

= Carl Tanzler =

Carl Tanzler , or sometimes Count Carl von Cosel (February 8 , 1877 ? July 3 , 1952) , was a German @-@ born radiologic technologist at the United States Marine Hospital in Key West , Florida who developed a morbid obsession for a young Cuban @-@ American tuberculosis patient , Elena Milagro " Helen " de Hoyos (July 31 , 1909 ? October 25 , 1931) , that carried on well after the disease had caused her death . In 1933 , almost two years after her death , Tanzler removed Hoyos 's body from its tomb , and lived with the corpse at his home for seven years until its discovery by Hoyos 's relatives and authorities in 1940 .

= = Name = =

Tanzler went by many names ; he was listed as Georg Karl Tänzler on his German marriage certificate . He was listed as Carl Tanzler von Cosel on his United States citizenship papers , and he was listed as Carl Tanzler on his Florida death certificate . Some of his hospital records were signed Count Carl Tanzler von Cosel .

= = Early life = =

He was born as Karl Tänzler or Georg Karl Tänzler on February 8 , 1877 in Dresden , Germany . Around 1920 he married Doris Anna Shafer (1889 ? 1977) and he was listed as " Georg Karl Tänzler " on the marriage certificate . Together they had two children : Ayesha Tanzler (1922 ? 1998) , and Crystal Tanzler (1924 ? 1934) , who died of diphtheria .

Tanzler grew up in Germany . The following ? Editorial Note ? accompanying the autobiographical account ? The Trial Bay Organ : A Product of Wit and Ingenuity ? by ? Carl von Cosel , ? in the Rosicrucian Digest of March and April 1939 , gives details about his stay in Australia before and during World War I and his return to Germany after the war :

Many years ago , Carl von Cosel travelled from India to Australia with the intention of proceeding to the South Seas Islands . He paused in Australia to collect equipment and suitable boats , and to become acquainted with prevailing weather and sea conditions . However , he became interested in engineering and electrical work there , bought property , boats , an organ , an island in the Pacific ? so that he was still in Australia at the end of ten years . He had just begun to build a trans @-@ ocean flyer when the war broke out and the British military authorities placed him in a concentration camp for ' safe @-@ keeping ' along with many officers India and China who were prisoners of war . Later he was removed to Trial Bay to a castle @-@ like prison on the cliffs , and there the work in this narrative was accomplished . At the end of the war no prisoner was permitted to return to his former residence , but all were shipped to the prisoner 's exchange in Holland . When Carl von Cosel was released he set out to find his mother from whom he had not heard since the beginning of the war . Finding her safe , he remained with her for three years , witnessing the chaos that followed in the wake of the war Finally , she suggested that her son return to his sister in the United States ...

Tanzler 's account of Trial Bay Gaol , his secret building of a sailing boat , etc . , is confirmed by Nyanatiloka Thera , who mentions that he planned to escape from the Gaol with ? Count Carl von Cosel ? in a sailing boat , and provides other information about the interment of Germans in Australia during WWI .

Tanzler emigrated to the United States in 1926 , sailing from Rotterdam on February 6 , 1926 to Havana , Cuba . From Cuba he settled in Zephyrhills , Florida , to where his sister had already emigrated , and was later joined by his wife and two daughters . Leaving his family behind in Zephyrhills in 1927 , he took a job as a radiologic technologist at the U.S. Marine Hospital in Key West , Florida under the name Carl von Cosel .

During his childhood in Germany , and later while traveling briefly in Genoa , Italy , Tanzler claimed to have been visited by visions of a dead ancestor , Countess Anna Constantia von Cosel , who revealed the face of his true love , an exotic dark @-@ haired woman , to him .

= = Maria Elena Milagro de Hoyos = =

On April 22 , 1930 , while working at the Marine Hospital in Key West , Tanzler met Maria Elena " Helen " Milagro de Hoyos (1909 ? 1931) , a local Cuban @-@ American woman who had been brought to the hospital by her mother for an examination . Tanzler immediately recognized her as the beautiful dark @-@ haired woman that had been revealed to him in his earlier " visions . " By all accounts , Hoyos was viewed as a local beauty in Key West .

