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Grace F. Thorpe collection - Newspaper Clippings: Jim Thorpe Legacy, 1971-1972

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[[image]] - Sunday Patriot-News Photo
Grace Thorpe
Holds picture of her illustrious father, Jim Thorpe.

Thorpe Daughter Digs Up His Past
By ROGER DORAN
Carlisle Bureau

CARLISLE- The remark was most appropriate.

Grace Thorpe, daughter of the immortal Jim Thorpe, said she was having a field day.

That sort of thing runs in the family.

Her father had several spectacular field days, particularly in the 1912 Olympics when he won all the events he entered but lost the trophies.

Along with countless others, she's working to straighten that out.

Meanwhile, she's having her field day digging up her roots.

Many hours last week were spent in the Cumberland County Historical Society's library poring over old Carlisle Indian School journals and records.

Her work is to fill gaps in a journal on her heritage which she is writing as a senior project at the University of Tennessee. She returned to college to fill gaps in her own life. "With the kids grown (she has two children), I just decided to go back."

Not too many students write senior theses featuring their fathers.

"It's a labor of love," she exclaimed.

Libraries are filled with the exploits of her father, but her interest here centered on Iva Margaret Miller, her mother, a Cherokee Indian whose name was Pioke, meaning "little violet." She was graduated from the Indian School in 1912.

"I pick up a paper or journal from the Indian School, and there's a picture of my mother," she said. "That's great."

Iva Miller and Thorpe were married in 1913 in St. Patrick's Catholic Church here and spent their honeymoon going around the world with the New York Giants.

"Not bad for a couple of kids off Oklahoma reservations, eh?" said Grace Thorpe, the youngest child of that union, with justifiable pride.

Grace Thorpe, her daughter, Dagmar, and brother, retired Army Lt. Col. Carl Thorpe were in Carlisle at the invitation of the Army War College, which Saturday sponsored Jim Thorpe Sports Day.



She was staying in Washington Hall at Carlisle Barracks. "I learned that's where Dad lived when he went to school here," she said. "What a thrill!"

The thrill is gone, though, when the conversation turns to the matter of injustice to her father after the 1912 Olympics. He was stripped of his honors when it was discovered he had played a summer of baseball while at the Indian School.

"I'm not interested in the medals he won but were taken away," she said. "Maybe it would be nice to get back his trophies, but that would just lead to a tug of war by different groups (including the Carlisle Jaycees) trying to get them. They want the material things. I'm not concerned with that."

She said her main interest is "the rehabilitation of James Francis Thorpe."

But where are those great Indian athletes now?

"They're out there," she said. "All kinds of Thorpes, Tonawandas; I think they're still there."

It's just a matter of matching them up with good coaching, something like putting Jim Thorpe with Pop Warner, she said.

"Dad," she said, "wasn't easy to handle temperamentally, but Coach Warner knew how."

Her father wasn't easy to handle physically, either.

Because no one really learned how.

Unlike his Olympic feats, that's in the record books.

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