



DR. MARGARET ESTHER WINTERS

April 29, 1947 - February 26, 2024

CHAPEL FUNERAL SERVICE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024, AT 2 P.M.
AT HEBREW MEMORIAL CHAPEL.

***THE CHAPEL SERVICE WILL BE WEBCAST AND AVAILABLE TO VIEW
ON THIS WEB PAGE ***

Dr. Margaret E. Winters, age 76, of Grosse Pointe a distinguished Professor and Provost at Wayne State University (ret.) died on February 26, 2024.

Margaret Esther Winters was born in Brooklyn, NY, April 29, 1947 to Dorothy and Joseph Winters. Eleanor, her only sister, was born 1948.

Margaret attended New York City public schools and went to the local Sholem Aleichem Folkshul in Brooklyn, where she learned to read and write Yiddish, a treasure that she cherished all her life. She received her BA in French from Brooklyn College. She married Richard Epro in 1968. They divorced in 1981. She received her MA in French from University of California, Riverside in 1970, and later moved back East to Philadelphia where she was awarded one of the last doctorates in Romance Philology from the University of Pennsylvania.

After several years of part-time teaching at various universities, she landed a

tenure-track job in 1977 as a Professor of French at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Illinois. In 1980, she met Geoffrey Nathan, and they married in 1984, almost exactly 40 years ago.

In the late 1980s, Margaret was asked to be Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, where she served until 1994, when she became Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Shortly thereafter, she was named university Provost.

Despite her busy career as an administrator, she continued to work and publish in philology and later in more prototypical linguistics. She became one of the first linguists to apply the emerging theory of Cognitive Grammar (a challenge to Chomskyism) to Historical Linguistics. Her textbook, *Introduction to Historical Linguistics*, is widely used in colleges and universities worldwide, as is *Cognitive Linguistics for Linguists*, which she and Geoff co-authored,

While at Carbondale, Geoff introduced her to Shotokan Karate. She rapidly advanced to the level of Second Degree Black Belt. During their years in Carbondale, she and Geoff ran an independent Karate school; she also taught classes in women's self-defense. She continued to train with Geoff until very recently.

In 2002, Margaret was asked to become Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at Wayne State University. She and Geoff moved to Detroit, where they built a new life with a wide circle of friends and many new interests. After several years she stepped down as Associate Provost, but was subsequently asked to combine four independent language departments in order to create the Wayne State Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. She served as Chair for several years, and was eventually asked to return to the Associate Provost position, and later served for several years as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs under President Roy Wilson

Margaret and Geoff became involved with the Sholem Aleichem Institute in Detroit, eventually becoming Co-Chairs of its Board. In 2023, she and Geoff arranged a merger of the Institute with the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, where they helped to create the Sholem Aleichem Institute Yiddishkeit Programming Fund.

In addition, she and Geoff became strong supporters of the Detroit Opera and the Detroit Symphony, where she served as a Trustee. Especially dear to her heart was the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, where she and Geoff served as Chairs of the Board; Geoff will continue in that capacity.

Margaret and Geoff were avid travellers, both by themselves and on cruises. Their most recent cruise from Buenos Aires to Rio in January of this year was a great joy to them both.

She is survived by her husband, Geoffrey Nathan, her sister, Eleanor Winters and her brother-in-law, Knights Order of Orange-Nassau, Leendert van der Pool.

Following Jewish tradition, in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings or the Sholem Aleichem Fund of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.

INTERMENT:

(PRIVATE INTERMENT)

Hebrew Memorial Park

33230 Gratiot Ave.

Clinton Township, MI 48035

OFFICIATING:

Rabbi Joseph Klein

SHIVA:

The family will observe Shiva following the interment on Thursday between the hours of 6 - 9 P.M., and there will be informal gatherings Friday from 2 - 5 P.M., and Saturday from 6 - 9 P.M. Religious Services will be held on Thursday only at 7 P.M. at the residence of
Dr. Geoffrey S. Nathan
862 University Place
Grosse Pointe, MI 48230

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings
24901 Northwestern Hwy Ste. 312
Southfield, MI 48075
<https://detroitchamberwinds.org/>

Sholem Aleichem Institute Yiddishkeit fund at the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan

Instructions: Under the heading: "If you wish to direct your contribution to a particular fund, please choose from the following:" you will find "Sholem Aleichem Institute Yiddishkeit Programming Fund"

In the "note to the JHSM office" section the donor can tell us it is in memory of Margaret Winters.

