Summer 2000

Eleanor Frost Snell: A Lifelong Impact

Jenepher Price Shillingford
Ursinus College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/snell_docs

Part of the Health and Physical Education Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Sports Studies Commons

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/snell_docs/8

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the The Eleanor Frost Snell Collection at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Eleanor Frost Snell Programs, Correspondence and Other Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprack@ursinus.edu.
ELEANOR FROST SNELL: A LIFELONG IMPACT

By Jenipher Shillingford, 1954, current Eleanor Frost Snell Chair of Physical Education

It is hard to put into words the impact that Eleanor Snell had on so many of us during our college years and in the professional years that followed. All of us who are a part of the "Snell's Belles" legacy can tell wonderful "Snell" stories. I had a good fortune and joy to continue to work with Miss Snell for five years following my graduation from Ursinus. Thus I had the high privilege of being both her student and her colleague, although in many ways I was always a student. In the field of coaching, she had the most amazing "game sense." She was able always to look at the other team and make necessary adjustments or see where her own team had stumbled. She understood and taught basic skills, but her knowledge of the game and sense of spatial awareness was the best that I have ever encountered.

She was a most human woman. She loved to drive fast and could well have been an outstanding race driver if she had not been a superb coach. She drove blue Packards and was more than a little disappointed when they stopped making them. Once when I was the assistant basketball coach at Ursinus we drove to East Stroudsburg. Eleanor drove to New Jersey instead of getting on the Northeast Extension, so I arrived with one half of the team. I stalled until they mentioned that we would have to forfeit or start the game. I looked at co-captain Vonnie Gros (who later became the coach of the U.S. field hockey team that captured a bronze medal in 1984) and said, "I don't care how you do it, but please have more points on the board than East Stroudsburg when she comes." Eleanor and the rest of the team arrived at half time and we were leading by one point. I have always liked Vonnie.

In 40 years of coaching, Eleanor Snell never had a losing season and compiled an overall record of 674 wins, 194 loses, and 42 ties. Twenty-five of her students were named to the U.S Field Hockey Team. In fact, during Miss Snell's career, Ursinus produced more All-American field hockey stars than any other college or university. During one ten year period of softball coaching, her teams lost but one game. But records are often made to be broken and her legacy became her influence on all whom she encountered in the field of women's athletics.

Of the revolution in women's sports, Miss Snell said, "Women athletes are better than they used to be. Basketball was the most drastic change," she related. "It went from a relatively confined women's game to one which made you work hard. There used to be very stringent rules as far as defense and changes in the rules of dribbling. Sports are more demanding today with longer seasons," she added, speaking of the difficulty in filling coaching positions.

Sportsmanship was expected and demanded. A split infinitive or misspelled word was as much in need of correction as a loose swing of the bat. Her legacy rest with the hundreds of women she coached and taught who carried forth her precepts and beliefs.

But Ursinus graduates can not be provincial for Eleanor Frost Snell belongs to a rich tradition of outstanding leaders in women's athletics, not just to Ursinus. These women have given to each of us a torch, which now we pass to you and others in your generation.

To the undergraduate participants of the Conference, I ask you to take the challenge and become a part of the legacy.