

Shirley White still cheers for UW Oshkosh students, alumni

by Sheryl Hanson - Tuesday, April 08, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/709/shirley-white-still-cheers-for-uw-oshkosh-students-alumni/>

Retired associate professor of physical education and health promotion Shirley White wore many hats during her 41-year tenure at UW Oshkosh. But perhaps the one she is most remembered for is cheerleader.

Anyone who knows Shirley can testify that she is — hands-down — the most dedicated and highest-spirited cheerleader for UW Oshkosh and its students.

Her former boss, kinesiology and health department chair Dan Schmidt, said it was difficult to imagine Shirley retired, because “no one could imagine her sitting still for more than a few moments.”

Shirley spent more than 41 years teaching UW Oshkosh students, retiring in December 2005. Together, she and her husband, Bob White, logged nearly 70 years as faculty members. Read more about Bob at www.uwosh.edu/alumni/enews/public_html/?module=displaystory&story_id=2668&format=html.

The couple arrived at UW Oshkosh, then known as Wisconsin State University-Oshkosh, in 1964 when Bob accepted the head basketball coach position. Shirley taught part-time until 1968, when she was hired to a full-time position.

Shirley taught a wide range of courses, including dance, nutrition and health classes and — fittingly — was the cheerleading advisor for more than 20 years. She also supervised clinical students and student teachers.

Early in her career at UW Oshkosh, Shirley became involved with the Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance club (HPERD) and, in her capacity as advisor, served as a crucial link between her department and the Wisconsin Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (WAHPERD).

“That was the highlight of my professional career,” she said. “I know our students received more scholarships than any other Wisconsin school. And I can’t remember how many of our students ended up being the state president, but it was quite a few.”

As adviser of the UW Oshkosh WAHPERD chapter, she won numerous awards, including Outstanding University Teacher—which she received twice. She also received the Service Award and Outstanding Health Educator.

Bob remembers being at awards banquets with his wife and marveling at the crowd’s response to Shirley.

“I have never seen a standing ovation last as long as Shirley’s,” he said.

During Bob's years as basketball coach — 1965 through 1984 — the couple traveled the state together with basketball players and cheerleaders.

“We were in the coaching and supporting role 100 percent,” she said.

Many of Shirley's fondest memories are of athletic events, which she misses dearly. She and Bob moved to Stillwater, Minn., after Shirley's retirement to be closer to family.

But being out of state does not stop them from cheering for UW Oshkosh.

“Just last week we drove over for both UW Oshkosh games at UW-Stout and UW-River Falls,” she said. “Had we stayed in Oshkosh, we would be at all the games there.”

The Whites also attend UW Oshkosh's Homecoming every year. Last fall, Bob was honored as grand marshal of the Homecoming parade, and the couple's good friend and former UW Oshkosh student Dorian Boyland was honored as Distinguished Alumni.

“That was a very proud moment, let's just put it that way. And a really, really fun time.”

Over the years, students have not changed much, she added.

“They maybe became more serious because we raised the bar a little bit, and they met the challenge. They are doing very well in sports, and academically, they are at the top. They have done very well. You just tell them I think they are wonderful.”