<https://www.jhsmichigan.org/donate/general-donations.html>

Previous Events

FUNERAL

FEB 29. 2:00 PM (ET)

Hebrew Memorial Chapel
26640 Greenfield Rd.
Oak Park, MI 48237

Shiva

FEB 29 (ET)

Dr. Geoffrey S. Nathan
862 University Place
Grosse Pointe, MI 48230

The family will observe Shiva following the interment on Thursday between the hours of 6 - 9 P.M. Religious Services will be held at 7 P.M.

Informal Gathering

MAR 1 (ET)

Dr. Geoffrey S. Nathan
862 University Place
Grosse Pointe, MI 48230

Friday from 2 - 5 P.M.

Informal Gathering

MAR 2 (ET)

Dr. Geoffrey S. Nathan
862 University Place
Grosse Pointe, MI 48230

Saturday from 6 - 9 P.M.

Tribute Wall



“ Hebrew Memorial Chapel created a Webcast in memory of DR. MARGARET ESTHER WINTERS



Hebrew Memorial Chapel - February 28, 2024 at 01:59 PM

SU

My heart breaks for you, Geoff. It was such beautiful service, and I'm glad I could at least be there virtually.

I'm so sorry Margaret was taken from you much too soon, and so so suddenly. She was the best neighbor a person could ever want.

Sending much love and a big hug your way.

-Susan Tusa

Susan - February 29, 2024 at 02:45 PM

FS

Gladys and I were stunned to hear of Margaret's passing. Margaret and I were classmates at Penn between 1971 and 1975 and Gladys arrived in the fall of 1972. It was Margaret who introduced us. The girls spent many hours socializing after class and all of us on weekends. Gladys and Margaret would frequently study together along with Nancy Jo Dyer and Juan Espadas ("Johnnie Spades"); both have also departed this world. The renowned hispanist Paul Lloyd was our favorite professor--we referred to him as "Uncle Paul." Sam Armistead and William Roche were two other forces in our lives. Looking back on the course of our time on this planet, I truly believe that these were the best years. You and your family of course have our deepest condolences. We hope that memories will be some small comfort to you at this time.

Frank J. La Scala, Gladys M. Rivera-La Scala

Frank La Scala - February 29, 2024 at 03:10 PM

LN

It was an extraordinary service that I just now could watch as I was teaching my French classes this afternoon here in Toronto. I dedicated them to Margaret, my prof and supervisor from the SIU days and told my students about her accomplishments. She was such an inspiration to all of us and I was very lucky to know her and be mentored by her in the early days of her amazing career. She will be so missed by so many, but especially by you, Geoff. You had just gotten married when we arrived in Carbondale in 1984, the two of you were inseparable. It is hard to imagine a world where she is gone. Sending our love to you.

Lieve De Nil - February 29, 2024 at 05:19 PM

FB

Listening to Rob Jensen's beautiful eulogy for our dearly departed Margaret and her wonderful and productive life with Geoff. Jacquie and I send our deepest condolences to you, Geoff, and to Margaret's sister Eleanor and her husband. Jacquie and Fred Betz (Carbondale, IL)

Frederick Betz - February 29, 2024 at 07:23 PM

JE

This photo of Margaret depicts perfectly her Essence--her deeply radiant beauty and her Sparkling, Soaring Spirit!! Peace. a 'SOAR' student. Thank you.

jeana - February 29, 2024 at 07:44 PM

VA

What an extraordinary service - thoughtful, celebratory and I hope comforting to you, Geoff and Eleanor. Bless all of you in the days and years ahead. Vivian Anderson

vivian t anderson - February 29, 2024 at 07:47 PM

LK

What a beautiful experience and tribute to an amazing person. Being surrounded by people's memories and experiences of Margaret was comforting and inspiring. . She was a very lovely force of nature, a life very well lived.

loraleigh keashly - March 02, 2024 at 08:55 AM

TT

Margaret was the department chair when I started working at SIU. During my interview as a prospective hire, I asked her if there was a place in Carbondale where I could continue my study of Shotokan karate. When I mentioned that, her eyes lit up and she told me that she and her husband, Geoff, had a Shotokan karate club. The rest of the interview we talked about karate and I ended up joining the club. Margaret was a genuine mensch, a wonderful person who embodied the best of human traits. Geoff, you and Margaret played a big roll in my life and I will forever be grateful for that.

