Dr. Lonnie Leotus ‘Lee’ Morrison

Dr. Lee Morrison died on May 4, 2015 at Sunnyside Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, VA. Dr. Morrison was born in Savannah, Georgia on July 30, 1926. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Georgia State College for Women in 1948, her Master of Arts from George Peabody College and her doctorate (Ph.D.) in 1962 from Indiana University. She started her teaching career at Lander College in South Carolina, and began teaching at Madison College (James Madison University) in 1954. At Madison College, she specialized in the History and Principles of Physical Education, Measurement and Evaluation and Women in Sport. She also coached women’s basketball and the field hockey team for 17 years, coordinated the women’s sport program and was promoted to Associate Athletic Director and served in that capacity until she retired in 1989.

Dr. Morrison was very active in the women’s sport movement of the 60’s and 70’s and played a pivotal role in the two events that significantly contributed to increased opportunities for equity in athletics. She was a founding member and the first president of the Virginia Federation for Intercollegiate Sports for College Women. It is from this organization that the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) evolved into an influential national organization. Dr. Morrison served as the third President of AIAW. Because of her work with AIAW, Dr. Morrison was invited to be a part of a committee in Washington, D.C. that interpreted and promoted Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title IX was signed into law on June 23, 1972, thereby enabling girls and women to have equitable opportunities in education and sport. Dr. Morrison also served on the United States Olympic Committee and was the first president of the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS). She advocated the philosophy that that athletics should build lifelong skills and that players were students first, then athletes.

While at Madison, Dr. Morrison served on many University committees, and received numerous awards and recognitions including induction into the James Madison University Sports Hall of Fame (1992) and the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame (2000). Dr. Morrison was also recognized as a “JMU Be the Change” honoree and as an Honor Fellow from the National Association for Girls and Women in Sports. She received an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from James Madison University at the 1990 commencement where she was the featured speaker. The Morrison-Bruce Center for the Promotion of Physical Activity for Girls and Women at James Madison University continues Dr. Morrison’s dedication to expanding and enriching the physical activity opportunities for women.

Dr. Morrison enjoyed an active life outside the University. She was a long-time member of First Presbyterian Church of Harrisonburg, where as a volunteer she directed the Soup Kitchen. She spent many summers in Maine, teaching riding at Camp Mudjekeewis and later
hosting friends and former students at Kezar Lake. She was an avid reader of books and could not resist entering a used book store. She will be sorely missed by friends, colleagues, and former students with whom she maintained long-lasting relationships.

Dr. Morrison is survived by a sister, Mariuna Morrison of Salisbury, MD, a brother, Arthur Morrison, of Atlanta, GA., cousins, Lamar Webb of Tybee Island, GA, Joe Morrison of Savannah, GA, Albert Hinson of Springfield, GA, Laura Lee Hill, Vickie O’Barr of Sylvania, GA., nephews David Morrison of Atlanta, GA and Preston “Skip” Morrison of Marietta, GA., and longtime friends Drs. Judith A. Flohr and Anne S. Gabbard-Alley of Mt Crawford, VA.