

THE SAGE OF SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000

There are not to many of us around today that recall the old "Sage of Superstition Mountain," which is how many people referred to "Doc" Rosencrans.

I first met Ludwig G. Rosenkrantz in the spring of 1949. My father stopped at his cabin for a short visit that spring. Rosencrans' cabin was located along the Apache Trail northeast of Apache Junction. "Doc" was always willing to talk about the Dutchman's Lost Mine and often started his conversations with, "The only lost mine is in the mind of its believers."

Rosencrans moved to the Superstition Mountain area in 1946, from California after spending a couple of years searching for the Lost Peg Leg Mine near Amboy Crater. When Rosencrans arrived in the area he first met Mrs. Sina Lewis. At her suggestion he built a small cabin on a claim northeast of Apache Junction just beyond the Treasure Vault Mine. Doc believed the claim he moved onto had good geology.

Doc made several trips into the Superstition Mountains over the next forty years. He spent time around Black Top Mesa, Lewis Ridge and in East Boulder Canyon. He also made trips into La Barge, Needle and Charlebois Canyons. Rosencrans even led a couple of prospecting expeditions in the forties and fifties. People arrived at Doc's cabin from all over the world seeking information about the Lost Dutchman Mine. He was more than happy to oblige them, but would always caution them about the mountains. "As for the mine," he would say, "lots of interest, but little substance." His experience, information and philosophy lead to him being called the "Sage of Superstition Mountain."

Who was Doc Rosencrans? Ludwig G. Rosenkrantz (his birth name) was born in Latah, Washington, on July 9, 1914. His father was a Veteran's Administration doctor and constantly moved from one place to another. Doc remembered as a child living on the Hoopa Indian Reservation. Growing up, he also lived at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, then in Chicago, and finally in Memphis. Doc attended Southwestern College in Memphis, but soon gave up a college education and moved to California in 1935.

When Doc moved to California he planned on striking it rich. He even tried Hollywood for awhile, playing the part of a Burgundian soldier in the film *If I Were King*. The film starred Ronald Coleman and Claire Trevor and was released in 1938. Doc always said, "I didn't hit Hollywood by storm, as a matter of fact Hollywood hit me by storm. I was in, then I was out," he claimed.

It was in California that Doc became acquainted with billiards. His only means of support was hustling pool, primarily at a pool hall located at 6th and Union Streets in Los Angeles, California. His pool shooting expertise soon earned him the name of "Sixth and Union Doc." He actually played exhibition games against "tuxedo players" such as Harry Oswald.

"It was a romantic way of life," Doc would often say. "You were always looking for a big sucker, the \$100,000 hustle. Of course those games never came. It was much like looking for the Lost Dutchman Mine, but somewhat less vigorous."

Doc vividly remembered December 7, 1941. He recalled leaving for the pool hall that morning, wondering where the money to pay for breakfast was going to come from. He passed some workers on the street who informed him the events surrounding the "day that would live in infamy."

Doc was drafted into the Army Air Corps on March 5, 1942. He had basic training at Shepherd Field, Texas, and was sent to radio school at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. He was assigned to the 17th Bomber Group, Jimmy Doolittle's group, as a radioman.

While in the military during World War II, Doc became a public relations

writer. In this position he sent many interviews of enlisted men and officers to home town newspapers across our country for printing. As a public information writer he toured the Austrian concentration camps of Gusen and Mauthausen. His vivid descriptions of these horrible death camps were printed in the Memphis newspapers and others. Doc carried this horror with him for the rest of his life. What he saw at Gusen and Mauthausen had soured him on the human race.

Rosencrans was discharged from the U.S. Army in 1945 at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. After a brief visit with his family he returned to California, but he had lost his interest in pool halls and billiards. He decided to search for gold.

Lost gold mine hunting was certainly a solitude way of life and he needed the isolation. He read John D. Mitchell's book and it fired his imagination and eventually led to his decision to search for the Lost Dutchman Mine in Arizona.

Once settled in his cabin along the Apache Trail he turned to writing. He wrote a small book titled "*Spanish Gold and the Lost Dutchman Mine*." Not all of Doc's writings were serious. His notebooks were filled with quips of witticisms and satirical statements. His final manuscript was written about life itself and what eventually happens to the soul. Rosencrans penned a manuscript titled "The Kingdom of Reality." This manuscript was a very complicated and complex look at life based on reality as Rosencrans understood it. The manuscript attempts to explain the unknown about life itself and it also projects the philosophical being of the author.

Another interesting aspect of Doc Rosencrans' life was his attempt to make a claim to the Kidd Estate. This estate belonged to a very eccentric old prospector who disappeared on the eastern edge of the Superstition Mountains in the late 1940's. Kidd left a handwritten will which basely stated, anyone who can prove the existences of a soul would be the sole heir to his estate. The estate was worth over \$500,000. This just goes to prove "Doc" tried every avenue available to him to reach his life goal of getting rich, but he always failed in the end.

Rosencrans' life experiences and his desire to become wealthy placed him in a situation where he sit idly while time passed him by. I am sure his experiences at Gusen and Mauthausen contributed to his writing of the manuscript "The Kingdom of Reality." He searched all his life in an attempt to explain man's cruelty to his own kind and he probably never found answer.

Doc promoted his mining claim, but in the end it never amounted to much for him. You might say he was never a rich man in material things, but he was a wealthy man in experience, friends and knowledge.

Ludwig G. "Doc" Rosencrans passed away on April 7, 1986, in the Phoenix Veteran's Hospital. His passing ended yet another interesting chapter in the saga of Superstition Mountain.

