

Daily Progress newspaper, Charlottesville, VA 9/19/14

## Monaghan, E. Jennifer

E. Jennifer Monaghan E. Jennifer Monaghan, professor emeritus of English at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and a leading authority on the history of literacy in America, died Sunday, September 14, 2014, of a sudden stroke. She was 81.

She was born in Cambridge, England. Her father, Clement, was a family physician and her mother, Margery Elton Walker, was active in tennis throughout her life and played at Wimbledon in 1930 and 1931.

Jennifer received a B.A. in classics at Lady Margaret Hall of Oxford University, receiving first-class honors in classical languages. She won an English-Speaking Union grant to attend the University of Illinois, receiving an M.A. in Greek.

Visiting New York during her studies in the United States, she met and later married journalist Charles Monaghan. They settled in Park Slope, Brooklyn, and raised three children, Leila (who teaches at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale), Tony (Pastor of Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville) and Claire of West Orange, New Jersey, a nursery school teacher.

Spurred by her experience as a volunteer reading teacher at a local public school and a fascination with phonics, Jennifer decided to pursue a graduate degree in reading education, receiving an Ed. D. from Yeshiva Graduate School of Education with a dissertation on Noah Webster, which was later published as "A Common Heritage: Noah Webster's Blueback Speller." The book launched her career as a historian of literacy.

Author of dozens of scholarly papers and invited presentations worldwide, she was the founder of the History of Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association and edited the group's newsletter for 25 years. Their annual best-book award is named after her.

She and her husband were avid collectors of old literacy textbooks. The collection, amounting to some 1500 texts dating back to colonial times, resides at the University of Kansas.

Jennifer's work on early American literacy is summed up in the widely praised book "Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America," which includes sections on schools, the reading curriculum, textbooks, and portraits of literacy among the enslaved, Native Americans, women and the founding fathers.

She shared her phonics knowledge with beginning readers in her most recent book, "The Illustrated Phonics Booklet," which was illustrated by Virginia Cantarella.

Jennifer and her husband moved to Charlottesville a dozen years ago after her retirement. She continued her longstanding love of choral music by joining the chorus of the Oratorio Society.

Above all, she loved the company of her seven grandchildren, Conor, Jane, Regan and Liam Monaghan of Charlottesville (she loved taking them on walks along the Rivanna Trail and pathways of Dunlora) and the frequent fun-filled visits of Quinn, Jake and Aidan Tolchin from West Orange. Thank you to the wonderful Dayna Shook Monaghan and the stalwart Kirk Tolchin for their role in their lives and ours. And thank you Bob McGovern, our friend and partner of our daughter, Leila.

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Jennifer may be made either to the Rare

Book School of the University of Virginia or the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA). The Rare Book School can be reached at [www.rarebookschool.org](http://www.rarebookschool.org) or (434) 243-1010. JABA donations can be mailed to JABA, 674 Hillsdale Drive, Suite 9, Charlottesville, VA 22901. A memorial service for Jennifer will be held this Saturday, September 20, 2014, at 2 p.m. at JABA, 674 Hillsdale Drive, Charlottesville, Virginia.