-1942, and his career record was 30-54-7 (.368). His 1935 team was the first for Linfield to win a Northwest Conference football championship. While serving as men's basketball coach for 15 seasons, Lever compiled an overall record of 173-109 in 1930-1941 and 1942-1947. His winning percentage of .613 is the best in school history for basketball coaches with at least two seasons on the job. He also coached men's track and field from 1931-1935 and 1941-1943. While coaching the Linfield baseball team in 1947 he led the Wildcats to their first ever Northwest Conference championship in that sport, and he also served as a scout for the Cincinnati Reds of major league baseball.

Lever was "mainly responsible for lifting the performance of Linfield athletic teams to a respected position in the Northwest Conference and on the Pacific Coast," according to Linfield sports figure Paul Durham. In an article in the McMinnville News-Register newspaper, Harry Dillin wrote that Lever had a "wide range of talents and abilities. He was an indefatigable worker. He was a great person, one of the most tremendous persons I have known. He was gracious and talented. He had a great sense of humor."

Durham also added that, even more important than Henry Lever's ability as coach, was "his contribution to the character development of the students with whom he worked." Wildcat athletes looked to him as a leader and to his wife Marguerite as a mother figure said Dement, and "many times she fed hungry athletes, especially during the Depression years." During his

years at Linfield, Lever had an offer to return to Wisconsin -- where he had coached previously - "at more than twice my Linfield salary" according to an account he wrote in the November 1975 Linfield College Bulletin, an alumni publication. However, Lever turned down the offer, saying, "My beloved wife voted with me to stay at Linfield, where there was much work yet to do."

Margaret Lever Dement said her father was blessed with able assistant coaches during his time at Linfield. They included Orile Robbins, Wayne Harn and Hal Smith. Robbins is best known as a successful head football coach at McMinnville High School, where the "most inspirational" award is named for him. Harn, a former Oregon State University football player, was Linfield head football coach in the 1939, 1946 and 1947 seasons. Smith, like Lever, in the Linfield Athletics Hall of Fame, was an outstanding football player at Washington State University. In addition to coaching football at Linfield, Smith served as the college's head wrestling, track and field and cross-country coach, as well as head of the Linfield Physical Education Department.

Margaret remembers that her father put his engineering skills to work at Linfield when he laid the plans for the first grass football field in the Northwest Conference, Linfield's Maxwell Field. According to Harry Dillin, Lever also helped develop plans for old Riley Gymnasium and Memorial Hall, a residence hall built into Linfield football and track and field's Memorial Stadium. She added that during World War II her father worked as an engineer for McMinnville Municipal Airport to assure it could accommodate, if needed, the Boeing B-29 "Superfortress" bomber aircraft.

Paul Durham, who lived in Portland and graduated from Portland's Franklin High School in June 1932, started at Linfield as a student in September of that year. He knew of the college because his older brother was a Linfield student. Lever came to Portland and promised Durham a "job in a restaurant for food, a bed at Macy's funeral parlor in downtown McMinnville, and half tuition for academics and athletics. In the heart of the Depression, I needed all the help I could get" said Durham. He eventually went on to succeed Lever as the college's football coach, and was also the men's co-basketball coach with Roy Helser, and athletic director. Lever stayed at the college during the 1948-1949 academic year, then turned the reins as athletic director over to Durham in 1949 when Lever retired. Durham said Lever "meant a lot to me" and was a "solid leader and example. His influence as a Christian gentleman still carries on in men like (former Linfield football coach) Ad Rutschman and the men Ad (coached)."

Henry and Marguerite had been interested for years in Oregon's High Desert area, and after she passed away in 1952 he moved there, to Madras, in 1953. There he farmed briefly before earning his real estate license at age 80, and later he would earn a real estate broker's license. The motto for his real estate firm, The Henry Lever Agency, was "Service with Integrity."

Henry Lever died July 1, 1980, after being hit by a truck as he was running across a busy state highway in Madras. At the time he was 97 years of age and the oldest active real estate broker in Oregon. Henry's memorial service was held at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in McMinnville with speakers including Linfield representatives, and his Linfield football players served as pall bearers. Today Linfield College has the Henry W. and Marguerite S. Lever Fund, through which students receive scholarships. The Lever family decided that the scholarships should support Linfield students studying music, since Marguerite was a talented singer. Henry was posthumously enshrined in the Linfield College Athletics Hall of Fame in 1998.

## BLACK COLLEGE FOOTBALL A BRIEF HISTORY: 1930-2004

By Roger B. Saylor

In the 75 years from 1930 to date, the story of football in the historically black colleges may be divisible into three eras. The likely dividing points are World War II and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with the latter probably the more important.

By 1930 there were black colleges fielding teams in all the states which had been part of the Confederacy during the Civil War plus the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, and the portion of Virginia which became West Virginia. Oklahoma, not yet then a state, had established Langston as its college for blacks and was represented. Also present with black college football teams were Lincoln of Pennsylvania and Wilberforce of Ohio. That which is now Cheyney University of Pennsylvania had a modest start about 1920 as a two-year teacher-training school for blacks.

Most of the early powers on the field of play continued in that role through World War II. The most highly publicized series was Howard versus Lincoln on Thanksgiving Day. The games were often played in Washington, Philadelphia or New York. In the deep South, Tuskegee Institute (now University) maintained its prominence, as did Hampton Institute in Virginia. Among the better known church-related colleges on the football scene were Virginia Union, Shaw, Morehouse, and Fisk. Early leaders Talladega and Atlanta dropped out of the football picture prior to World War II. In far off Texas, Wiley was a gridiron power.

Throughout that period a number of teacher-training and agriculture-technical state institutions moved up from two-year to four-year status. It took a while for most of them to catch up with the best on the field of play. By the war period though, Florida A&M, Southern of Louisiana, and Prairie View A&M of Texas were playing with the strongest schools.

The four leading conferences of the 1930-1945 era were the same as those of the earlier years. The oldest, the CIAA, dates back to 1912. The "C" originally stood for "Colored" but was later changed to "Central," so the CIAA abbreviation could remain unchanged. It stretched from Pennsylvania to North Carolina with both private and state supported colleges as members. Later that year, a number of colleges met in Atlanta to form the Southeastern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, which began operation in 1913. By 1930 its name had been changed to the