



## Dr. Alf J. Mapp, Jr.

January 23, 2011

Dr. Alf Johnson Mapp, Jr., 85, a noted author, historian, and Eminent Scholar Emeritus of English at Old Dominion University, died Sunday, January 23, 2011, in a Suffolk nursing facility.

Dr. Mapp was born in Portsmouth, VA on February 17, 1925, the son of Alf J. Mapp, Sr., who served as Portsmouth superintendent of schools 1950-1965 and Lorraine Carney Mapp, a teacher. He attended Port Norfolk Elementary School and Woodrow Wilson High School, where he graduated in 1941. He was an outstanding student who participated in many activities at Wilson, where he captained the debate team and edited the school newspaper. He helped represent Wilson High at Boys State, where he was chef justice. After attending the College of William and Mary as a Grayson Scholar, where he was a finalist in the multi-state speaking contest, he became editorial page editor of the Portsmouth Star in the 1940s. He had written for them as a college student and had been a published writer since childhood. He also hosted a news analysis program on a Portsmouth radio station. In the early 1950s, he became an assistant editor for The Virginian -Pilot, which he left in the late 1950s to work as a freelance writer and finish his bachelors degree in English at the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary now Old Dominion University, where he graduated in 1961 and started teaching that fall. He taught until 1992, starting out as a lecturer and retiring as Eminent Scholar Emeritus of English. He taught British and American literature, journalism, creative writing, and Virginia history. Thousands of students

enjoyed his fine lectures and the concern he showed.

During the time he was working as a journalist he also was a freelance for The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, Dr. Mapp who received an honorary doctorate of letters from ODU in 2006, and serving as a professor, and until shortly before his death, was also writing books. His first book, *The Virginia Experiment*, was published in 1957. His other books include: *Frock Coats and Epaulets* 1963; *America Creates Its Own Literature* 1965; *Just One Man* 1968; *The Golden Dragon* 1974; *Thomas Jefferson: A Strange Case of Mistaken Identity* 1987; *Thomas Jefferson: Passionate Pilgrim* 1989; *Bed of Honor* his only novel 1996; *Three Golden Ages* 1998; and *Faiths of our Fathers* 2003. With his wife of 39 years, Dr. Ramona H. Mapp, who died on January 8, 2011, he co-authored two editions of *Portsmouth: A Pictorial History*. Dr. Ramona Mapp was a great partner who was a professor of English and Chair of the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Portsmouth Campus of Tidewater Community College, as well as a leader in civic and cultural organizations, who chaired the Portsmouth Library Board and was president of Young Audiences of Virginia.

Dr. Alf Mapp, Jr., was also active in many civic and cultural organizations. He chaired the Portsmouth Bicentennial Commission and the Portsmouth Museum and Fine Arts Commission and was president of the Portsmouth Historical Society and the Poetry Society of Virginia, and a member of the James Towne Society. Dr. Mapp served on many boards and received the Portsmouth Young Man of the Year Award and the Liberty Bell Award. He was honored as a Portsmouth Notable in 1987 and was listed in many reference books, including *Who's Who in the World*.

He loved Portsmouth, where he lived until 2009, when he moved to Lake Prince Woods Retirement Community in Suffolk. He was a proud thirteenth generation Virginian and American, and enjoyed sharing the lives of Virginian and American heroes with readers.

Dr. Mapp was a noted public speaker, addressing local, state, and national audiences, and also was frequently on radio and television. He hosted a

program on Virginia history on WAVY-TV in the 1970s.

He was a devoted father, husband, relative, and friend who enjoyed music and theatre, as well as a wide variety of literature.

Predeceased by his parents and his former wife, Hartley Lockhart Mapp, he is survived by his son, Alf Johnson Mapp, III of Portsmouth, as well as stepsons Gregory Stuart Hamby wife Linda Moon of Kitty Hawk, N.C., and Geoffrey Alan Hamby wife Pamela Thurman of Falls Church, VA, and step granddaughter Ramona Hamby Tyabut husband Constantin Tyabut of Kitty Hawk and step grandsons Christopher Malcolm Hamby and Nicholas Conner Hamby of Falls Church.

The family would like to thank Dr. Mapp's aides and caregivers: Helen Ratcliff, his longtime research assistant; Denise Fortune of Senior Corp; chef Casey Hoxter; and Katrina Britt, Melinda Eubanks, Stephanie Kazouris, Shantel Weathers, Lisa Scott, and Cheri Lane, all of Home Instead of Suffolk, which is co-owned and managed by Nell and Larry Neal. Dr. Mapp, a former member of Port Norfolk Baptist Church, was a member of Churchland Baptist Church, and West End Baptist Church, whose congregations and pastors, the Rev. Lawrence Coleman and the Rev. Dr. Skip Irby, the family thanks, as well as thanking Rev. Dr. Woodie Rea and the Lake Prince Woods community.

Donations may be made in Dr. Mapp's memory to either of these churches, as well as to Friends of the ODU Library and the College of William and Mary.

Funeral services will be held at Churchland Baptist Church, 3031 Churchland Blvd., Chesapeake, VA 23321, on Wednesday, January 26, at 1 P.M., by the Rev. Lawrence Coleman. Visitation will be held from 11:30 to 12:30 at the church preceding the funeral. Burial will follow in the church's cemetery.

