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University of Minnesota, Morris celebrates the life of the late Jim Gremmels, professor and coach

Summary: Special gatherings honored the founding faculty member and the Cougar's first basketball coach.

(April 1, 2010)-The University of Minnesota, Morris celebrated the life of the late Jim Gremmels, professor of English, on Thursday, April 29, 2010. The campus and community were invited to three special events on campus to remember the founding faculty member and the Cougar's first basketball coach, a professor who touched many lives in and out of the classroom.

At 11 a.m., a special program was held in the Physical Education Center during which the varsity basketball court was named the James Gremmels Court. Speakers included [Philip Allen, basketball player](#), and [Paul Grove, head men's basketball coach](#).

At 1:30 p.m., a Celebration of Life was held in Edson Auditorium in the Student Center with friends, family, alumni, and colleagues sharing memories of Jim Gremmels. [Son Paul Gremmels '90](#) gave his father's eulogy.

Gremmels was one of the first thirteen faculty hired in 1960 for the new public, liberal arts college in Morris that opened that fall. He often told the story of how he arrived a day late for his interview with Rodney Briggs, Morris's first chief administrator. Gremmels fondly remembered that day 50 years ago when Briggs invited him to embrace the new college's vision and hired him to teach American literature.

Ten years ago, on the occasion of the Morris campus's 40th birthday, Gremmels employed a quote from his favorite novel to describe his Morris career. "Ishmael, Herman Melville's narrator in the novel Moby Dick says: 'A whale-ship was my Yale College and my Harvard.' I could easily say: 'The University of Minnesota, Morris was my Oxford College and my Cambridge,' but for me it was a 40-year voyage with a group of remarkable faculty, outstanding students, and an administration whose dead reckoning always kept us afloat and on course. This campus has meant a great deal to me."

Gremmels was born in 1927 and grew up in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He earned a degree in English and philosophy from Augustana College, where he excelled in basketball. He received a master of arts in American studies from the University of Minnesota in 1955. He taught and coached at Glenwood High School from 1955 until 1960 when he began his Morris career. Gremmels received the Horace T. Morse Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. He was inducted into the Augustana Vikings Hall of Fame, the Cougar Hall of Fame, and the South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame for basketball accomplishments as a player and as a coach. He passed away in September 2009.

Photos below: The University of Minnesota, Morris founding faculty in 1960. Gremmels is second from the right in the back row.

Photo below: The 1961 Cougar basketball team.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.