

Marlene Joan Adrian

At a glance:

Born: September 3, 1933, Milwaukee, Wisc.

Died: April 20, 2022, in Las Vegas, Nev.

Maiden name: Marlene Joan Adrian

Race/Nationality/ethnic background: Caucasian

Married: Denise R. Duarte

Primary city and county of residence and work:
Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada

Major fields of work: Professor Emerita, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Other role identities: Author, athlete, co-founder and president emerita, Women of Diversity Productions, Inc.



Marlene Adrian
Photo by Denise R. Duarte

Athlete, academic, author pioneered equality for women in sports and society

Marlene Adrian was a force of nature with a passion for equality and women's visibility. She was an achiever in all her endeavors: academia, sports and feminism.

Marlene J. Adrian was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on September 3, 1933, to Edward Adrian and Ester Dahlke Adrian. Her early influences in life were her mid-western roots and Father James Groppi, a socialist who had a significant impact on Milwaukee's politics and society. Marlene loved sports and movement from an early age. It was also in Milwaukee that Marlene learned about the inequities between boys and girls. This realization became a lifelong passion to help create equality for women.

Marlene received a full scholarship to Wisconsin State College, La Crosse, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in physical education and recreation and was selected to represent University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*.

She received her Master of Science degree in kinesiology/physical education from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and her Doctorate in physiological sciences and physical education from Springfield College, Mass.

Adrian was a professor in the departments of physical education, kinesiology, rehabilitation education, served on the faculty of bioengineering and was director of the Biomechanics Research Laboratory from 1983 to 1992.

Her research began at Springfield College's Physiological Research Laboratory. She was an associate professor at Washington State University until 1983 when she became a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During those years she taught both graduate and undergraduate students and conducted research primarily in the areas of biomechanics, sports, aging, the disabled and women. She wrote more than 100 research articles, authored nine books, contributed chapters in books and presented speeches at national and international conferences. She became director of the Biomechanics Laboratory and president of the Research Consortium for The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; president of the International Society of Biomechanics in Sports; chair of the Sports Medicine Committee for the United States Fencing Association and chair of the Biomechanics Committee for the United States Gymnastics Association.

She led movement and fitness workshops for women, children with mental and physical handicaps, and adults afflicted with multiple sclerosis. Her books include *Woman in Motion*, *Biomechanics of Human Movement*, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Aerobics*, and *Catastrophic Injuries in Sport*.

After more than 40 years of teaching, community service, and research, Adrian retired as professor emerita at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

She was awarded several honors, including the Ruth B. Glasgow 2008 Honor Award, Distinguished Lecturer of the Peter V. Karpovich Lecture Series in 1987 and the Program Commissioner, biomechanics sessions, for the Olympic Scientific Congress in 1984.

She taught during the pre-[Title IX](#) times and helped change the inequality in sports. One example was advocating for women to compete nationally and internationally in all three weapons of modern fencing.

Adrian was a multi-sport athlete and a national competitor in fast-pitch softball and field hockey. Fencing became her focus later in life. *The Wall Street Journal* named her Amateur Woman Athlete of the Year in 1989. She was a member of the 1988 - 1989 National Women's United



Photo by Debra R. Campbell

States Fencing Team. Her accomplishments in fencing include Fencing World Cup competitor, member of the U.S. National Women's Epee Team, U.S. National Sabre Champion, Silver Medalist in U.S. National Women's Epee and Gold Medalist on the U.S. National Women's Epee Team.



Photo by Debra F. Campbell

Adrian co-founded [Women of Diversity Productions, Inc.](#) (WOD), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization created in 1992 to give visibility to women and to create a woman-appreciated future. The initial project was the creation of an international research publication, *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* with Adrian as editor in 1992. In 2006, it was transferred to the National Association of Girls and Women in Sport.

After moving to Las Vegas in 1997, Adrian concentrated on the mission of Women of Diversity Productions by creating a collection of hundreds of audio-video recordings of women via documentaries, interviews of women, and their achievements and presentations by women, which will all be made available to the public on their website and donated to UNLV Special Collections.



Photo by Denise R. Durate

Two projects of historical significance were *The Role of Women in Shaping the first 100 Years of Las Vegas* (2005) and *Nevada Women's Legacy - 150 Years of Excellence* (2014 Nevada Sesquicentennial).

Her final project was the first Gaming Gender Equality Index: 2017 and 2018, which she co-authored with Denise R. Duarte. These reports revealed the results of two surveys of casino and gaming corporations, which were conducted to assess their policies and commitment to gender equality.

