

Margaret Hayford O'Leary

Margaret Hayford O'Leary died June 30, 2018 after a two-year battle with cancer.

Margaret was a professor at St. Olaf College, teaching Norwegian language, literature, and culture for 40 years. She was the King Olav V Chair of Scandinavian-American Studies and Associate Dean for Humanities at the time of her death. In 2016, Norway designated Margaret an officer,



Knight 1st class, of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit in recognition of her work in higher education and in promoting knowledge of Norway in the United States.

Margaret had a lifelong love for all things Norwegian, from attending Skogfjorden language camp as a child to helping lead St. Olaf's Syttende Mai celebration just weeks before her death. She was also a talented knitter who made intricate Norwegian sweaters for her family and friends. For 10 years, she spent her summers as a lecturer at the International Summer School at the University of Oslo, working with students from all over the world. Through her work in both Minnesota and Norway, she inspired interest and learning of Norwegian language and culture for hundreds of students.

She was born Margaret V. Hayford on March 30, 1951 in Minneapolis. She grew up in Richfield, Minn., graduating valedictorian from Richfield High School in 1969. She attended Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., where she met her future husband, Doug O'Leary. She graduated summa cum laude from Concordia, and went on to earn a master's degree and Ph.D from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

She is survived by her mother, Rachael Hayford (Skatrud); her husband Doug; children Kari (Greg), Erik (Jen), and Sean (John); grandchildren Miriam and Reuben; sister Andrea (Brant) Nelson; her nieces and nephews, Mariah, Dylan, Tyler, Victor, Connor, and Lilly; her cousins, and many dear friends.

She was preceded in death by her father, Andrew O. Hayford, and her grandparents.

A memorial service for Margaret will be on July 28, 2018 at 2 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church, 500 W Third Street, Northfield. Visitation will be one hour beforehand and a reception will follow. Memorial contributions may be made to the Tweet-Rolvaag-Zempel Scholarship fund at St. Olaf College.