Thom Thibeault - August 07, 2025 at 08:37 AM

ES

“ *My love to Geoff - I know her memory is for a blessing. The memory I want to share is of that wonderful Sunday Margaret and Geoff and I spent in Brussels, after the ICLA conference, before flying home. We went to the cathedral and heard the excellent Icelandic national choir; then the comics museum, and street wandering, and mussels to eat. And always such joyful talk. A gift, to have such times with friends as good as Geoff and Margaret. Margaret's affectionately-told Jim McCawley stories will also remain with me always (alongside George Lakoff's). And so, of course will her thoughts on cognitive linguistics and poetics.*

Eve Sweetser - October 07, 2024 at 11:57 PM

ER

“ *Geoff, I was so very sorry to learn of Margaret's passing from the LinguistList today. I did not know her well but thought she was a wonderful person and linguist. She had an amazing career. I remember well how very warm and welcoming you both were when I came to give a talk at Wayne State. You and your families have my heartfelt sympathy. Liz Riddle*

Elizabeth Riddle - April 02, 2024 at 11:56 AM

TF

“ My fond memories go back to when I was a graduate student in the Linguistics department at SIU Carbondale, IL. Dr. Winters and Dr. Nathan, her husband, were great models and dedicated to a welcoming and inclusive academic culture that promoted growth for us as students. Their efforts empowered me as a student and professional to maximize my academic opportunities. Dr. Winters was a great advocate for students and staff. I pay tribute for her positive influences. Bob and I send our deepest condolences.

Toyin Fox - March 08, 2024 at 09:26 AM

JA

“ I am so shocked and saddened to hear of Margaret’s passing. Geoff, my deepest sympathies and thoughts and prayers for strength and healing. Although I’ve only known you both a short time in Tai Chi, it is quite clear how incredible, inspiring, intelligent, and kind Margaret was. You are a model for what a healthy, intellectual, compassionate, joyful, and adventurous couple could be! Thank you for that and for sharing your dear Margaret with us. Lots of love,
Jen Anderson

jen anderson - March 06, 2024 at 05:31 PM

DD

I just met Margaret very recently at the Waterford Senior Center where she and Geoff gave an interesting and informative talk about linguistics and answered many questions with grace and humility. As vibrant, lively, humorous and brilliant as she was, I was shocked to read of her passing. I sincerely say that you have my deepest condolences, Geoff. I wish you strength and comfort. It is a huge loss for you, her family, the educational community and the larger community as well. May her memory be for a blessing.
Dede Domstein

Dede Domstein - March 22, 2024 at 11:26 PM

AW

“ Margaret was the kindest person I have known. I remember how, after I first met her, I attended a faculty dinner party at which an elderly colleague fainted. It was Margaret who insisted on personally taking her to the ER and afterward to Geoff and Margaret's house to stay for a few days so that she would not be at home alone. I soon learned that this kind of caring for others was typical of Margaret.

We will all miss her.