Adrian's activism continued alongside the efforts of her spouse, Denise R. Duarte, whom she met in Las Vegas. When Duarte founded

Equality Days at the Nevada Legislature in 2009, Adrian was her right hand. Equality Days, the first officially recognized day at the Nevada Legislature for the LGBTQ+ community, successfully lobbied for passage of the Nevada Domestic Partnership bill, which provided the same rights as marriage in Nevada. They received their Nevada Domestic Partnership on October 1, 2009, directly from Ross Miller, Nevada's Secretary of State and Senator David Parks. They later married in Washington D.C. in 2011, and their marriage was finally federally recognized on June 26, 2015. They were together for over 20 years until Adrian's death in Las Vegas on April 20, 2022.

Five major awards were received by Adrian for contributions in Nevada.

- 2004 Woman of the Year from The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada,
- 2006 Roll of Honor, Nevada Women's History Project
- 2014 Women's Chamber of Commerce of Nevada, Pioneer Award and inductee into its Hall of Fame,
- 2016 Maya Miller Egalitarian Award from the Nevada Women's Lobby, and
- 2017 Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission's Preservation Education Award.

In addition, she received honor awards from the Southern Nevada Women's History Project, Lambda Business Association, and the Historic Preservation Commission's 2017 Preservation Education Award as a video historian and women's history advocate.

Adrian held leadership positions in Business and Professional Women/USA, Lambda Business Association, Women in Communications, National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, and the Research Consortium.

Dr. Marlene Adrian's philosophy was that her life was worth living if she could improve the lives of women, as well as the lives of all persons or subgroups of society who are discriminated against.

Major Writings by Marlene J. Adrian

- 1982 Cooper, John N., Marlene Adrian, Ruth B. Glassow. *Kinesiology*. The C.V. Mosby Company, St. Louis, Toronto, London, Fifth Edition.
- 1986 Klinger, Anne K., Marlene J. Adrian, and Melanie Tyner-Wilson. *The Complete Encyclopedia of Aerobics*. Mouvement Publications Inc. Ithaca, NY.
- 1987 Adams, Samuel H., Mary A. Bayless, and Marlene J. Adrian. *Catastrophic Injuries in Sports: Avoidance Strategies*. Brown & Benchmark.
- 1987 *Sports Women*, editor Marlene J. Adrian. Karger International. Basel, Switzerland.
- 1992-2006 *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, editor Marlene J. Adrian. Now published by the National Association for Girls and Women in Sports.
- 1993 *Analysis and Performance of Basic Movement Skills*, with co-author John M. Cooper
- 1994 Adrian, Marlene J. and John M Cooper, *Biomechanics of Human Movement*: 2nd Ed. Book News, Inc., Portland, Oregon.
- 1996 Adrian, Marlene. *Women in Motion*. Women of Diversity Publications.
- 2014 Marlene L. Adrian and Denise M. Gerdes, editors. *Nevada Women's Legacy: 150 Years of Excellence*, Women of Diversity Publications Inc., Las Vegas Nevada.

Researched and written by Denise R. Duarte

Sources of Information

“Adrian captures two titles in opening day action.” *The Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho, April 4, 1982, p64.

“Dr. Marlene J. Adrian.” *NWHP News*, June-Sept. 2022, p.2.

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“Dr. Marlene Joan Adrian.” Dignity Memorial,

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/las-vegas-nv/marlene-adrian-10718191>.

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“Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society hosts Dr. Marlene Adrian.” *The Daily Illini* (Urbana, Illinois), p.6.

“Gay and lesbian center to present awards.” *Las Vegas Review Journal* (Las Vegas, Nevada, August 13, 2004, p. 114.

“Jumping into ‘low-impact’, the newest aerobics trend spares the wear and tear.” *Illinois Times* (Springfield, Illinois), January 29, 1987, p.21.

Mosier, Jeff. “Nonprofit pushing to recognize women behind state’s prosperity”, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (Las Vegas, Nevada), July 16, 2013, p. 23.

“*Movement creates avenue for wellness, says author.*” *Las Vegas Review Journal* (Las Vegas, Nevada), January 12, 1999, p. 49.

“Nevada Women’s History Project members gather for luncheon.” *Las Vegas Review Journal* (Las Vegas, Nevada), July 15, 2004.

Sanders, Kay. “NWHP 8th Conference Highlights.” *NWH Project News*, May 2006, p.6-7.

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“We honor the ladies, past and present, who have helped shape modern Nevada.” *Nevada Magazine*, Mar-April 2014. p. 68-72.