



Dorothy Minola Diehl

May 16, 1941 - December 17, 2020

Dorothy Mather Diehl of Alexandria, NH, aged 79, passed away on December 17, 2020, in Naples, FL. She was born May 16, 1941, in Bareville, PA to George and Sarah Mather. She is survived by her husband Thomas; her sisters Alberta Gable and Violet Geib; her son John Diehl and wife Julie Diehl; her daughter Emily Diehl and husband Hunter Moseley; her grandchildren Thomas and Elena Moseley; and her son John Diehl and wife Julie Diehl. Her brother James Mather predeceased her.

Dorothy, or “Dot,” was a loving mother and wife, a lifelong educator, a fitness mentor, a trailblazer, an outdoorswoman, an inspiration to many, a cheerful friend, a good listener, and a wonderful role model. She will be missed by the many who knew her well.

Dot's extraordinarily active life began in Bareville, Lancaster County, PA -- Pennsylvania Dutch country. She was the third of four children in a family of tenant farmers, and Dot grew up helping with farm work and with household work. She spent her elementary school years in a rural one-room schoolhouse with about seventeen kids, the older ones helping the teacher with the younger ones. In the summer preceding her seventh year, her parents moved to Manheim, where her father had found work in an asbestos factory. Dot energetically embraced the opportunities of this larger world. Now there were nearly one hundred students in her class, rather than three. She was active in school service groups, field hockey, track, cheerleading, and school plays. (Nicknamed “Minnie” for her small stature, she later bragged that she was taller at this point than was her future husband, Tom.) In her junior year she was elected to the National Honor Society, became captain of the cheerleading team, and began dating Tom, who was the quarterback for the football team. (He, fortunately, had grown taller than she by this time.) Son John finds it amusing to think of his parents as a quarterback/cheerleader couple (and also prom king/queen). That image, he thinks, does not fit them at all!

By attending Westchester State College, Dot became the first member of the Mather family to obtain a college degree, graduating in 1963 with a BS in Physical Education. She also kept dating Tom, who attended Amherst while she was at Westchester. Upon

graduation, Dot taught for a year in Massachusetts while Tom was at Harvard getting his MAT degree. They then moved to New Hampshire, married, and pursued teaching careers.

Tom taught English at New Hampton School in New Hampshire. Dot taught P.E. there for a few years, gave the world John and Emily, and then ventured into the college world, teaching PE classes and coaching the field hockey team at Plymouth State College, about 20 minutes away. She liked teaching at the college level, and PSC was happy to have her. However, PSC required her to get a master's degree in order to remain. Juggling teaching, parenting and studying, Dot got her master's just in time to be told that the requirements again had changed: She now needed a PhD! So Dot went back to a hectic schedule of teaching, researching, and parenting. After a year and two summers of study at UNH, Dot enrolled at the University of Illinois for her thesis work. With the kids belted into the backseat of a '67 Dodge Dart, boxes and bags between them and at their feet, with the car's trunk stuffed, and with a homemade roof rack piled almost three feet high with trunks, the family drove out to Urbana, Illinois.

Dot's research topic was to investigate training effects on blood-iron levels in female athletes. There had been virtually no such research done in the U.S. in this area, and many school officials in America were skeptical about the general utility and safety of highly competitive athletic programs for women and girls. But with Title IX rules now in place, colleges were forced to develop competitive athletic programs for women commensurate with those for men. Dot's field hockey teams had been doing well (eight post-season tournaments, one ECAC championship), and her players loved her, so they willingly became her research subjects. All went smoothly, and Dot received her Ph.D. in 1981. In subsequent years, she became a strong advocate for women's equality in sports, working tirelessly and forcefully to realize for female athletes at Plymouth State the opportunities that were promised them by Title IX.

Title IX required changes and imposed costs and some hardships to many colleges. There was much pushback from the established male coaches because their budgets often had to be reduced to help fund new women's sports teams. In addition, lurking behind the pushback from athletic departments-- almost always run by men-- was an institutional assumption that men's teams were more worthy of respect and support than women's teams. Dot, of course, disagreed (Look out, world!). Dot's Ph.D. work qualified her to be an authority for advocates of women's teams in New England high schools and colleges. A number of times she was called as a witness in court regarding some title IX disputes. Her testimony helped force some recalcitrant high schools and colleges to expand opportunities for female student-athletes.

In a college teaching career spanning well over 30 years, Dot played a variety of roles-- teacher, tenured professor, department chair, faculty speaker, and mentor. When Dot cared about something, she worked diligently and thoughtfully to leave things better than she had found them. As a result, she sometimes stepped on toes. For example, when she was elected to chair the Physical Education Department at Plymouth State, she ruffled some feathers. Traditionally the newer, younger teachers were assigned the large, introductory classes required for all first year students. These newer teachers had a heavier workload than more experienced teachers had, and Dot addressed the unfairness by rearranging schedules so that workloads were shared more equitably. Most of her colleagues recognized the fairness of Dot's reassignments, but a few didn't want to accept them. They took their grievances to the Faculty Senate, which sided with Dot. They then appealed to the dean, and lost. They appealed to the president, and lost. They finally appealed to the chancellor of the UNH system, and lost. Life for Dot would have been much easier had she left the former system in place. But, in typical Dot fashion, she chose to fight for fairness for the younger teachers.

