Early Life

Richard B. Cozens was born on May 19th, 1922, in San Diego, California.[1] His father, Burt, had been born and raised in California, and worked as a construction worker when he was born. His mother was born as Grace Van Autnerp (also spelled Vanatwerp) and was raised in Chicago before moving to California, where she married Burt and started their family.[2] Richard had two older brothers, Thomas and Robert, and one younger brother named Edward.[3] He also had a younger sister, Ann. Richard was not the only Cozen brother to enlist during World War II, in fact, all four Cozens brothers served. Thomas was an Air Cadet who died in a plane crash in Roswell, New Mexico, in September of 1942. Robert served as Lieutenant Colonel in the army air forces out of Washington DC, and Edward served in the US Navy, where he was stationed in Paloma.[4] Richard grew up in Encinitas, California, where he spent a lot of time with his extended family on the beach.[5]

WSC Experience

Richard enrolled as a freshman at Washington State College in 1941, where he became a pledge for the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity.[6] As a freshman, he played for the WSC football team, and received his letters along with twenty-seven others.[7] During his time at WSC he met Ruth Russell, another student, and the two began a relationship.[8]

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[1] "Richard B. Cozens," Ancestry.com. *California Birth Index, 1905-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005.
[2] U.S Census Bureau, Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900, Population Schedule, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/11590560:7602 (accessed June 2023).
[3] U.S Census Bureau, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population Schedule, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/92006801:6224(accessed June 2023).
[4] "Services for Cozens Wed, in San Diego," *Blade Tribune*, 21 August 1944.
[5] "Family and Friends Gather for Reunion," *National City Star-News*, Volume XLIII, Number 33, 14 August 1925
[6] "Fraternities List Recent Pledges," *Washington State Evergreen*, September 22, 1941.
[7] "Thirty Gridders Receive Awards," *Spokane Chronicle*, December 3rd, 1941.
[8] "Services for Cozens,"

Military Service

In 1942, before enlisting, Cozens trained as a civilian to become an aviation cadet, with the aviation cadet examination board at Geiger field, an air force training base in Spokane, Washington.[9] This would have only been weeks after his brother Thomas' death at an air force training facility in New Mexico. One can't help but wonder if his brother's death was the inspiration for his training and subsequent enlistment. He was among seventy-eight WSC students who left Pullman behind to enlist in the Air Corps, in early 1943.[10] He was stationed at Fort Worth, Texas. While stationed at Fort Worth, he married Ruth Russell, on July 2nd, 1944.[11] One month later, on August 5th, while in a routine combat training flight, the B-24 Liberator that Cozens was aboard crashed into a tree near Breckenridge, Texas. Cozens, who had achieved the rank of Second Lieutenant, was being instructed by First Lieutenant Joseph Kwasnik Jr., at the time of the accident. Cozens, Kwasnik, and Lieutenant Robert Craig all sustained critical burns from the crash and resulting fire, while Sergeant Cornelius, the plane's engineer, died instantly.[12] Initial reports stated that the three survivors' injuries were not serious, and that they were transferred to the hospital at Fort Worth.[13] However, Cozens died of complications due to the second and third degree burns on his neck and arms, twelve days later.[14]

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[9] "33 New Aviation Cadets on Lists," *Spokane Chronicle*, October 1, 1942.
[10] "W.S.C Loses 78 to Air Corps," *Spokane Chronicle,* February 16, 1941.
[11] Grace L. Cozens to Mr. Frank Banard, Registar, Washington State University Libraries, Manuscript, Archives and Special Collections, War Records, 2, 5, 19.
[12] "City Flier is Burned When Plane Crashed," *Shawnee-News Star,* August 8, 1944.
[13] "One Dies, Trio Hurt in Liberator Crash," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal,* August 6, 1944.
[14] Cozens, Richard B. Standard Certificate of Death, Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 40223, Received September 13, 1944.

Postwar Legacy

After Cozens' passing, his widow, Ruth Cozens, returned to Pullman to complete her studies. She moved into the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority house.[15] She also became involved in the Psi Chi psychology honors society.[16] She graduated in 1946 with honors.[17] Cozens' body was escorted back to San Diego, California, by his good friend Dick Chapman. He was buried at the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.[18]

[15]Grace L. Cozens to Mr. Frank Banard, Registar,

[16] "Psi Chi Initiates and Picks Officers," *Evergreen,* May 24, 1946.

[17] "Fiftieth Annual Commencement," Washington State College, Washington State Libraries, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, 9.

[18]"Richard B. Cozens," Find a Grave, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/3394233/richard-b-cozens?_gl=1*znnt6c*_gcl_aw*R0NMLjE2ODk5MDM0MzUuQ2p3S0NBand0dU9sQmhCUkVpd0E3YWdmMXMzRDB5WDF2bWhESGlLdGRmZ2pJUWtDXzlrWHhkNGNLZGRDanFKR2Yxd1RwbGNKODdrZDhCb0MyWW9RQXZEX0J3RQ..*_gcl_dc*R0NMLjE2ODk5MDM0MzUuQ2p3S0NBand0dU9sQmhCUkVpd0E3YWdmMXMzRDB5WDF2bWhESGlLdGRmZ2pJUWtDXzlrWHhkNGNLZGRDanFKR2Yxd1RwbGNKODdrZDhCb0MyWW9RQXZEX0J3RQ..*_gcl_au*MTQ2NjU1NTYxNC4xNjg0ODYzNDY1*_ga*NzgzMDgzMzEuMTY3NjUxMDU2Nw..*_ga_4QT8FMEX30*ZGE5MWFjMGQtZGI5MC00ZTAzLWE2YmYtMTA5MjY3NTExYTc0LjQ4LjEuMTY5MjA1MDM5NC42MC4wLjA. (accessed June 2023).