

H.R. June 2, 1986

Les Duke, 83, memorial held

Les Duke, 83, the former Grinnell College coach and athletic director for whom the Les Duke Invitational Track Meet is named, died of leukemia Thursday, May 29, at the Mayflower Home Health Care Center.

A memorial service was conducted at 1:30 p.m. Monday at Herrick Chapel on the Grinnell campus, with the Rev. Philip J. Ramstad, pastor of the United Church of Christ-Congregational, officiating. Music was provided by Jo Anne Ritacca and Kenneth Goldsmith.

Following cremation, burial was in Hazelwood Cemetery. Memorials in Mr. Duke's name may be made to the Mayflower Home Health Care Center.

A native of Washington, Iowa, he was born on Oct. 26, 1902, in Washington County, graduating from Washington High School in 1921. He attended Grinnell College, graduating in 1925 with a major in economics, and immediately joined the college's physical education faculty. As an undergraduate, he had earned letters in football, track and basketball and was named to the 1924 All-Missouri Valley Conference football team as a guard.

Mr. Duke served as head track coach from 1927 through 1942, and his Pioneer teams never finished lower than fourth at Missouri Valley and Midwest Conference meets.

He also served as director of intercollegiate athletics, head basketball and cross-country coach, and assistant football coach. He was dean of men at Grinnell College from 1948 to 1952, then served as a district agent with Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. for 15 years. Following his retirement from the insurance business in 1967, he returned to the college for 1½ years as a special assistant to the presi-



Les Duke

dent in development.

Nationally recognized as a track starter, he served in that capacity for many years at the Drake Relays, the Kansas Relays and the annual Grinnell Run. For more than 20 years, Grinnell's major home cross-country meet has been the Les Duke Invitational.

Mr. Duke held an M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin (1946), coached for one year at West High School in Madison, Wis., and received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Grinnell in 1972. In 1955 he was honored with a Grinnell alumni award.

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and in the 1960s he was athletic commissioner for the Iowa Collegiate Athletic Conference.

He was married to Lois M. Griffith on Aug. 5, 1925, at Washington, Iowa. The couple had lived in Grinnell except for 10 months when Mr. Duke was a participant in a U.S. educational exchange program in Santiago, Chile, and for seven years spent in Sun City, Ariz. Mr. Duke was a member of the United Church of Christ-Congregational, the Kiwanis Club, and the Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education.

He is survived by his wife, Lois; two daughters, Doris Hall of Junction City, Ore., and Nancy Kissane of Grinnell; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; a sister, Helen Mace of Washington, Iowa; and a brother, Theodore Duke of Ogden, Utah.

He was preceded in death by his parents; one sister, Thora Beal; and four brothers, Lewis, Harold, William and Donald.