



Nancy J. O'Connor

October 24, 2019

After a long and difficult journey, Nancy J. O'Connor passed away October 25, 2019.

Nancy J. O'Connor was born in Massachusetts to Joseph O'Connor and Marjorie Mulchahy in 1934. She attended elementary school there and in California, graduating from Lakeview High School in Chicago. She earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Northern Iowa, a Masters and Doctorate degree from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley.

She taught and coached in Los Angeles and Tustin, California public schools before coming to Fort Collins. She was hired in the Physical Education Department at CSU in 1964 and began her career in teaching, coaching and administration. She was a pioneer of women's athletics at Colorado State University. In 1964, she started the women's swim team. From 1964 to 1977 she led them to a 118-4 record in dual and triangular meets, winning seven regional championships and finishing in the top ten nationally five times. No other CSU coach has a superior record.

Dr. O'Connor became the director of women's athletics in 1975 and worked with Fum McGraw until the department brought all athletics under one director. During the time she served as women's athletic director, she oversaw the varsity women's programs established through Title IX. In 1992, Dr.

O'Connor was inducted into the Colorado State University Hall of Fame. She worked tirelessly for women's athletics throughout her career.

She cared deeply about the many athletes, students and coaches and made many lifelong friends along the way. After her retirement from CSU in 1991 she remained in Fort Collins and worked for a time as a representative for the retirement program VALIC(AIG). She continued spending summers in Door County, Wisconsin where she was able to enjoy her love of the beach, sailing, swimming in Lake Michigan and the company of her many friends and summer guests.

Nancy leaves behind many friends and students whose lives have been enriched by her. Heartfelt thanks to her many caregivers at Lemay Avenue Health and Rehab, Donna Forbes, and Emily Settles, friend and caregiver.

A memorial service for Nancy will take place at 1:00 pm, November 23rd, 2019 at Goes Funeral Care in Fort Collins.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

NOV **23**. 1:00 PM (MT)

Goes Funeral Care & Crematory

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Tribute Wall



“ *Nancy J. O'Connor* ”

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM

“ A few memories

One of my loveliest and earliest memories of Nancy, is of going with her to swim in Ammons Hall swimming pool. At the time, I believe she was the athletic director, and no longer the swimming coach, so I remember that it was not completely certain that we were allowed to enter the closed and darkened building. That made it all the more exciting. Nancy let us in the old, grand building, and while she turned on the lights I am sure we were instructed to stay put, but I remember exploring the old dark building with its arched gateways, the fountains and behind temporary walls the swimming pool, or at least that's how I remember it. This swimming pool was like none I knew. It was more like a museum or theatre than a swimming pool and it was thrilling to swim there. Nancy, who we De Meyer kids have to thank for our comfort and ease in the water, would take us on her back and play dolphin. I knew going under water like that was supposed to be scary and hard, but as we played, it became exciting. Nancy helped us be more daring.

Another place that comes to mind when I think of Nancy is her house at Miramont Dr. It's a vivid memory I have of standing at her kitchen counter, opening cans of dog food (the smell!) or of drinking hot cocoa with little marshmallows made from a package and hot boiling water. I can't remember Nancy without one or two dogs as companions. First Putzi and Liebchen, then Bodie, Beau and Sara. I remember coming over to help her clean the house, sort through candles (so many interesting candles from Door County, from Sedona), shine some shoes. Only now do I really realize how hard it is to manage a house on your own, and how much Nancy really needed our help. At Christmas time, Christmas eve was the night we went to Nancy's house. It was always so exciting to start Christmas there. Nancy took out her best dishes, took care to make food we all liked (even if that made for a rather oddly composed meal), had gifts for everyone—gifts she had been shopping for since the summer vacation when already she wanted to know which sizes and colors.

Summer vacation in my memories of Nancy meant one thing: Door County. Much of the little wooden sandpiper figurines, the photographs and crafty artwork that we dusted during the year came from Door County and when we were old enough, as promised, Nancy invited us to come and stay there for a week. Lisa and I went first (Mark joining later, mastering the Wisconsin accent) and took over the cabin next to Nancy's, the smaller one where we could hear the sound of the waves as we fell asleep. Nancy was almost another person in Door County—much more relaxed and happier. We swam in the very cold water, ate sandwiches with peanut butter and marshmallow fluff on the beach, and took walks to visit Jinx and the Bruchs. We also went sailing in Nancy's small sailboat. It was Nancy's way of sharing some of the things she experienced as an active girl at camps in the summer. It was another way she encouraged us to be more adventurous.

Nancy showed us in all she did and what she shared with us that women are strong and capable. We laughed when she would say that a woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle, but by example she showed us that there are many different ways of being in the world, and that women are daring as well as caring. And that we will always remember.

While we were sailing, Nancy and Jinx sang one of the songs they knew from camp, "White Wings":

*White wings that never grow weary
They carry me cheerily over the sea
Night falls, I long for my dearie,
I spread out my white wings and sail home to thee.*

Goodbye, Nancy with your strong wings. I hope you have found your harbor at last.

Carolyn - November 17, 2019 at 02:30 PM

MC

“ Dr. O'Conner was one of my major professors in undergrad PE. What I remember most about Nancy, is that she changed the way to grip my golf clubs, forever improving my game.

When I married, we lived around couple of corners from Nancy's old home on Westward Dr. I would ride a horse through the streets to get to a field (gone now, of course,) and Nancy and I would have a short chat.

Bless you, Nancy, for helping me reach my goals and dreams.

Mary E. Carlson, DVM

mary carlson - November 03, 2019 at 01:30 PM