



Blanche Parrott Olson

August 24, 1929 - March 25, 2018

Blanche Parrott Olson passed away in Orlando, Florida on March 25, 2018 at 88 years of age, surrounded by her loving family. Blanche was born on August 24, 1929 in Kinston, North Carolina to Frank Dibble Parrott and Nancy Wade Parrott. She grew up on the family farm along with her namesake Aunt Blanche, her cherished Aunt Willie, her eccentric Uncle Harlow, her brother David, and numerous farm workers, friends, and family who have predeceased her but whose love and support she cherished throughout her life. “In the hot summer haze we children – black, white, clean or tobacco-stained – sat on the long front porch and listened to the endless tales of Shakespeare Uncle Harlow told. We made up stories, poems, and plays of our own, acting in them, climbed ladders to give stirring speeches and relived the cowboy movies faithfully attended for 10 cents each Saturday. Sometimes we youngsters stayed at the tobacco barn where the ‘hands’ skillfully looped and wound green fistfuls of broad, sticky tobacco leaves along twine onto slender sticks – the workers all the while relating tales and gossip so far removed from my own knowledge and environment.”

Blanche, known as Pinky to many, graduated from Granger High School and at age 16 began her studies at Greensboro Women’s College (now UNC-Greensboro). As a junior she transferred to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which was required of women at the time. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1950 and a Master of Education in 1962 from UNC.

She was a lifelong Carolina fan, and enjoyed watching basketball games up until the time of her death.

As a young teacher in the late 1950s Blanche taught in small town North Carolina, New York City, and New Orleans, where she lived an exciting life in the French Quarter. Blanche eventually sought bigger and bolder challenges, and became a teacher for the Department of Defense. She lived and taught in Morocco for many years where she had numerous adventures, the memories of which stayed with her always. With the full cooperation of the U.S. Air Force and the Crescent Rouge, Blanche became a liaison between American and Moroccan children. She spearheaded an initiative in which American children visited and helped in local schools and orphanages, learned Arabic, and invited Moroccans for fun days and playing the “strange game of baseball.” It was in Morocco that Blanche was also reconnected after years apart with her childhood friend from the farm Gladys, when she realized that her student Earl was Gladys’s son. After raising her children on stories of locust swarms on school buses and driving an old jalopy to Agadir, she was happy to be able to share the medina of Marrakesh and the beaches of Casablanca with her daughters years later.

As a child in the 1930s and 1940s, Blanche made trips with her family to southern Florida and always passed through the town of Winter Park. When Blanche eventually married, she remembered the beauty of Winter Park and decided to move there to start and raise her family. She taught for Orange County Public Schools for over 30 years, including teaching at the old Park Avenue, Webster, Chickasaw, and Fern Creek Elementary Schools. She was instrumental in integrating the school system in central Florida, and volunteered to teach at one of Orange County’s first crossover schools. At the time of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, Blanche was “the only white person above grade three – student or teacher. No special help or protection was given but we were all there doing our jobs. I still have the essays the

children wrote about their feelings that day.” Many of her students have kept in touch with Blanche throughout the years.

As her children grew older and Blanche eventually retired, she continued to pursue her passions for travel and civic involvement. For years she would spend the month of October at American University in Paris, and also traveled to Israel, the Netherlands, and Canada. She was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, the First Congregational Church of Winter Park, the University Club of Winter Park, Friendship Force, Alpha Delta Kappa, the Orange County Retired Teachers Association, and the Moroccan Reunion Association. She co-chaired the Restoration Advisory Board during the decommissioning of the Orlando Naval Training Center, which became the Baldwin Park community. Notably, the group was given the 2006 Phoenix Award, which honors individuals and groups who are working to solve the critical environmental challenge of transforming blighted areas into productive new uses.

In an autobiography Blanche said, “What are my greatest contributions to the teaching profession in the last years? Love of the classics, a window on the world correspondence program, plays and journals – but foremost an acceptance and appreciation for each student and what he brings to the school family.”

