



## **Biography of Florence Pavlides Blankenship**



Honoree of the Blankenship Memorial Scholarship  
for the ODU Master of Library and Information Studies Program

Born in New York City to Greek Cypriot parents, Flo was a dedicated Virginia Beach educator, a high school librarian and English teacher. She earned both her B.A. with an English specialty (1962) and her M.S. in education--emphasis in library science (1984) at Old Dominion University.

Her parents, Christ and Mary Pavlides, were in the restaurant business and in 1942 followed an opportunity that led them away from New York City and brought them to Norfolk, Virginia. Christ and Mary strongly believed in the power of education and always encouraged both Flo

and her sister Irene to pursue a college degree. So, after graduating from Granby High School, it was off to college, and ODU was a perfect fit!

While at ODU, Flo was elected a member and president of the Honor Society for her outstanding leadership achievements both in and out of the classroom. She was president of her class, president of her sorority, a member of the student executive council, and a news reporter. After graduation she became an ODU Alumni Board member, continuing to support the school financially and with volunteer activities.

Her first job after completing her B.A. was working for a local newspaper as a reporter. Later she taught high school English in Virginia Beach. Shortly after completing her master's degree in library science, she became head librarian at Bayside High School, retiring after 33 years with Virginia Beach public schools.

Her first love was her family. She cared for her long-lived parents, enabling them to spend their final years in their home. After her sister and brother-in-law moved from Virginia, she remained in constant contact with them. During one of their many travels together, they visited their Greek cousins in Cyprus and the birthplace of her parents there. That trip included a visit to Monet's Giverny garden in France; Flo was herself an accomplished gardener, cultivating flowering plants in her yard and many orchids in her home. She used insights gained on a visit to Shakespeare's Globe Theater to enhance her English classes.

A beloved succession of boxer dogs were her constant companions. A founder and parish council member of Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Flo helped organize church summer camp for children. She made thousands of cheese-filled phyllo triangles for bake sales. Most rewarding, however, were her visits to parish shut-ins and nursing home residents. She brought them gifts and helped celebrate birthdays. She was honored with a special community recognition award for her care and compassion. In keeping with her devotion to education, Flo and her sister endowed an annual academic scholarship to a church member in memory of their parents, honoring their encouragement to pursue college educations.

After retiring, Flo visited Arizona at Christmas. There she celebrated with her sister Irene and her brother-in-law Robert, her nieces and their children, husbands, and grandchildren. Flo always hosted a girls' luncheon the day after Christmas. Summer stays at Flo's beach house were family highlights that included educational trips to Colonial Williamsburg for the children.

Flo gave generously of her love and attention to her Arizona family, Florida cousins, and countless Virginia friends who were also like family to her. She kept up with the daily activities of those distant by phone, text, and photos, always encouraging them and celebrating their achievements. To honor Flo's desire to help ODU students, her sister Irene P. Wood (ODU '59)

and her brother-in-law Robert C. Wood (ODU '52) have endowed a scholarship in Flo's name to support a student admitted to the Master of Library and Information Studies Program within the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies. This generous gift will continue to celebrate Flo's life of giving by generating tuition assistance to a deserving ODU in perpetuity.