Anne Winston-Allen, Carbondale

Anne Winston-Allen - March 05, 2024 at 04:27 PM

SB

“ I met Margaret and Geoff when I set up an endowed scholarship at Wayne State in the College of Liberal Arts and sciences. Margaret was always so gracious even when I would run into her and Geoff at Morning Glory in Grosse Pointe on Saturday mornings. Geoff May happy memories be with you always. Susan Bristol

Susan Bristol - March 04, 2024 at 12:10 PM

AR

“ I was shocked and very saddened to hear today of Margaret’s passing. In fact I still can’t accept it. I met Margaret when I returned to SIU in the late 70s for grad school in Linguistics. Because it had been many years since I had studied a language, I had to take a translation class. I chose Margaret’s class in translating from French. I don’t remember much about the class, but it was my first semester of graduate school and her first tenured position and we were both in our 30s. We became friends. We shared many meals, often chicken livers cooked in red wine, and many conversations. During the years we were both in Carbondale, we remained good friends. When she met Geoff and fell in love, I was there. I attended their wedding. I went to Seders at their house and they came to Easter brunches at mine. I left SIU in 1986. Margaret went on to become department chair and then Assistant Provost. We stayed in touch for many years, but distance kept us from seeing each other and slowly we didn’t communicate much, but I always considered her and Geoff to be my friends. Heartfelt condolences to Geoff and to Eleanor for your loss. I will always remember my friend Margaret. I wish I could be in Detroit for the Shiva.

Ann Ramos

Ann Ramos - March 02, 2024 at 12:23 AM

HL

“ I told Margaret that she had the talent of calming people down. She made my tenure process much less daunting. She once said to me: if you have to go (on a business trip that I was not interested at all), you'd better enjoy it. I think Margaret just lived what she said. She really enjoyed life and let others enjoy it too. RIP, dear Margaret. We took a moment of silence for you today at our linguistic talk and we knew you were with us in spirit.

Haiyong Liu - March 01, 2024 at 09:59 PM

JM

“ Dear All,
Margaret's death has really moved and saddened me. She welcomed me into CMLLC when I transferred from the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, and she helped me in so many ways. I remember her as warm, efficient, caring and funny. She was a real pleasure to work with. Jim Michels

James Michels - March 01, 2024 at 12:51 PM

EG

“ My heart is with Geoff. Margaret was an amazing person. I remember many time when her humor and intelligence smooth a rough spot in the academic life we shared for a time. I am so sorry that she is no longer among us. Genie

Eugenie Gatens-Robninson - March 01, 2024 at 11:51 AM

FB

“ s well as to Margaret and I came to the Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in the 1970s. She taught French and I taught German. Margaret was a great teacher, scholar, and colleague, as well as Department Chair from 1988 to 1993. Jacquie earned her master's degree in Linguistics, and so we both knew both Margaret and Geoff. Their life together was, as was highlighted in the wonderful eulogies this afternoon, was a great love story, and so Jacquie and I send our deepest sympathies to you, Geoff, as well as to Margaret's sister Eleanor and her husband! We will keep Margaret in our fond memories of her! - Jacquie and Fred Betz (Carbondale, IL)

Frederick Betz - February 29, 2024 at 03:01 PM

YZ

“ Dearest Margaret, please rest in peace. I cannot attend the funeral due to teaching commitments. I deeply missed your warm smile and your generosity.

Yunshuang Zhang - February 29, 2024 at 02:32 PM

PH

“ I am profoundly saddened by Maraget's passing as she -- along with Anne Parsons -- were my rocks of clear thinking and advice when I left Detroit. Clear thinking, quick smiling, and unafraid of providing difficult and welcomed counsel was Margaret. Godspeed, Margaret. Well done, good and faithful servant. Geoff, Lauri and I welcome you to visit Cleveland. Thank you everyone for the terrifically loving memorial service.

Paul Hogle - February 29, 2024 at 02:27 PM

JF

“ Dear Geoff, I'm so very sorry to learn of Margaret's passing. As you know, she played a monumental role in my life and career, and I was privileged to report to her, work with her, and consider her a friend. I watch her service today from Nebraska and send thoughts and love. I will miss her.

Jane Ferreyra - February 29, 2024 at 02:07 PM

SB

“ As a member of Soar at The Hawk in Farmington Hills i have attended classes that Margaret and Geoff taught. I found them interesting and quite challenging. I wish to express my condolences to the family. Margaret's contributions and her spirit will be very much missed.

