The AVCA History Commission was formed as a subgroup to the AVCA Diversity Development Team on December 1, 2020. The History Commission’s purpose is to recognize, amplify, and celebrate the rich and diverse history of the sport of volleyball. The first phase of the Commission's work will explore the contributions of Black Americans to the sport of volleyball. Phase 1 is timed to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the American Volleyball Coaches Association.
TERRYHITE DAVID

Terry Hite arrived at the University of Illinois as a sophomore in 1968 as part of the “Project 500” program. Project 500 was established at Illinois in 1968 in response to the glaring lack of diversity at the university. It is reported that in 1967, of the 30,400 students at the university only 372 were Black. This program would attract and bring an additional 565 African-American and Latino students to the campus in the fall of 1968.

Terry, standing only 5’61/2” joined the volleyball team and it wasn’t until her senior year when they competed under the NAIAW that they competed nationally in those pre-Title IX days.

Graduating in 1972 with a degree in Physical Education, Terry headed to the Virgin Islands under a program that recruited teachers for a two-year program that paid her way there and paid her way back when it was time to return. Being the adventurous type, she said, “Why not...” While in the Virgin Islands she worked to raise the profile on the already popular sport of volleyball and even competed in two NORCECA Games.

Terry decided to return to Champaign in 1975 to get her master’s degree. Karol Kahrs, who was an assistant athletic director, offered her a job as assistant volleyball coach. Before arriving on campus, the first head coach of the varsity volleyball program decided to resign after only one year. Kahrs offered the head coaching job to Terry and she accepted.

In two seasons, Hite would compile a 40-28 record in the program’s first two years being affiliated with the Big Ten Conference. Hite would say, “Things were starting to change quite a bit. No longer did the team have to play in their gym suits. We were given uniforms, sneakers, transportation and I had an assistant coach. And now the women were coming from other areas of study to play volleyball.”

After receiving her master’s degree, Terry would go on to a career as an educator and school administrator back in the Virgin Islands. She also served as a volleyball official.

It wasn’t until a few years later that she found out from a cousin, who was still living in Champaign, that she had been the first Black head coach in University of Illinois history.

David would say, “That’s when it hit me. At the time I was at Illinois, we weren’t part of the Athletic Association, so we never had any meetings with the other head coaches. I knew there were black assistants in football and basketball, but I had never thought I was breaking a barrier.”

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