

Cleopatra “Cleo” Maroudas Mathews

Cleo Maroudas Mathews was born in Williamson, WV, the daughter of Greek immigrants. She has lived in Hinton since 1958, when she married the late Bill Mathews. Cleo believes in the importance of faith, family, and community. She lives her values.

When Cleo started elementary school, she spoke no English. She mastered the language quickly, and with a voracious appetite for learning, was the valedictorian of her high school class.

Cleo attended the University of Cincinnati and earned a degree with honors in business education. She was a member of Mortar Board and Kappa Delta. After graduation, she was given a scholarship to pursue a Master’s degree and start a Kappa Delta chapter at Miami University of Ohio. Unfortunately, Williamson experienced a terrible flood, and Cleo returned to Williamson to teach and help rebuild her father’s diner, which was severely damaged by floodwaters. Only after her two daughters had gone to college, was she able to return to school and obtain her Master’s degree.

Cleo met Bill Mathews, her husband of nearly 60 years, at a meeting of Greek Orthodox Church ladies in Bluefield. He brought his mother, Mary Mathews to the gathering, and Cleo brought her Godmother. Bill and Cleo were married six months later.

Cleo and Bill have two daughters, Stephanie and Sylvia. She was a working mom, when very few women balanced career and family. She taught at every level over the arc of her 40 year career as an educator – from a one room school up a holler in Mingo County, to Beckley College. If you ask around, you will hear great stories of her ability to engage and inspire hundreds of West Virginia students, some of whom followed in her footsteps.

Cleo is a great mom – a tremendous role model for her daughters. She had an unusual balance of discipline, high standards, fun and compassion that ensured they knew that there was nothing they could not accomplish if they worked hard. She supports them in their endeavors, personally and professionally.

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She is a leader, and leads through her actions. She has served as the President of the West Virginia Board of Education, the Mayor of Hinton, and on many boards and commissions ranging from West Virginia Public Radio to the Ruby Memorial Hospital at West Virginia University.

Her faith guides her. She has played many roles at her beloved Ascension Episcopal Church, and instilled a strong faith in her children. She embraces the value of ecumenical cooperation, working with all the churches in Hinton to make it a better place.

She does not take herself too seriously. Just come by her house on Halloween, or take a look at the reindeer antlers that decorate her car at Christmastime.

Cleo has enjoyed many different roles and honors. Her career has taken her places few women of her generation had the opportunity to go. She has flown on Air Force One and been the subject of a political cartoon. But if you were to ask her today what her most rewarding role has been, it would be the most important thing she is doing right now. In her role as grandmother, or Yia Yia in Greek, she is the true north for her grandchildren – Jody, Keely, Helene and Matthew.

Cleo Maroudas Mathews We Salute You!

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