Sheldon Beck

sheldon beck - February 29, 2024 at 02:04 PM



“ My deepest condolences to Geoff and the Winters/Nathan family. I regret that I cannot be with you today due to illness but I will watch the service online. Margaret was an amazing colleague, mentor and friend. I echo the sentiments about her contributions to Wayne State and in particular to academic labor relations, where our careers intersected. I learned so much from Margaret and she was just an exemplary human being. I so enjoyed working with her, our many conversations and great laughs together. May her memory be a blessing to all who knew her.

Amy Lammers - February 29, 2024 at 01:10 PM

HS

“ I will be unable to attend the funeral, but hope to be with you in the evening at the Shiva. I think of Margaret as one of the “36 just souls“ that keeps the world functioning. This Judaic folk (and Talmudic”) conceot, from around the 4th century, says that when one “just soul” dies —someone who did the right things to help othersb , but still stayed humble and concerned with and for others — another is born somewhere. Those of us who lost the person we know are still in pain over the loss, but a piece of us can be hopeful that a new child, born somewhere, will continue to carry on Margaret’s efforts as a good and just person.

Harriet Saperstein

Harriet Saperstein - February 28, 2024 at 07:40 PM

TA

“ I met Margaret, who was the Chair of the recently created Classical and Modern Languages Department at the time, when I was on the negotiating team for the new Union of Part-Time Faculty in 2007-08. Later, she served as Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Provost during later negotiations with our union. Margaret was a fair and very kind person and I always enjoyed our interactions. RIP Margaret, you will be missed.

Tom Anderson

Tom Anderson - February 28, 2024 at 02:34 PM

PJ

“ Not mentioned in the fine obituary: Margaret's first year of "graduate" study was in Paris (Sorbonne?), her academic year slightly shortened by the student protests (riots?) of Spring, 1968. She then married Richard and became a fellow graduate student at UCR.

*With best wishes,
Dick Jesson, San Francisco*

Paula Dick Jesson - February 28, 2024 at 11:47 AM

PJ

I have been corrected: Margaret studied at University of Reims.

Paula Dick Jesson - February 29, 2024 at 02:02 PM

PP

“ So sorry Geoffrey, Only met her a few times but she was a lovely Lady. You two were such a Handsome, Charming Couple. Condolences again.

Phil Potter - February 28, 2024 at 10:10 AM

RC

“ We enjoyed so many happy times of meals shared together with Margaret, Geoffrey, and friends. Our annual trips to Stratford for the Shakespeare Festival each year became a tradition which we will miss. Most of all Margaret's smile. Lee and Randal Charlton

Rosalie and Randal Charlton - February 28, 2024 at 05:00 AM

EE

“ I remember having dinner with you and Margaret. such a wonderful evening of sharing opera and traveling stories. Her warm smile will be missed.

Emmajean Evans - February 27, 2024 at 10:31 PM

SS

“ Among the many memories I have of Margaret is on of the the first times I met her. I was staying at Stone House on SIUC's campus for a weekend before I became CoLA dean. Margaret was about four days out from a surgery. but was sturdy enough to come visit and welcome me to Carbondale and the university. When she was provost and I was a pesky dean, we had our innings, but it is a mark of her capability for friendship that our professional quarrels did not impede our personal friendship. I lament her death.

Shirley Scott - February 27, 2024 at 06:05 PM

RS

“ So many beautiful memories of and with Margaret z”l—our work together in CMLLC, our many pleasurable dinners and other times together, our longtime friendship, our conversations about our native New York as well as travel adventures, and so much more. And so many happy memories of both of you together. The photos you have shared on Facebook reveal so perfectly the joy of your loving marriage and partnership. I am so very grateful to have had Margaret in my life.

I grieve the loss of my dear friend, and I grieve especially for you, Geoff, and for Eleanor and Leendert. May you be comforted and strengthened in your sorrow by the flood of messages, love, and support from near and far that you are receiving. Margaret's memory will always be for a blessing to those who knew and loved her.

*With warmest hugs and love,
Roz Schindler*

Roslyn Schindler - February 27, 2024 at 04:43 PM

SO

“ I love Margaret. We shared many get-togethers at the Morning Glory Cafe in Grosse Pointe. Margaret was so easy to talk to, so knowledgeable, so eager to help and to listen. Such a terrible, sudden loss. She will always be missed.

