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THE LEGACY OF BOARD MEMBER EMERITA MERCEDES SHOEMAKER

Mercedes “Merdie” Shoemaker died Feb. 14, 2018, at her home in Friendship Village, Pittsburgh, Pa. She was 94 years old. A Board member emerita, member of the John S. McMillan Planned Giving Society, and recipient of the John Anderson Award of Merit, Merdie and her late husband, G. Albert Shoemaker, were leading financial supporters of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for many decades. Their substantial and widespread philanthropy has made an invaluable impact on individuals and society as a whole through their financial furthering of education, medicine, Christian ethics, and much more.

Her enthusiasm and interest in the world of the Bible were contagious. She will be dearly missed by many.

The Shoemaker legacy embodies the very essence of responsible fiscal stewardship as taught throughout the Bible. The Seminary’s president, the Rev. Dr. David Esterline, noted, “Pittsburgh Theological Seminary was blessed by Merdie’s extraordinary generosity and her thoughtful engagement. We will all miss her tenacious spirit very much.”

Merdie grew up in Chicago, earned her bachelor’s from Purdue University in preschool education, and started her career in welfare work before becoming involved in industry with U.S. Steel, first in Gary, Ind., and then in Pittsburgh. She worked for the company for nearly 20 years. After the death of Al’s first wife, Merdie and Al had their first date on a Friday the 13th, which she considered her lucky day. They were married in 1967, a year into Al’s retirement as president of the Pittsburgh division of Consolidation Coal Company, which named its Shoemaker Mine (Benwood, W.Va.) after him.

Before their marriage, the Shoemakers had individually become supporters of Pittsburgh Seminary. Al’s endowing of a faculty chair inspired other supporters to endow more chairs. Because Merdie and Al also believed in the importance of providing the Church outside the Seminary community with opportunities to grow in their Christian knowledge and faith, they endowed the Continuing Education Program to help fill that need, as well as the Distinguished Preacher series to bring outstanding guest preachers for chapel.

Several years ago Merdie commented, “Like Al used to say, the kind of education students get at the Seminary sets them up for a life founded on Christian ethics and shaped by Christ through the Scriptures. The faculty chair that Al endowed—the G. Albert Shoemaker Chair of Bible and Archaeology—reflects the combination of our interests in theological education and the earth under our feet. I couldn’t have been involved in more interesting pursuits! Nor could Al and I have realized more joy than that of wisely stewarding the abundant resources God saw fit to entrust to us in this life.”

Dr. Ron Tappy, who has held the Shoemaker chair for the past 20 years, describes Merdie as “one of the most vivacious people one could ever meet. She was interested in everything. When I met her two decades ago, she was going for glider flights, white-water rafting expeditions, and a host of other exiting activities. And from the beginning of our relationship, Merdie was a strong supporter of the archaeological program at PTS—especially of The Zeitah Excavations, our project of field work in Israel. Her enthusiasm and interest in the world of the Bible were contagious. She will be dearly missed by many.”

Friends will be received at Laughlin Cremation and Funeral Tributes, 222 Washington Road, Mt. Lebanon Sun., Feb. 18, 2018, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Services will be held Mon., Feb. 19, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. in Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2040 Washington Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15241.

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