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Daily Notebook

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2016 September 28-30

Ira Edward Aaron, Ph.D., 1919-2016

My great-uncle, Ira Edward Aaron, Professor Emeritus of Reading Education at the University of Georgia, died on September 27 at age 97 after a long illness. He was well taken care of by my sister and died in bed at her house. Thankfully, all the way to the end, his mind was clear when he was awake, though he was awake less and less of the time.

My middle name, Aaron, was chosen to honor him and his branch of the family.

"Uncle Ed" was an important role model for me. He was the first academic in our extended family. My first visit to the University of Georgia was when, at age 6, I was brought to his department to be studied. Normally they evaluated children to find out why they couldn't read — they evaluated me to find out why I *could*, and how I had learned it before starting school, and to make recommendations for my further education.

He was a co-author of many editions of the Scott, Foresman elementary-school reading books, including *Fun with Dick and Jane,* so a whole generation of Americans grew up reading things he wrote. He boasted of being co-author of one of the most notorious sentences in American literature, "See Dick run."

A sample of "Uncle Ed's" academic work can be seen in this pamphlet for teachers

published by the State of Georgia. Notice how clearly he writes. Almost all his academic work was applied rather than theoretical; his emphasis was on getting the word out, helping teachers everywhere teach more effectively. During the short times our careers overlapped, we never collaborated on anything, which may have been a lost opportunity. I did give a talk to his department while I was a Ph.D. candidate; I talked about the writing systems of other languages and what was involved in learning to read them.

He had the distinction of being listed on page 1 of *Who's Who in America* and occasionally getting mail for the baseball player Hank Aaron, whose entry was right above his.

He is not to be confused with at least two distant relatives also named Ira Edward Aaron, one of whom was Ira Edward Aaron, M.D., of Lyons, Georgia.

Update: Dr. Aaron's colleague Donna Alvermann has collected **tributes from former students and colleagues** and I have also added a scanned image of the memorial card that was given out at the visitation. More material may be added here later.

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