Sharon O'Brien - February 27, 2024 at 03:25 PM

KT

As someone who has spent much time in shared governance and as a former colleague from Wayne State, I want to express my appreciation for the long and hard work that Margaret did as Chair of the Foreign Languages Dept and as Provost at Wayne State. This is not easy work, and the many hours of unseen labor often go unrecognized. Thank you Margaret for everything that you did for your department and university. You will be missed. My deepest condolences to Geoff. I am glad you got to share a last trip together this year.

Kirsten Thompson, Film Chair and English Dept

Kirsten Thompson - February 28, 2024 at 01:07 PM

BH

Margaret was a treasured member of the national higher education labor-management community. Her intelligence, kindness, calmness, and spirit will not be forgotten.

Her wisdom was reflected in her writings and presentations on collective bargaining as part of the annual conferences of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions at Hunter College. Let her memory be a blessing.

Bill Herbert, Executive Director

Bill Herbert - February 28, 2024 at 03:19 PM

RB

Margaret was a great colleague and an exceptional mentor to me. She always supported and encouraged me, especially with my research on Dante's Divine Comedy. Lately, she asked me about my new released book on Dante. I hope she had a chance to take a glimpse of it! Margaret was not only a colleague and a mentor, but also a family friend whom my entire family respected and admired.

My sincere and heartfelt condolences to Geoff.

Margaret will never be forgotten....May she rest in peace.

Raffaele De Benedictis

Associate Professor of Italian

CMLLC

Raffaele De Benedictis - February 29, 2024 at 02:25 PM

MF

I have just learned that Margaret has passed. I am shocked and saddened. As the Executive Director of the AAUP-AFT at Wayne State, I got to know Margaret deliberating grievances and contract negotiations while she was associate provost, provost, and lead Administration negotiator. Although we did not always agree, she was always fair, always willing to listen and consider other positions. She sincerely cared for the faculty and academic staff and women's rights. I will always respect her. My deepest condolences to her family and friends.

Michelle J Fecteau - February 29, 2024 at 02:32 PM

RN

*I am very grateful for Margaret for her friendship, support love, and encouragement that she showed me and other colleagues at Wayne State. She was indeed a very beautiful human being with a memorable smile on her face.
With my deepest and hear felt condolences to Geoff Nathan and family, Ratna Naik (Wayne State retired faculty member)*

Ratna Naik - February 29, 2024 at 02:38 PM

RO

Geoff - I am sorry that I was unable to attend Margaret's service and funeral. She was a lovely person, who always had a kind word and a beautiful smile, making every person who was in her presence feel significant and welcomed. I heard wonderful stories at her service (which I watched on-line) at Wayne State, and she (and you) had/have such a profound and positive impact on DCWS and on the music world in our area. The two of you were a symbol of all that is good in our world. Margaret's memory will be a blessing for all of us. Hopefully, the support of others will bring you comfort and the knowledge that we all care will give you strength. With sincere sympathy, Ruthanne Okun

Ruthanne Okun - March 03, 2024 at 05:35 PM

RB

O, hemel. Why do the good ones always go first? Een lange, verdrietige knuf for and with Geoff, Eleanor and Leendert. The world no longer turns, it wobbles.

Raymond Broersma - March 19, 2024 at 04:37 PM

CH

Margaret was a valued colleague in the MI-ACE Women's Network. Her thoughtful perspectives enriched the discussion of the Executive Board. I loved sitting beside her and treasured our all-too-brief visits. The world is a better place because of this smart and courageous woman leader.

Christine M. Hammond - March 19, 2024 at 08:05 PM

RS

I am both shocked and deeply saddened to learn of Margaret's passing. She and I met back in 1965 at Brooklyn College as young girls who bonded over everything French and somehow found Philology and Linguistics. We have remained friends ever since sharing the ups and downs of adult life despite the challenges of geography. I will truly miss our periodic "catching up" whether virtually or in New York. My heart goes out to Geoff. Theirs was a love that is rarely found. My condolences go to Eleanor whose sisterly love Margaret cherished.

Rosemary Salomone

Rosemary Salomone - June 01, 2024 at 11:12 PM