Elena was the daughter of local cigar maker Francisco " Pancho " Hoyos (1883 ? 1934) and Aurora Milagro (1881 ? 1940) . She had two sisters , Florinda " Nana " Milagro Hoyos (1906 ? 1944) , who married Mario Medina (c.1905 ? 1944) and also succumbed to tuberculosis ; and Celia Milagro Hoyos (1913 ? ?) . Medina , Nana 's husband , was electrocuted trying to rescue a coworker who hit a powerline with his crane at a construction site .

On February 18 , 1926 , Hoyos married Luis Mesa (1908 ? ?) , the son of Caridad and Isaac Mesa . Luis left Hoyos shortly after Hoyos miscarried the couple 's child , and moved to Miami . Hoyos was legally married to Mesa at the time of her death .

Hoyos was eventually diagnosed with tuberculosis , a typically fatal disease at the time , that eventually claimed the lives of almost all of her entire immediate family . Tanzler , with his self @-@ professed medical knowledge , attempted to treat and cure Hoyos with a variety of medicines , as well as x @-@ ray and electrical equipment , that were brought to the Hoyoses ' home . Tanzler showered Hoyos with gifts of jewelry and clothing , and allegedly professed his love to her , but no evidence has surfaced to show that any of his affection was reciprocated by Hoyos .

= = Morbid obsession = =

Despite Tanzler 's best efforts , Hoyos died of terminal tuberculosis at her parents ' home in Key West on October 25 , 1931 . Tanzler paid for her funeral , and with the permission of her family he then commissioned the construction of an above ground mausoleum in the Key West Cemetery , which he visited almost every night .

One evening in April , 1933 , Tanzler crept through the cemetery where Hoyos was buried and removed her body from the mausoleum , carting it through the cemetery after dark on a toy wagon , and transporting it to his home . He reportedly said that Elena 's spirit would come to him when he would sit by her grave and serenade her corpse with a favorite Spanish song . He also said that she would often tell him to take her from the grave . Tanzler attached the corpse 's bones together with wire and coat hangers , and fitted the face with glass eyes . As the skin of the corpse decomposed , Tanzler replaced it with silk cloth soaked in wax and plaster of paris . As the hair fell out of the decomposing scalp , Tanzler fashioned a wig from Hoyos 's hair that had been collected by her mother and given to Tanzler not long after her burial in 1931 . Tanzler filled the corpse 's abdominal and chest cavity with rags to keep the original form , dressed Hoyos 's remains in stockings , jewelry , and gloves , and kept the body in his bed . Tanzler also used copious amounts of perfume , disinfectants , and preserving agents , to mask the odor and forestall the effects of the corpse 's decomposition .

In October , 1940 , Elena 's sister Florinda heard rumors of Tanzler sleeping with the disinterred body of her sister , and confronted Tanzler at his home , where Hoyos 's body was eventually discovered . Florinda notified the authorities , and Tanzler was arrested and detained . Tanzler was psychiatrically examined , and found mentally competent to stand trial on the charge of " wantonly and maliciously destroying a grave and removing a body without authorization . " After a preliminary hearing on October 9 , 1940 at the Monroe County Courthouse in Key West , Tanzler was held to answer on the charge , but the case was eventually dropped and he was released , as the statute of limitations for the crime had expired .

Shortly after the corpse 's discovery by authorities , Hoyos 's body was examined by physicians and pathologists , and put on public display at the Dean @-@ Lopez Funeral Home , where it was viewed by as many as 6 @,@ 800 people . Hoyos 's body was eventually returned to the Key West

Cemetery where the remains were buried in an unmarked grave , in a secret location , to prevent further tampering .

