Dr. Patricia “Pat” Jane Bruce

Dr. Patricia (Pat) Bruce died May 7, 2015 at Sunnyside Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, VA. She was born in Belmont, MA on June 13, 1926. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wheaton College in Chicago, Illinois in 1948, a Master of Education from Boston University in 1952 and a Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1961. She began her career in education as a high school physical education teacher, during which time she coached women’s field hockey, women’s basketball and women’s softball. In 1955 she became Women’s Physical Education Department chair and acting chair of the Men’s Physical Education and Recreation Department at Whitworth College in Spokane, WA. In 1961 she joined the faculty of Madison College as a professor of Physical and Health Education where she taught undergraduate and graduate courses in swimming, sport psychology, sociology, and motor learning until her retirement in 1989.

Dr. Bruce influenced education and sports policies by holding leadership roles in national, regional and state professional organizations. She was Vice-President of the Southern Association of Physical Education for College Women (SAPECW). She served as President of the Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (VAHPERD). Dr. Bruce was recognized for her leadership in VAHPERD by receiving the Honor Award and Pioneer Award. She also received the Honor Award given by the Southern District of the Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPERD).

Dr. Bruce was a role model, mentor and leader of students and colleagues at James Madison University. She exerted leadership at various levels of the University, including the University Council, the Commissions on Graduate and Undergraduate Studies, and the Graduate Academic Review Board. Dr. Bruce was elected Speaker of the Faculty Senate for two terms, which was not the usual pattern and reflects the value her peers placed in her leadership. The Bruce-Crawford-Morrison-Rummel Scholarship at JMU was established in recognition of Dr. Bruce’s efforts and leadership (served as President) in the founding of the James Madison University Faculty Women’s Caucus, a group focused on bringing equity to female faculty at James Madison University. She also was recognized for her efforts to enhance the academic experience at James Madison University by being named as a “JMU Be the Change” honoree. The Morrison-Bruce Center for the Promotion of Physical Activity for Girls and Women at James Madison University carries on Dr. Bruce’s dedication to improving the lives of girls and women in the community and supporting activities for those women and girls who are not necessarily elite athletes.

Dr. Bruce was an active citizen of the Harrisonburg community. As a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, she was elected and served as elder twice and a deacon once. Pat served on numerous committees at First Presbyterian Church, was an active member of
the Forum and is the current President of the Presbyterian Women. Until recent years, Pat’s service to the church extended into numerous committees and leadership roles of the Shenandoah Presbytery, most notably she chaired the study commission that recommended what was adopted as the mission and structure of the Shenandoah Presbytery. In 1996 Pat received the Presbyterian Women Honorary Life Membership Award.

Pat’s volunteer work included assistance at the soup kitchen as well as serving as a volunteer at Sunnyside and Friends of Massanetta. Her penchant for service was also demonstrated by being a co-founder of “Sunny Treasures,” a shop that collects donated goods for sale to the public. The monies are used to fund activities at Sunnyside as well as Christmas bonuses for the staff.

Pat enjoyed returning to her New England roots by spending time at Lake Kezar and dining on lobster rolls at multiple sites up and down the Maine and Massachusetts coastline. Patricia Bruce will be greatly missed by her friends, colleagues, and students. Her integrity and strength of character serve as a life exemplar for all the people whose lives she touched. She was preceded in death by her friend and long-time companion, Dr. Lee Morrison. She is survived by her friend, Dr. Judith A. Flohr, who held Pat’s hand and buoyed her spirit during the arduous journey of the past two years.