As a result of that intra-departmental conflict Dot won the respect of many people at PSC, including a large number who had not known her before the conflict began. Many admired her principles and her moxie, and the following year the faculty elected her to be Faculty Speaker and to chair the college's faculty meetings. In subsequent years other commendations came to her for her service to women. She taught courses in the newly opened Women's Studies Program. She received the first Theodora Kalikow Award "Commending the work of a Plymouth State faculty member on behalf of women and awareness of women's issues." And at her retirement, an award was created in her honor: The Dorothy "Dot" Diehl Award, presented annually to a female student-athlete "who exhibits leadership for the advancement of women's equality in sports and physical education, strength of character, and sense of responsibility to others."

Throughout her life, Dot was the embodiment of physical activity and exploration. She earned three varsity letters in high school and captained the cheerleading team in both high school and college; she was involved in field hockey for over six decades as a player, coach, and umpire; she ran or biked daily; she learned, practiced, and taught, Pilates; she was a life-long tennis player and captain of several teams; she took her family cross-country skiing in the winter and swimming in the summer; she took Tom dancing whenever they could get away; she led NH visitors hiking up nearby Cardigan mountain; she learned to ice skate when she was in her 50's; she went "bouldering" (low height rock-climbing) after age 70; in retirement, she amazed her Florida doctors by biking to appointments.

But two years ago, Dot fell and suffered a severe head injury. Although she returned occasionally to the tennis court and the dance floor when she could, this “energizer bunny,” as her friends called her, gradually became exhausted by complications stemming from her concussion.

Dot impacted the lives of many people and touched many hearts. We are saddened by her death, but we are better for what she gave; us.

In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to the Dr. Dorothy Diehl Memorial Scholarship at Plymouth State University, which can be sent to:

Dr. Dorothy Diehl Scholarship
Plymouth State University
Advancement Services
MSC 50
17 High Street
Plymouth, NH 03264-1595

Donations also may be given online via go.plymouth.edu/diehl

Tribute Wall

GC

“ *My wife and I met Dorothy and Tom when we visited them on an antiquing trip to New England. She was a wonderful lady and it was clear they were very happy. We just discovered that Dorothy had passed in 2021. We never forgot our visit. Our condolences to you, Tom.*

George and Terry Clarke
Chantilly, Virginia

George Clarke - January 28, 2024 at 08:11 AM



“ *Dorothy Minola Diehl*

October 09, 2023 at 02:01 AM



“ *Dorothy Minola Diehl*

January 28, 2023 at 12:09 PM

TH

“ *An admirable and formidable woman, who I remember as caring for young kids while Tom taught us, and played tennis with Lance Bicknell. Who knew she was also teaching and working on the frontiers of Title IX, while juggling child-rearing responsibilities?!*

Truly a life well and fully lived, and for the good.

Condolences to Tom and the Diehl family from a student of Tom's from decades ago.

Tom Hayner - February 08, 2021 at 05:05 AM

BD

“ *Thank you for sharing Mrs Diehl's story, I enjoyed reading about her amazing life! The Diehl's were a big influence on the New Hampton "Husky" culture during my '80 PG year. My condolences to Tom and the entire Diehl family.*

Brian Driscoll

Brian Driscoll - February 06, 2021 at 09:09 AM

JP

“ *Dot and Tom were clearly a matching pair. I met her only a few times at New Hampton during my two years, '65 & '66. Of a few good teachers in my formal education, Tom was the best! My condolences.*
John Powell

John Powell - February 05, 2021 at 10:06 AM

SM

“ *Thoughts are with you Tom, Emily and John....*
Scott and Lorna Mendelson

Scott Mendelson - February 04, 2021 at 08:47 PM

EM

“ *3 files added to the tribute wall*



Emily - January 15, 2021 at 10:45 AM

EM

“ *2 files added to the tribute wall*



Em - January 09, 2021 at 11:42 AM

EM

Tom and Dot having fun on their 50th Anniversary photo shoot (by Maundy Mitchell) when they wore their grandparents' clothes and imitated R.O. Diehl's wedding portrait.

Emily - January 15, 2021 at 10:40 AM

SD

“ *My condolences to Dr. Diehl's family. She was an amazing professor and positive role model! So lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from her!*

Sarah Dumais - January 08, 2021 at 09:10 AM

CL

My condolences to the Diehl Family. I was privileged to have had Dot as a teacher, coach, mentor, teammate and friend. I will miss seeing you at PSU Homecoming. RIP Dot.

Cathy Leaver - January 08, 2021 at 10:21 PM

PG

Dot was a ray of sunshine and a beacon of hope to all. She embraced life with laser focus intent, an intelligent wit and a loving gaze that warmed your heart. Thank you for being you, Dot.

PEG GREINER - January 11, 2021 at 04:38 PM

LL

My deepest condolences to the Diehl family. Dot was my boss, my colleague, my mentor, my supporter, and most of all, my friend. I will forever remember your love for life and respect for others. Rest well my friend.

Linda Levy - January 14, 2021 at 11:38 AM