The facts underlying the case and the preliminary hearing drew much interest from the media at the time (most notably , from the Key West Citizen and Miami Herald) , and created a sensation among the public , both regionally and nationwide . The public mood was generally sympathetic to Tanzler , whom many viewed as an eccentric " romantic " .

Though not reported contemporaneously , research (most notably by authors Harrison and Swicegood) has revealed evidence of Tanzler 's necrophilia with Hoyos 's corpse . Two physicians (Dr. DePoo and Dr. Foraker) who attended the 1940 autopsy of Hoyos 's remains recalled in 1972 that a paper tube had been inserted in the vaginal area of the corpse that allowed for intercourse . Others contend that since no evidence of necrophilia was presented at the 1940 preliminary hearing , and because the physicians ' " proof " surfaced in 1972 , over 30 years after the case had been dismissed , the necrophilia allegation is questionable . While no existing contemporary photographs of the autopsy or photographs taken at the public display show a tube , the necrophilia claim was repeated by the HBO Autopsy program in 2005 .

= = Later life and death = =

In 1944 , Tanzler moved to Pasco County , Florida close to Zephyrhills , Florida , where he wrote an autobiography that appeared in the Pulp publication , Fantastic Adventures , in 1947 . His home was near his wife Doris , who apparently helped to support Tanzler in his later years . Tanzler received United States citizenship in 1950 in Tampa .

Separated from his obsession , Tanzler used a death mask to create a life @-@ sized effigy of Hoyos , and lived with it until his death on July 3 , 1952 . His body was discovered on the floor of his home three weeks after his death . He died under the name " Carl Tanzler " .

It has been recounted that Tanzler was found in the arms of the Hoyos effigy upon discovery of his corpse , but his obituary reported that he died on the floor behind one of his organs . The obituary recounted : " a metal cylinder on a shelf above a table in it wrapped in silken cloth and a robe was a waxen image " .

It has been written (most notably by Swicegood) that Tanzler had the bodies switched (or that Hoyos 's remains were secretly returned to him) , and that he died with the real body of Elena .

= = In popular culture = =

Several bands have released musical interpretations of the Tanzler story , such as And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Dead 's The Secret of Elena 's Tomb album , and Sleep Station 's Von Cosel album , both released in 2003 .

In 2010 , the electroindie band Fiordmoss released a song titled Cold Night which is sung from Tanzler 's perspective .

The band " Through The Strip " released a song called " One Moment In Time (Carl Von Cosels Requiem) " Which featured sound clips from documentaries in the intro . The song is told from the points of view of both Elena and Carl Tanzler .

The band The Black Dahlia Murder released a song titled Deathmask Divine which tells the story .

The band Loch Lomond 's song Wax & Wires tells the story of Tanzler 's love for Elena .

In 2008 , ChansoNoir released the single Count Von Cosels Obsession , with the b @-@ side A Cemetery Serenade presenting an instrumental piece reenacting Carl Tanzler 's organ playing in the tomb .

The Ripley 's Believe It or Not museum In Key West , Florida , has an exhibit recreating Elena 's body being cared for by Tanzler .

Portions of the original memorial plaque that was commissioned by Tanzler and affixed to Elena Hoyos 's mausoleum have been reassembled and are on display at the Martello Gallery @-@ Key West Art and Historical Museum in Key West .

Sharon Needles wrote " Dead Girls Never Say No " inspired by Tanzler on her album PG @-@ 13

The novel Buried by Tom Baker , is a fictionalized horror novel based on Carl Tanzler .

The story of Dr. Von Cosel and Elena Hoyos was featured in an episode Investigation Discovery series " True Nightmares " entitled " Overstay Your Welcome " .

" It Happened in Key West " , the musical , co @-@ written by Jill Santoriello , Jason Huza and Jeremiah James , is currently in production for 2017 . < [http : // www.keywestmusical.com / # ! story / cfvg](http://www.keywestmusical.com/#!story/cfvg) >

= = Timeline = =