Loving Funeral Home is handling the services

# Tribute Wall



“ *Everytime I go to write a headline, I hear him saying "find something three-quarters of the way down in the story to use." He also helped me with my features writing.*

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**Daryl Law** - November 10, 2025 at 03:39 PM



“ *I remember seeing him at Old Dominion University when I was working on my AB degree in German under Regula Meier and Dr. John Holley. My wife and I knew him and his wife when we were members at Churchland Baptist Church. We now belong to Aldersgate United Methodist Church. My father was a first cousin to the Rev. Ralph and Marion Lee Mapp at Cradock Baptist Church; therefore, Alf called me cousin Charles and often invited me to his home. Alf will be sorely missed. His immortal spirit is now with our saviour, Jesus Christ.##imported-begin##Charles Miller,BA,MA,DipBS,##imported-end##*

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March 28, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ My late father, Charles E. Miller, Sr. was a first cousin to the Rev. Ralph Mapp of Cradock Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia. My late mother, Betty Spurlin Miller, served as a Room Mother Chairman at Hodges Manor Elementary School and knew Alf Mapp, Sr. was head of the Portsmouth City Schools. I was a student at Old Dominion University and received my BA in German in 1979. My wife and I are former members of Churchland Baptist Church. We are now members at Aldersgate United Methodist Church. Professor Mapp always referred to me as his cousin due to my relation to the Rev. Ralph Mapp. He used to invite Nancy and me to his house. He was a fellow scholar and friend and will be sorely missed. May God bless his eternal soul and give him a better resurrection Hebrews 10.  
Charles E. Miller, Jr. BA, MAR, DipBS, Abschlussurkunde in Biblische Studien##imported-begin##Charles E. Miller, Jr. BA, Old Dominion University; MAR, Liberty##imported-end##

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March 27, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ I just received my ODU Alumni magazine and was saddened to learn of Dr. Mapp's passing I also was very sad to hear of his wife's passing earlier the same month.

*Dr. Mapp was a wonderful professor. I took his feature writing journalism class in the late 1980s/early 1990s at ODU. I remember him as being very kind and a terrific teacher.*

*He will be missed.*

##imported-begin##Valarie Blaes##imported-end##

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May 11, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ AFTER READING "FROCK COATS AND EPAULETS" FOR PROBABLY THE TENTH TIME,I FELT A NEED TO EXPRESS HOW MUCH DR. MAPP MEANT TO ME WHILE AT ODU. I WAS A STUDENT THERE FROM 1973 TO 1977, AND I TOOK A HISTORY COURSE WHICH HE TAUGHT. AS WAS PROBABLY THE CASE WITH MANY OF MY FELLOW STUDENTS,I WAS VERY MUCH CRAVING STABILITY IN WHAT HAD BECOME A SOMEWHAT CONFUSING WORLD DUE TO CONTINUING POST VIETNAM AND WATERGATE UPHEAVAL.DR. MAPP HELPED ME REALIZE HOW MUCH OUR HISTORY AND HERITAGE MEANS,AND I ENDED UP GRADUATING IN 1977 WITH A B.A. IN HISTORY IN 1977.

MY MEMORIES OF DR.MAPP WERE OF THE CONSUMATE GENTLEMAN, WHO TRULY CARED FOR THE INTERESTS OF HIS STUDENTS.

TO HIS SURVIVING FAMILY, I OFFER BELATED CONDOLENCES.

DR.MAPP WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN BY ME OR THE THOUSANDS OF HIS OTHER FORMER STUDENTS.##imported-begin##JOHN M. MORSE,JR.##imported-end##

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April 15, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ I read Mr. Mapp's book "Frock Coats and Epaulet's"...and in passing one day long ago, met and talked with him on the steps of Portsmouth Library. I've always thought of him as inspiring. My condolences to his family. Best regards, Frederick Olsen.##imported-begin##Frederick Olsen##imported-end##

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February 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ On this day, 23 January 2011, Thomas Jefferson cried and so did we.##imported-begin##Bernie Kraatz##imported-end##

January 28, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Mr.Alf Mapp introduced me to Mr.Thomas Jefferson,and Mr.Jefferson introduced me to Mr. Mapp. Thank you Mr.Mapp.##imported-begin##Bernie Kraatz##imported-end##

January 27, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dear Alf, you are in my thoughts and prayers at this time of your father's death. I was hoping to attend the funeral and hear all the loving tributes to him but illness in the family prevented it. All my best wishes for you at this difficult time.  
Sincerely, Jeanne Marcus##imported-begin##Jeanne Mussman Marcus##imported-end##

January 26, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ I am so sorry death causes so much grief but my professor has moved away from discomfort of all sorts.  
Dr. Mapp helped me through a rough time. He also helped me get back to my love of language and writing. It is my loss never to have followed that path. This man has helped others, I am sure, but I will always be grateful to him for my share of his time.  
Thank you for sharing him with the world.  
Love, Joy, Peace and Blessings.  
Pat Burns##imported-begin##Pat Burns##imported-end##

January 26, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dr Mapp was a member of the Scholars Commission 13 prominent scholars who found no truth in the claims that Thomas Jefferson fathered a Hemings child. He was most thorough in his research and knew the Jefferson legacy very well and wrote books on his research. I will greatly miss him as we had many conversations and exchanges of research.*

*My sincere condolences to the family and his many friends.  
Respectfully,*

*Herbert Barger*

*Founder, Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society [www.tjheritage.org](http://www.tjheritage.org)##imported-begin##Herbert Barger##imported-end##*

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January 26, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ *Alf's death is like the burning of a great library. He was knowledgeable in a myriad of subjects with a true and deep understanding of many of them. That is forever lost to us. A giant oak has fallen. We will not see his like again in our lifetime. The family has my deep sympathy.##imported-begin##Bernie Kirsch##imported-end##*

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January 26, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ *My condolences to the entire Mapp family. Professor map was a great scholar and a true Southern Gentleman. His great biography of Thomas Jefferson truly brought that man's accomplishments and the formation of our nation to life for me. I will miss Dr. Mapp very much.##imported-begin##Ed Bunch##imported-end##*

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January 25, 2011 at 12:00 AM