

### **Robert Roy Pavlis**

Robert Roy Pavlis, age 76 of Girard, Kansas, passed away suddenly on November 30, 2017, in Pelham, Alabama. Robert was born April 10, 1941, in Geddes, South Dakota, to William and Stella (Bogenhagen) Pavlis. He attended the first five grades in a small country school a couple miles from the farm where he grew up south of Geddes, South Dakota. After closure of the country school he attended "town school" in Geddes and graduated valedictorian in his class of 22 in 1959. After high school he attended the South Dakota School of Mines for one year before transferring to Purdue University where he graduated with a B.S. degree in chemistry in 1963. He then attended graduate school at Pennsylvania State University where he received his Ph.D. in chemistry in 1969 for his work on halogenated organic compounds.

He joined the faculty of the College of the Virgin Islands (CVI) in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, in 1969. While there he worked with numerous undergraduates on organic chemistry research projects and collaborated with colleagues in Biological Sciences on unusual compounds found in some tropical marine organisms. In 1986 he moved to Kansas joining the faculty of the Department of Chemistry at Pittsburg State University (PSU) in Pittsburg, Kansas. He retired and became Professor Emeritus at PSU in 2007. Professor Pavlis was a well respected teacher who impacted the lives of a large number of students during his 37 years of teaching at CVI and PSU. Many maintained personal connections with him long after completion of their degrees. At CVI he was an inspiration figure to many of his students who subsequently advanced in their careers and themselves served as mentors for other African-American students in STEM. His breadth of knowledge was remarkable. In addition to his specialty in organic chemistry he taught physical chemistry, biochemistry, and polymer chemistry. During his academic career he also taught courses in physics, astronomy, and general physical science. He was an accomplished computer programmer and worked extensively on ways to improve software for analysis of molecular structure. He had a long fascination with a range of scientific instrumentation. In addition to all types of chemistry laboratory instrumentation he had a large personal collection of microscopes and telescopes.

Robert had many hobbies throughout the years. He enjoyed photography from his entire life. He acquired his first camera in the early 1950's and developed his own photographs in a makeshift darkroom he constructed in the farmhouse bathroom. He maintained his interest in photography until his last days and was working on a camera system for microscopes in Alabama at the time of his death. Robert always went into all his hobbies in a big way and enjoyed collecting a range of things. Some of his other hobbies were tropical fish (He once had more aquariums than the local pet shop while in the Virgin Islands.), birds of various kind (mostly parrots), rebuilding microscopes, astronomy, clocks of various unique designs, Aladdin lamps, and collecting various antique items. Later in life he became a coffee aficionado with special coffees, roasting equipment, and espresso machines to rival a starbucks. In his later years he became an avid bicyclist. He became a regular fixture in Girard where he took laps around the town nearly every morning. He proudly talked of his virtual travels on his bicycle to exotic spots around the world. His tally shows he went around Girard enough times to circle the globe more than once.

Robert is survived by three brothers and one sister: Roger (Karen) Pavlis, Hudson, WI; Joyce (Everett) Tollerud, Eagan, MN; Gary (Mary) Pavlis, Ellettsville, IN; Terry (Laura) Pavlis, El Paso, TX; and seven nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents William and Stella Pavlis.

A memorial service for Professor Pavlis will be held January 27, 2018, at 3 pm in McCray Hall on the campus of Pittsburg State University. Following the service there will be a reception in the lobby of Herkert-Wells Hall. A second small service for extended family and friends with internment of the ashes will be held in Charles Mix County, South Dakota in the spring. Contributions can be made to Pittsburg State University in memory of Robert Pavlis to start the Robert Pavlis Memorial Scholarship.