

MCCLURE CENTER

HONORING LOUISE MCCLURE

OCTOBER 2021



University of Idaho

McClure Center for
Public Policy Research

*Dear Friends
of the McClure
Center,*

McClure Center co-founder Louise McClure passed away last month. Her heart and tenacity shaped Idaho communities, the University of Idaho, the state, the nation and beyond. Louise's dedication to public service and her intellect, charm, humor and kindness will forever be an inspiration.

Louise McClure's Impact

Louise Miller McClure always aspired to make a difference. In 1946, she graduated from Nez Perce High School as valedictorian and continued her studies at the University of Idaho. Louise pursued a bachelor's degree in music and education at a time when most young women were content to find a future in their own backyards. Her time at the University of Idaho and in the Greek system was transformative. It was during these four years that she established her reputation of leadership, commitment to service and a life guided by fairness, intelligence and grace. In 1950, she graduated with a BA in Music, Phi Beta Kappa.

While at the University of Idaho, she captured the mind and heart of a young law student, James A. McClure. As Jim and she spent more time together during and after Vandaleers practice, Louise's heart and mind also were captured.



*Louise McClure with President George H.W. Bush,
First Lady Barbara Bush and Senator Jim McClure.*

Photo courtesy of the McClure family

Once married, they moved to Payette where Jim began a law career and Louise launched a music education career. Jim soon was elected County Prosecuting Attorney and City Attorney for Payette. Both Louise and Jim exercised their leadership skills in community service; their time in Payette acted as a training ground for Jim's and Louise's future as public servants, first in local government, then the Idaho legislature and Washington, D.C.

The vast footprint of the McClure's leadership in their communities has been recognized widely. For that service, Louise was honored a number of times, from sponsoring and christening the naval submarine, USS *Boise*, to receiving a University of Idaho Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in 2011.

Serving Country as a Congressional Wife

In Washington, D.C., Louise made friends with other Congressional wives and encouraged them to make their own community, in a city different from "back

home." She joined the Congressional Club and the International Club, whose members included wives of Senators, Congressmen, ambassadors and journalists. The women forged influential international friendships. When Jim was elected to the Senate, she became actively engaged with the Senate Wives' Club, which organized its ambition and skills to serve the International Red Cross and impact other important issues.

While furthering the mission of the International Red Cross, the Senate Wives – later called Senate Spouses – hosted a First Lady Luncheon every year. These events facilitated professional networking, enhanced idea exchange and fostered lifelong friendships, like the relationship between "Mrs. James A. McClure" and "Mrs. George H.W. Bush" and their families. In the midst of being actively engaged in such work, Louise also raised three children: Marilyn, Ken and David.

Congressional families are integral to the kind of policy making that bridges the aisle. Entertaining dignitaries, visiting communities, representing



Louise McClure with First Ladies Rosalyn Carter and Betty Ford at the annual First Lady Luncheon.

Photo courtesy of the McClure family

constituents and advocating are all part and parcel of the job of a Congressional spouse. Louise was precisely the kind of leader who led the charge into the activities that built relationships and fostered collaborations. Her service was an absolute necessity on innumerable occasions, ranging from international events to hosting dignitaries. The relationships cultivated in the International Club were so important in these settings. Louise's leadership, organization and strategic thinking complemented and provided the kind of counsel that Senator McClure needed to navigate and negotiate a nearly 30-year career in Idaho and federal politics.

Louise met a tremendous number of leaders and spouses while traveling as part of delegations and attending receptions and dinners. She had the honor and pleasure of meeting all U.S. Presidents and First Ladies from President Lyndon B. Johnson and First Lady "Lady Bird" Johnson through President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush. Notable international leaders and royalty include those from Britain, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Thailand. Over her life, Louise visited 80+ countries. Forging

connections with the partners and families of world leaders was integral, as was the Senate Wives Club work, to bridge policymaking and community making.

Supporting and Fostering the Arts

Louise's fine arts education and talents were welcomed in Washington, D.C. and she became recognized as a champion for the arts. In 1983, she was the driving force for "Sawtooths and Other Ranges of the Imagination," an Idaho art exhibit at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush appointed Louise to the National Council on the Arts, the body that oversees the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). She helped guide the NEA through a particularly challenging period during her six-year term of service. Louise was a formidable champion, advocating tenaciously to Congress and arts leadership for continued support of the NEA.

Once her time in Washington, D.C. had come to a close, Louise focused on advancing the arts in Idaho. In 2010,



Louise McClure delivers the University of Idaho commencement address in 2014.

Photo courtesy of the University of Idaho

Idaho Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter honored Louise and Jim by bestowing them with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Governor’s Awards in the Arts.

Louise also took great pride in serving the University of Idaho, sharing her leadership on numerous college and department advisory boards, as well as the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival Board. Her service to the University of Idaho has been honored with the President’s Medallion, Alumni Hall of Fame Award and Distinguished Idahoan Award.

Louise also advised the arts community in Boise, including the Boise State Radio Community Advisory Board, Boise Philharmonic, Women’s and Children’s Alliance and many others. Louise’s work supported and fostered a strong arts culture in Boise that continues today.

Public Policy and the McClure Center

In 2001, Jim and Louise established the James A. and Louise McClure Endowment for the Sciences and Public Policy at the University of Idaho. In 2007, the University of Idaho recognized the McClures for their significant contributions to the University of Idaho, the state and the nation by renaming its longstanding but recently dormant Bureau of Public Affairs Research as the James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research and opening the doors of the new center.

Louise inspired and championed the work of the McClure Center: conducting research with the utmost integrity, fostering young leaders, making a difference in Idaho and Idaho communities and tackling pressing issues with evidence, a nonpartisan approach and impartiality. She attended many McClure Center events, was active on our advisory board and shaped the direction of our work by asking many tough questions.

Louise will be deeply missed.

Sustaining Louise’s Legacy

Please consider sustaining Louise’s incredible legacy by making a gift in her name to support and advance the McClure Center’s work. Louise was thrilled to see the McClure Center fulfill the vision that she and Jim built so many years ago. To ensure that the McClure Center’s exceptional, nonpartisan research is sustained far into the future, we ask you to make a gift that fully endows the McClure Center’s operations. Please help us grow the operating endowment and recognize Louise’s leadership.

[Support the James A. and Louise McClure Center Operating Endowment](#)

In the Media

‘True Idaho icon’: Louise McClure dies after leaving mark in public service, the arts (21 Sept. 2021).

Idaho leaders note the life and impact of Louise Miller McClure.

[Read more>>](#)

Louise McClure obituary (29 Sept. 2021).

[Read more>>](#)

Based in Boise, the University of Idaho’s James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research conducts nonpartisan public policy research, informs public dialogue and policy and engages students in learning about public policymaking. The Center’s approach to addressing society’s complex issues sustains Senator and Louise McClure’s legacy of thoughtfully pursuing bipartisan collaboration and sound public policy.