

Nancy Blackwell's Retirement Will Leave 61-Year-Deep Hole in Alumni Office

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Over the years, Nancy Overcash Blackwell has been in contact with more members of the Davidson family than any other individual.

But that's not really surprising when you learn that she joined the Davidson staff as a high school junior, when Harry Truman was in the first year of his presidency!

Blackwell will conclude sixty-one years of continuous service in Davidson's Alumni Office on July 15, taking with her an encyclopedic knowledge of the college's history, and relationships with alumni, that will surely never be matched.

Her distinguished record has long been lauded by colleagues grateful for her reliable service. She won the college's Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award in 1976. The biggest celebration was in September 2000, when hundreds of friends and admirers showed up to witness rededication of the Alumni House as "The Nancy O. Blackwell Alumni House" in September 2000. She was also feted at a college-wide reception last week and was presented with a handsome bench for her yard adjacent to the campus.

She was recognized at the All-Alumni Luncheon during Reunion Weekend in April. On that occasion, Alumni Director Peter Wagner '92 told the crowd, "Without fail she is the one person that alumni ask for at chapter events around the country or when they call in to give us the news of their lives. Nancy is a true Davidson treasure, very special to those who have worked in the Office of Alumni Relations, and very special to the thousands of people who she's touched over the years... Her grace, style, warmth, and congeniality will be sadly missed as she moves on."

She has worked through the administrations of five college presidents (and will miss the sixth by just two weeks), twelve alumni directors, sixty-two Alumni Association presidents, countless alumni office student employees and interns, and hundreds of class secretaries.

She has typed research papers for students, become an honorary member of the Class of 1932, and worked on everything from a manual typewriter to a computer.

The humble "Mrs. B" has withstood the adulation and folderol with deferential patience. She has blushed, was moved to a few tears, and always smiled sweetly in greeting her gushing admirers. She claims that her work has been in no way extraordinary. In honor, as in her daily toil, she was a model for all who surrounded her.

And when the party was over, she was more than happy to return to her desk, explaining, "I just enjoy coming to work every day. I enjoy people and I'm in the perfect place to do it."

She'll leave her office on July 15 to take life easier. But she intends to maintain contact with her Davidson alumni friends by working the registration desk at Homecoming and Alumni Reunion weekends -- there to greet returning alumni and their families, and to re-affirm the close bonds that tie so many of them to Davidson.

Davidson is a highly selective independent liberal arts college for 1,700 students. Since its establishment in 1837 by Presbyterians, the college has graduated 23 Rhodes Scholars and is consistently ranked among the top liberal arts colleges in the country by *U.S. News and World Report* magazine.



Photo 1: *Many alumni have already written to Nancy Blackwell of their appreciation for her service.*

Photo 2: *The Alumni House was gift wrapped and renamed in her honor in 2000.*

Photo 3: *Her office colleagues presented Nancy Blackwell with a bench for relaxation during retirement.*