

Gail Cherry Criminger, 70, of Franklin, passed away Sunday, June 22, 2008, at the home of her daughter, Jennifer Cleere, in Atlanta, Ga.

She was born April 6, 1938, in Lincolnton, the daughter of Magdalene Roof Cherry and Ralph Boyd Cherry. She was preceded in death by her husband of 26 years, William Russell Criminger.

Though she suffered a brief illness, her death was sudden and unexpected. A graduate of Appalachian State University, she taught and supervised in the Atlanta Public Schools for 10 years. She served as curriculum coordinator and director of staff development in Clayton County Public Schools for 21 years. As one of the first local leaders in her field, she was affectionately called the "Mother of Staff Development" for the State of Georgia. She was active in various community organizations and the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Atlanta.

After retiring to Otto in 1995, she enjoyed volunteering for a number of community organizations. She spent nine years as a board member of Friends of the Macon County Library, serving as vice-president from 1998 to 2000, and president from 2000 to 2002. She worked at the Friends of the Library Bookstore from 1996 to 2008. She was a member of the Fontana Regional Library Board in 2004. She served on the Macon County Library Board of Trustees from 2004 to present.

She was very devoted to the capital campaign, building and design of the new Macon County Community Funding Pool Task Force, Art Saturday team, and was elected to the Board of Directors of the Arts Council of Macon County serving to present.

She was an active member of First United Methodist Church in Franklin and enjoyed serving on various committees and attending the Open Discussions Sunday School class.

She loved her family and adored her friends and the beauty of the mountains.

She is survived by her daughter, Jennifer Cleere of Atlanta; sisters, Irene and Frances Cherry of Gastonia; brothers, William Cherry of Sebastian, Fla., and James Cherry of Eden; stepchildren, John Criminger of Sugar Hill, Ga., Rusty Criminger of Signal Mountain, Tenn., Carol Criminger of Highlands; grandchildren, Emily, Jenny, Jeff and Colin Criminger, and Lucas Bazzurro; and great-grandchildren, Anna Grace Criminger and Thomas Jenkins.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m., Saturday, July 12, at First United Methodist Church in Franklin, followed by a gathering at the farm of Ed Haight, 3431 Tessentee Rd., Otto.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions be made to Macon County Friends of the Library, 819 Siler Rd., Franklin, NC 28734; or Heifer International, P.O. Box 8058, Little Rock, AR 72203; or First United Methodist Church, 66 Harrison Ave., Franklin, NC 28734.

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