

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

PAMELA LEI STRATHAIRN (1925 – 1987)

Pamela Lei Strathairn, Professor of Physical Education and, by courtesy, of Education, died on June 12, 1987, after a long illness.

Of native Hawaiian and Scots heritage, Professor Strathairn came to Stanford from the Punahou School of Honolulu. Here she earned an A.B., an A.M. and an Ed.D. degree. Except for a brief time spent in teaching in southern California, all of Professor Strathairn's career was spent at Stanford, where she moved through the academic ranks and served as Chair of the Department of Physical Education for Women. From that position of leadership she contributed, in 1975, to the organization of the new Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation where she served as Associate Director, first, taking charge of the credit curriculum for the newly organized department and, more recently, contributing to D-APER's planning and development activities.

As an Academic Council member Professor Strathairn served frequently on the Registrar's Advisory Committee and its successor, the Committee on Academic Appraisal and Achievement's Subcommittee on Academic Standing, Petitions and Exceptions, most recently during 1986-87.

Professionally, Professor Strathairn was considered a leader among physical educators and, both locally and nationally, a prime mover in the development of women athletics. A member of the National Association for College Directors of Athletics, she also served as president of the Northern California Athletic Conference and on the Committee on Ethics and Eligibility of the Association of Inter-collegiate Athletics for Women. During 1986-87 she was a member of the NCAA Women's Basketball Championship Committee.

Committed to the worth of physical and affective learning in undergraduate study, Professor Strathairn spoke forcefully during the Study of Education at Stanford and to the Committee on Undergraduate Education for a continuing credit curriculum in physical education and dance performance. The power of her persuasion drew strength from the curricular quality of the women's department she chaired. In the new D-APER she brought rigor to curriculum reviews, organized structures for the ongoing internal oversight provided by the School of Humanities and Sciences, currently academic home for Stanford's curriculum in physical education.

Colleagues who reflect on her long Stanford association comment on her remarkable unselfishness. Without hesitation she ceded departmental autonomy and the authority of her chair, leading her colleagues to the merger that created D-APER. It was better for women students, better for women in the profession, and better for Stanford she said. That same unselfishness was reflected in small gestures -- her accessibility to the student seeking help with

a dissertation or support for a dance program, a scheduling accommodation to unburden a colleague but not herself, a quietly provided field pass for a youngster.

Other colleagues remember, "she always did her homework." There was homework for the internal committees where she brought imaginative management to always scarce resources, and homework for the University committees where she brought high standards and a tough-minded fairness to issues and petitions. "I might be persuaded were this petition better written," she once observed, moving to deny the petition from a student seeking relief from the undergraduate writing requirement. But she had a soft spot for the appeals of the stellar student. An "exceptional precedent" she occasionally endorsed, "a precedent for any record equally good as this one."

It was for the agenda of progress in support of her concerns for fairness and opportunity, especially for women's opportunities in athletics, that Professor Strathairn did noteworthy "homework." Into the cacophonies of impression, opinion and occasional prejudice -- at Stanford, in the AIAW, the PAC-10 and NCAA -- she brought facts and plausible plans, and reason and skill at drafting program documents and by-laws that could reflect consensus or capture it. Her values, her persuasion and her craftsmanship are best seen in the works to which she made major contributions -- the integrity of the current curriculum in physical education, the present strength of the Stanford women's athletic program, the revised organization of Stanford's athletic fund-raising agenda and, in national terms, the structure of a distinguished PAC-10 program for women.

A memorial service for Professor Strathairn, held June 23 at the 18th hole of the Stanford golf course, drew colleagues from across the country to testify to their high regard and personal affection. Before her death, an annual trophy, the Pamela L. Strathairn Award, was established to honor a Stanford senior woman athlete.

Jack Friedenthal
Carolyn Lougee
Sally Mahoney (Chair)
Wesley Ruff
Mary Sunseri