

Ida and Laura Fleming Scholarship

- Amount:** \$3,000 annually
- # Offered:** Two per year (\$1,500 each)
- Deadline:** Refer to Allen College Institutional Scholarship Application
- Established:** 2000
- Special Criteria:** Nursing student (BSN) who has demonstrated community involvement.

Fleming Sisters' Lives Filled with Giving, Education (Written in 2003)

As young women, they struggled to obtain an education and earn teaching degrees. The three Fleming sisters never forgot the lessons learned and the help they received. "We remember when we first got our education," says Ida, the youngest sister at age 87. "You truly knew the value of a gift that helped you."

"Our memories are so steeped in how hard it was for us," says 88-year-old Laura, the middle sister. "If we can make it easier for students today, that's great."

The eldest sister, Edna, was born in 1912 and passed away in 1991. She worked on an uncle's farm south of Cedar Falls and walked three miles each day to attend classes at the University of Northern Iowa (formerly Iowa State Teachers' College) and obtain a teaching certificate. Edna's pursuit of a degree lasted from 1929 to 1942 as she taught in rural schools during that time.

"She taught at Grant Township No. 4 between Lincoln and Dinsdale for her first job," recalls Laura. "She made \$50 a month and still gave money to me to get my education. Then we both helped Ida get hers."

The joy of helping each other obtain educations carried forward in their lives. The Flemings have contributed generously to Allen College scholarships through Allen Foundation as well as to UNI and Hawkeye Community College. Through a trust they have established through the Community Foundation of Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Northeast Iowa, they will continue to give in perpetuity to Allen and other local nonprofits.

"Giving a scholarship is a rewarding experience. You're doing something of value," says Ida. "Education is more important than ever in this day and age. I particularly enjoy giving to Allen because at one time I wanted to be a nurse."

"It's very important that you leave a legacy of some kind," says Laura. "We never married. We've been good to our family and they've been good to us, but the community was very good to us, too."

The Fleming sisters taught 123 years with 99 of those in the Waterloo Community Schools. Once secure in their professions, none ever married as teaching contracts at that time read "void for wages if married." Except for the school year Edna taught in Burlington, the sisters have lived together in Waterloo their entire adult lives. Edna retired in 1976 because of vision problems, Laura retired in 1978 because of her health and Ida retired that same year to take care of them.

In the children they taught, the Flemings emphasized both philanthropy and gratitude. Students in one of Edna's classes remember raising money to send surgical soap to Dr. Albert Schweitzer in Africa. Ida recalls teaching long-time Cedar Rapids Washington basketball coach Don King and Waterloo attorney John Holmes. "So many turned out beautifully, but we've lost track of lots of students too," says Laura.

After retirement, the Fleming sisters each volunteered at First Congregational Church, traveled all over the world and pursued individual hobbies including needlepoint and pursuit of the family's genealogy. Though not always easy life has been full for the Flemings, who look at their retirement years at Friendship Village as a time to enjoy themselves and the joy of giving.

Laura passed away in 2005 and Ida passed away in 2007.