

VALE CATHERINE "KITTY" O'BRIEN



Kitty endured a long illness before her sufferings ended on 3 September 2002. She had been diagnosed with cancer shortly before she retired. Bravely she went through the recommended treatments, never giving up hope that she would regain her health and strength. Kitty was a true international citizen. Born and bred in the USA, she changed her academic life from a position at The Ohio State University to The University of Sydney. She was an elite gymnastics athlete who had been the first American female to win a

scholarship to the USSR, and who had mastered the challenge of learning a foreign language well enough to study there. Her professional life reflected her sporting passion: dedicated, committed and inclusive. Kitty used her multicultural experiences and expanded the involvement into her teaching, research and student supervision. It is not surprising that multiculturalism and the interest in sporting cultures and traditions set the parameters for comparative and historical research. For many years she was an active member in two professional associations, ASSH and the International Society for Comparative Physical Education.

In the sporting arena, Kitty remained with the sport she loved: Gymnastics. As an international official her career peaked when she was appointed at the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000. But her knowledge and wisdom will not cease with her passing. At least two students made gymnastics the centre of their PhD thesis in the last five years. While Kitty never lost the competitive edge, she applied the same standard to and for her students. When Sydney University established the university wide award of 'supervisor of the year' in the mid-1990s, the students were able to applaud their supervisor's qualities when they voted for her nomination and subsequent appointment in a highly competitive field. Kitty's professional life centered around her students. Like many of them I admired her patience and never ending belief in success. Because of this, many of her students won national and international prizes. Kitty worked relentlessly to continuously improve the standard for her students. A global citizen at heart, she nurtured many international students and/or international projects to successful PhD completion.

Kitty will be sadly missed by her friends.

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