Blanche is survived by hundreds of students she has taught over the years, her daughter Aimée Merriman (Rick) of Orlando; son Frank Olson (Lira) of Roswell, GA; daughter Sigrid Olson of Montpelier, VT; brother David Parrott (Carol) of Savannah, GA; grandsons Brett Merriman, Matthew Merriman, Henry Lumbra, and Ray Olson; and granddaughter March Lumbra. There will be a celebration of life at the First Congregational Church of Winter Park at 11:00 a.m. on April 21, 2018.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

Express condolences at <http://www.communityfuneralhome.com/>

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

APR 21. 11:00 AM (ET)

First Congregational Church of Winter Park
225 S Interlachen Ave
Winter Park, FL 32789

Tribute Wall

DR

“ Words cannot express the void I feel in the loss of Mrs. Olson. She was my teacher, friend, mentor and often a mother to me. She was truly a woman ahead of her time. I will never forget the stories she shared of her travels and some of her experiences throughout her lifetime. I saw the world through her adventures. My first vacation was with Mrs. Olson and her family ...I was in the 6th grade. Thank you Aimee, Frank and Sigrid for sharing your mother with me unconditionally. She left her footprint of love in my heart. I will always hold her memory and she will always hold my heart. Rest in peace my friend and show those ladies in heaven how to wear red lipstick...love you forever.

Diane Reynolds

Diane Reynolds - April 16, 2018 at 11:33 AM

HD

“ So sorry to hear about your Mom. She was the kind of person who made my job worthwhile and fun. Hollis

Hollis Dobson - April 06, 2018 at 04:47 PM

AM

You were mother's favorite speech therapist. Thank you for the care and attention you gave to her.

*Regards,
Aimee Merriman*

Aimee Merriman - April 15, 2018 at 04:19 PM

GH

“ My thoughts and prayers are with all of you. Before Pinky got sick, when she came to Kinston, she would stop by the office to see me (Parrott Insurance). She was a wonderful lady.

Gretchen Hill
Kinston NC

Gretchen Hill - March 30, 2018 at 09:53 PM

AW

“ Mrs Olson was my sixth grade teacher, at Webster, a wonderful example of courage and caring for children and their education, whether they were black or white. I visited ,with another classmate, Mrs Olson more than 40 years after elementary school and was surprised that she remembered all of us from that class! She was just as engaging as she was when I was 11 yrs old. She will always hold a special place in my childhood memories. To her family, I'm sure you know how special your mother was, we are all thankful God allowed her to cross our paths. My sincere condolences for the loss of your mother.

Anita Armstrong Watson - March 28, 2018 at 10:40 PM

FO

Anita,

Thank you very much for sharing your personal experience. I understand my mother touched many lives but your words bring me a wonderful perspective and first hand account of her life and interactions with her students. It is a delight to read, especially at this time.

Frank Olson

Frank Olson - April 06, 2018 at 10:11 AM

WR

“ Mrs. Olson’s influence on everyone she touched was amazing. She was an awesome teacher to my mother, and an a mentor that spanned my entire life. #blessup 🙏



Wanda Reynolds - March 28, 2018 at 06:49 PM

FO

Thank you Wanda. We are so glad to hear how mom inspired others.

Frank Olson - April 06, 2018 at 10:21 AM

MS

“ Marian Daniels.Edith D Reynolds Sister lit a candle in memory of Blanche Parrott Olson



Marian Daniels.Edith D Reynolds sister - March 28, 2018 at 04:38 PM

MS

“ Thank you Mrs Olson for always being a positive influence in Corrines Reynolds kids life.You will be miss RIP.MARIAN DANIELS

Marian Daniels.Edith D Reynolds sister - March 28, 2018 at 04:37 PM

SO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Sigrid Olson - March 28, 2018 at 10:54 AM



Donna
Stafford

Sigrid, your Mom sounds like an amazing woman, educator, and role model for women of all ages. Please accept my deepest condolences and take great pride and find comfort n your Mom's legacy.

Donna Stafford - March 28, 2018 at 08:30 PM



RP

I never met Blanche but she sounds like a feisty loving accomplished lady. Wish I had the chance to know her. She will be missed. Regina De Palma

Regina De Palma - June 17, 2018 at 12:52 PM