

Carol E. Gordon



Dr. Carol E. Gordon of Pullman, WA, passed away peacefully on May 29, 2021 at the age of 95. Carol was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, and, following her mother's death during childbirth, was raised in Goffstown, NH by her grandparents, Charles and Isabella Ray, and her aunt Carolyn Worden. Carol enjoyed tagging along with Grandpa Charlie as their horse Chubby pulled the butcher cart along the delivery route. Her grandparents on the Gordon side owned a nearby apple orchard, and she was the chief of a crew of her childhood friends that her grandfather swore was the best crew of apple pickers he'd ever had. Carol was a violinist in her high school orchestra, and played on the girls' basketball team, dismaying opposing teams with the accuracy of her two-handed set shot.

After graduating from Goffstown High School as the class valedictorian, she attended Oberlin College, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1948. Carol taught in the physical education department at the University of New Hampshire from 1948-1954, and then attended the University of Utah where she chaired the Division of Physical Education for Women while earning her Ph.D. in Educational/ Counseling Psychology. In 1961, she completed her Ph.D. and was also named Faculty Woman of the Year. During those years at Utah, Carol took every opportunity to enjoy her remarkable downhill skiing skills on the slopes at Alta. From Utah, she moved on to Washington State University to serve as professor and chair of the Department of Physical Education for Women, a position she held from 1962 until her retirement in 1983. Carol's teaching specialty was sport psychology, and in 1968 she was honored as the WSU Faculty Woman of the Year. She chaired the committee that oversaw the design and construction of WSU's Physical Education Building. She also coached the women's field hockey and tennis teams until

1966, and served as the Director of Athletics for Women from 1962-1975. Carol was inducted into the WSU Athletics Hall of Fame in 2004.

Among her many roles with professional organizations, Carol served as president of both the Washington Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, and the Western Society for Physical Education for College Women. In 1973-74, Carol served as president of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) which, as the women's equivalent to the NCAA, functioned as the national governance organization for women's intercollegiate athletics from 1972-1982. In her role as AIAW's second president, Carol was highly instrumental in determining how the newly-enacted Title IX law prohibiting sex discrimination in educational institutions would be construed to apply to women's intercollegiate athletics. Her influence has been documented in a book on the history of Title IX in college sports written by a former WSU doctoral student. She was also profiled in a 2009 book by Richard Lapchick titled *100 Trailblazers: Great Women Athletes who Opened Doors for Future Generations*. In 1998, the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators honored Carol with its Lifetime Achievement Award. For her significant contributions to WSU and to the growth of sports opportunities for girls and women, Carol was memorialized with an engraved plaque in the Pullman Walk of Fame sidewalk in downtown Pullman, WA.

While serving as president of the AIAW, Carol was invited by the NCAA to attend a meeting with prominent male coaches and NCAA administrators focused on resolving serious disagreements about how to implement Title IX, such as whether football should be included in the equity equation. Apparently, famous football player and big-time athletic director Elroy (Crazy Legs) Hirsch did not approve of gender equity in college sports, and (as the only woman present) Carol steadily and graciously faced him down. Penn State football coach Joe Paterno spoke up to support her, telling Hirsch that times had changed. To this day, friends wonder if the pink pantsuit that Carol wore to the meeting (because it was her favorite color!) helped or hindered the cause.

Carol was a dedicated supporter of the Pullman community - particular favorites were the Regional Theatre of the Palouse, the Washington/Idaho Symphony, the Museum of Art at WSU, and Pullman Regional Hospital. Additionally, thanks to her generosity, and that of her longtime companion, Dr. Mary Lou Enberg, WSU's Sport Management Program hosts the annual Gordon/Enberg Speaker Series in Sport Studies.

One of Carol's special gifts was her ability to bring out the best in everyone around her. Believing the best about each person, she inspired them to believe they could accomplish more than they had thought possible. Countless former students and faculty colleagues stayed in touch with Carol over the years, expressing gratitude for her leadership, wise counsel, and the profound impact she made on their lives and careers. To all of her many friends - know that your friendship was her greatest treasure. To our dear Carol - our hearts will be forever blessed by the memory of your beautiful smile.

Honoring Carol's request, there will be no memorial service. Those desiring to make a donation in her memory may send contributions to: Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse, P.O. Box 37, Pullman, WA, 99163 (509-332-0552), or to the Women's Sports Foundation at www.womenssportsfoundation.org.